



## Context rules! Top-level education policies for newly arrived migrant students across six European countries



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### ABSTRACT

Migration across Europe is an increasing reality over the last number of decades, affecting countries with long histories of immigration as well as countries newer to the phenomenon. Although education remains a key factor in receiving and integrating migrants, policies and practices differ among countries. How contextual factors shape these differences is under-represented. This article reviews the top-level education policies on receiving Newly Arrived Migrant Students (NAMS) in six European countries – Belgium, Ireland, Malta, Norway, Portugal and Romania – in an attempt to fill this gap. Employing the European Commission four-dimensional framework of educational support for migrants, we examine how the context of each country shapes these policies. Findings are somewhat paradoxical, indicating both the contextual nature of top-level policies, and a trend towards policy homogenisation at a European level, despite very different national contexts.

### 1. Introduction

There is nothing new about international migration. Written accounts of the movement of people between lands and across borders have persisted since biblical times. However, recent social and political developments such as European Union (EU) expansion, and humanitarian migration flows, which peaked in 2015, have led to changes in patterns of migration within Europe (European Commission/Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency/Eurydice, 2019, p.29). Whereas the debate on education and migration continues (cf Rodríguez-Izquierdo & Darmody, 2019), relatively little is known about how policies underpinning practice can vary between countries, depending on their context.

Despite the influence of the educational policies of transnational organizations such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), policies are shaped in part by context (Resnik, 2008; Alexiadou, 2014; Nordin, 2014; Morgan & Volante, 2016). Whether local, national or international, context prompts policy. The countries of Europe offer great diversity in this regard, with history, tradition, culture, economics and a multitude of other factors influencing the context of national policy. Despite a shared European identity and the efforts of the post-World War project that evolved into the European Union, national contexts remain rich and varied. And this shapes policies, including policies on migration.

This paper emerges from the work of Transnational Collaboration on Bullying, Migration and Integration at School Level (TRIBES),

*List of abbreviations:* CPD, Continuous professional development; COST, European Cooperation in Science and Technology; DASPA, Dispositif d'Accueil et de Scolarisation des élèves Primo-Arrivants et Assimilés (Reception and Schooling System for Newcomers and Assimilated Pupils); DEIS, Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools; EC, European Commission; ECTS, European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System; EU, European Union; FLA, Français langue d'apprentissage (French as a Learning Language); GDP, Gross Domestic Product; ITE, Initial Teacher Education; NAMS, Newly Arrived Migrant Students; NEET, Young people Not in Education, Employment or Training; NGOs, Non-Governmental Organisations; OECD, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development; OLC, Openness to Languages and Cultures programme; PCs, Participating Countries; TRIBES, Transnational Collaboration on Bullying, Migration and Integration at School Level.

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a project focused on migrant experiences of school bullying across the European continent (O’Higgins Norman, 2020); O’Higgins Norman (2020). TRIBES is a European Cooperation in Science and Technology (COST) action, involving 33 European countries formed into six working groups. The six participating countries in this paper (see below) are part of a working group focusing on the policies and practices ‘put in place for schools to deal with integration of immigrant pupils’ (tribesproject.com, 2021). As a first step, this paper deals with the issue of top-level policy. The practice element ie. what practices schools adopt to help integrate immigrant students, and whether such practices reflect top level policy, is not dealt with here. Rather, it is the next step in this project.

The aim of this paper is to analyse how the participating countries (henceforth PCs) of Norway, Malta, Republic of Ireland (henceforth, Ireland), Romania, Belgium<sup>1</sup>, and Portugal support the education of newly arrived migrant students (NAMS) through top level policies.<sup>2</sup> By newly arrived migrant students (NAMS), we mean ‘first generation migrant children and young people who, as they enter the formal education system of the host country, may qualify for additional support measures to assist their integration into schools (e.g. preparatory classes, additional classes in the language of schooling, etc.) (Eurydice, 2019, p.169). The chosen countries offer not only a geographical range, but also a range of experience in receiving NAMS (see Section 4), and policy range in terms of education and migration (see Section 5).

Children in compulsory education are the focus of this study. In all six PCs, education is compulsory for all children between the ages of six and sixteen, although national variations exist within these broad parameters. It is for the most part free of charge, although private options exist in all jurisdictions. In all six, NAMS have largely the same rights to education as native children throughout compulsory primary and post-primary education (Eurydice, 2019).

It is not the aim of this paper to compare and contrast policies or education systems (ie their relative strengths and/or weaknesses). Nor do we trace their evolution. Our aim is to analyse the approaches as shaped by the national contexts, thus providing a cross-European snapshot in time of the sorts of migration issues facing different countries and national approaches to resolving these issues. Rather than an examination of outcomes, processes or practices, the focus is on current top level policy regarding NAMS in the field of education. Our study should therefore be considered an exploratory contribution to research on migration education policy and context.

The paper addresses the following questions: What top level educational support is available to NAMS in our six PCs and how is this shaped by the six different national contexts? While the study spans six European countries, the findings are likely to be of interest to other countries in their quest to receive NAMS successfully.

The structure of the paper is as follows:

- a) Firstly, it sets out the theoretical framework for education support of NAMS, and substantiates this with evidence from the literature;
- b) Next, it outlines the context with reference to demographics including recent incidence of migration in each of the six PCs;
- c) In the third section, the paper analyses educational provision for NAMS under the four thematic areas of linguistic support, academic support, parental involvement/outreach to parents, and intercultural education (European Commission 2013, European Commis-

sion (2013). These thematic areas are explained in more detail below;

- d) To conclude, we discuss our findings and highlight points of significance. In short, policy measures on education of NAMS in European countries tend to vary depending on context, yet at the same time exhibit some common threads such as an emphasis on host language learning.

## 2. Theoretical framework

### 2.1. Supporting NAMS in Europe

Researching educational support of children and young people from migrant backgrounds is not a simple endeavour (Eurydice, 2019). According to Jacobs et al. (2009), ‘most countries in Europe lack an official (legal) definition of people of foreign origin or of ethnic minorities’ (p.70). Each country counts its ‘nationals’ and ‘non-nationals’ (Jacobs et al., 2009, p.70), but this does not warrant comparison between countries because of their varying rules around acquiring nationality. For example, it is ‘much more likely for a person with a foreign background to have state citizenship in Belgium or The Netherlands than it is in Austria or Switzerland’ (p.70). However, NAMS are identified as a specific category in about half of the education systems in Europe. This is true for four of our six PCs ie Belgium, Norway, Malta and Romania (Eurydice, 2019, p.54). In the remaining two countries (Ireland and Portugal), net immigration is a relatively new phenomenon, with NAMS comprising the vast majority of children with migrant background attending school (McGinnity et al., 2018, Baganha, Marques & Góis, 2009). This point is developed further in Section 4 as part of the contextual analysis.

However, a key message from the *Study on educational support for newly arrived migrant children European Commission (2013)* (henceforth EC Study)<sup>3</sup>, is the importance of an integrated approach to NAMS’ inclusion: ‘policy makers should pay more attention to the overall structure of the education system and its effects on NAMS’ inclusion rather than the individual support measures targeted at NAMS’ (p. 5). A second key message is that identification of NAMS as a specific target group is not a prerequisite for having a good and comprehensive integration policy. Universal and loosely targeted education mechanisms aimed at supporting ‘all underachieving or immigrant students’ are often more beneficial for NAMS. The study concludes that ‘comprehensive educational support systems addressing all kinds of individual needs contribute to the development of more inclusive education systems for NAMS in the long-run than those focusing on the targeted measures for NAMS’ (p. 5).

### 2.2. The four thematic areas of educational support

The EC Study (2013) employs four thematic areas of support measures for newly arrived migrant children: linguistic support, academic support, parental involvement/outreach and cooperation, and intercultural education and friendly learning environment. A list of indicators elaborates each thematic area. It is beyond the scope of this study to address all indicators in all areas. Instead we focus on a sample of two indicators in each of the four thematic areas (Table 1). Although some of these measures may target NAMS specifically, most are available to all underachieving and immigrant students, and/or can help promote diversity in general (p. 34–36).

There is some overlap between the eight indicators and between thematic areas. For instance, proficiency in the language of the receiving country largely influences the migrant-native achievement gap (Kristen et al., 2011) and the academic and social integration of migrant children (Darmody and McCoy, 2011), Darmody & McCoy (2011). Nev-

<sup>1</sup> Since 1989, education in Belgium has been under the jurisdiction of the three language-based communities. These communities (French-, Flemish- and German-speaking) manage similar but completely independent education systems. In this paper, we focus on the French-speaking Federation Wallonia-Brussels (FWB).

<sup>2</sup> Note that one of our participating countries (Norway) is not a member of the European Union. All other 5 are members, albeit with varied lengths of membership.

<sup>3</sup> Throughout the paper, we use the terminology and language of this seminal study. For instance, the language of the sample indicators is exactly as used by the EC Study.

**Table 1**  
Thematic areas and related sample indicators.

Linguistic support	● Support for teaching of the language of instruction (integrated and separate models)
Academic support	● Training teachers to teach the host language as a second language ● Induction programmes ● Targeted support in the form of quotas, scholarships and grants to migrants and schools
Parental involvement/ outreach and cooperation	● Publications on the school system in the mother tongue of immigrants ● Providing adequate information through various communication channels
Intercultural education and friendly learning environment	● Teacher training for diversity ● Integrating cultural diversity in the curriculum

ertheless, the four areas with related indicators provide a useful framework for analysis. We use this framework to explore next what the literature says about the four thematic areas and related indicators.

### 2.2.1. Linguistic support

The literature recognizes that insufficient proficiency in the language of instruction is the primary reason for poor academic performance among non-native students or NAMS. It is essential for NAMS to be capable of following lessons in the language used at school (Christensen & Stanat, 2007; Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Martin & Suárez-Orozco, 2018; Navarro et al., 2016). Furthermore, when immigrant students have a complete or partial lack of the language of instruction, they are sometimes placed into remedial classes or in a special needs school (Rodríguez-Izquierdo, González Falcon & Permisán, 2019). Therefore, it is fundamental that schools provide sufficient support for children to learn and master the language of instruction, and teachers receive effective training to be able to teach the host language as a second language.

The EC Study (2013) identifies two strategies to engage migrant students in the learning of the language of the local community:

- 1 Language support separate from mainstream education system (separate model)
- 2 Language support offered within the mainstream education set-up (integrated model).

Each strategy has social implications. The first strategy positively boosts second language learning and helps children to communicate sooner with their peers, but it may potentially impact NAMS negatively by depriving them of the positive effects of passing time with their classmates in subject learning and socializing during breaks – in itself an important factor for language learning (Dávila & Bunar, 2020; Nilsson & Axelsson, 2013; Størksen, 2010; Fillmore, 1985). On the other hand, when language support is provided within mainstream education NAMS may form part of a culturally diverse class community that generates a stimulating learning environment Brunello & Paola (2014), but perhaps at the expense of speed of learning and individual learning needs.

Support for the learning of immigrants' mother tongue as a potential asset for learning the host language is another aspect of linguistic support. Many studies demonstrate the importance of maintaining the learning of the immigrant students' first language (Chireac, Serrat & Huguet, 2011; Navarro, Huguet & Sansó, 2016; Berasategi et al., 2019). The central idea is that knowledge of one's first language can be transferred and help develop corresponding skills in another language.

### 2.2.2. Academic support

Linguistic support is one of the most underlined academic supports in the literature. However, studies have shown that linguistic support is more effective when combined with other types of academic support in the sense of progressive and systematic programmes of instruction that first identify the appropriate level of schooling (Fertig, 2012; Bradshaw et al., 2012; Kitching, 2012; Martin, Fergus, & Noguera,

2010; Faas, Sokolowska & Darmody, 2015). Effective programmes provide continued transitional supports such as teacher assistants, individual teaching, homework help, tutoring, mentoring, summer programs or bilingual education (Christensen & Stanat, 2007; Martin & Suárez-Orozco, 2018). The combination of academic support during classes, after classes and even during the holiday period (e.g. extracurricular) tends to have a positive impact on students' academic and social development. A systematic, community supported, and well-resource strategy is key to programme success (cf. Martin, Fergus & Noguera, 2010).

### 2.2.3. Parental involvement/outreach and cooperation

The literature indicates that parental involvement is an important element in formal education; it is advantageous for all children (Epstein, 2018; Cox, 2005; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011) be they native or migrants (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Degree of involvement can vary among native as well as among migrant parents (Faas et al, 2015, p. 459). Meta-analyses (for example, Hill & Tyson, 2009) show that parental involvement has a positive effect on academic achievement. Other positive effects are greater regularity of school attendance and fewer dropouts, the development of better social skills and behaviour, better social and academic adaptation, a better feeling of well-being on the part of the pupil, an impact on self-regulatory skills and educational aspirations (Henderson & Mapp, 2002, Larivée, Ouédraogo & Fahrni, 2019).

Good relations between school and family also contribute to the development of a social network and uptake of available resources (Larivée & Larose, 2014), such as housing, transport and employment services. Families thus become more active in the community and develop a greater sense of belonging. Support to parents of migrant students becomes even more important where parents lack proficiency in the host language, because they are less likely to get actively involved in family-school connections (Eurydice, 2019). The EC Study (2013) advises that comprehensive programmes aiming at NAMS should strive to involve their parents (European Commission, 2013).

### 2.2.4. Intercultural education and friendly learning environment

The final area of support measures to promote the integration of all immigrant students (not just NAMS), is intercultural education. Intercultural Education, as developed and used in Europe since the 1980s, generally means to discover, respect and interact with all forms of cultural diversity (Gundara, 2000; Portera, 2011; Barrett, 2016; Eurydice, 2019). For Portera (2020), intercultural education constitutes a Copernican revolution in pedagogy. Firstly, it defines identity and culture as being dynamic, negotiated, and co-constructed. Cultures are not limited by national borders but emerge as a result of conflict and hybridisation when different people from different countries come into contact. Secondly, intercultural education perceives cultural diversity in a complex and multicultural society not only as a risk factor, but also as an opportunity for enrichment. The prefix "inter" means interaction, and exchange. Intercultural education is meant to promote dialogue and relationships on equal terms, based on a direct exchange of ideas, principles and behaviour and mutual discovery Portera (2020).

Intercultural education can be ‘an education principle, a cross-curricular theme or taught through specific curricular subjects’ (Eurydice, 2019, p.20). The literature demonstrates how to operationalize the concept of intercultural education in pedagogical practices and educational policies. It implies integrating cultural diversity in the curriculum, teacher training for diversity, improving classroom interaction between native and non-native students, and respect for cultures (Gundara 2000; Portera 2011; Cantle 2013; Catarci and Fiorucci 2016).

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Design

In order to answer our research questions, we chose a method that provides a rigorous and systematic approach: qualitative document analysis via content analysis. Krippendorff discusses content analysis in terms of three points of entry, “text-driven”, “problem-driven” and “method-driven”. We opted for “problem-driven” content analysis, motivated by our epistemic questions that the documents are able to answer. We started from research questions and proceeded ‘to find analytical paths from the choice of suitable texts to their answers’ (Krippendorff, 2004, p.350). Suitable texts in this instance included government policies and regulations/directives, official reports, and laws. Such documents inform main policy-making guidelines and their contents can clarify the main viewpoints and strategies of the PCs about educational support to NAMS. They can also shed light on current policy trends.

#### 3.2. Data collection and data analysis

In order to collect data we retrieved government documents by systematically searching official websites of the ministries of education and government bodies in charge of immigration policies (eg. Observatory for Migration the High Commission for Migration, Portugal). We collected current government documents on educational policies aimed at primary (basic) and secondary education in general and at immigrant students in particular. From the collected documents, we selected a body of 45 documents (see Appendix) that we considered relevant, i.e. “if there is evidence for or an assumption of stable correlations between that text and answers to the research question” (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 348).

To analyse the documents we chose a deductive approach of thematic content analysis, in which the themes and subthemes were the four thematic areas of support measures for NAMS and their sample indicators (European Commission, 2013) (see Table 1).

### 4. Six countries, six contexts

#### 4.1. Migration in the sample countries

Migration in Europe is a historical process, recently triggered by “the general and gradual enlargement of the migration system centred on the European Union (EU) countries” (Bonifazi, 2008, p.107). Since the 1960s, immigration has been on the rise especially in Western Europe, while until the early 90s, Eastern Europe was sealed under the Iron Curtain. In the last couple of decades, unprecedented changes occurred in the European migration landscape Kahanec & Zimmermann (2016). In this landscape, different European countries interact with migratory movements differently: some countries are destination countries targeted by migrants, while others, mainly those of former communist Eastern Europe, are origin countries (ie of net emigration).

As exponents of various migration patterns, our participating countries provide an interesting comparative frame. Belgium, Malta and Norway are mainly destination countries while Romania is primarily an origin country. Both Ireland and Portugal converted from net emigration in the early 2000s to countries of immigration in later years.

This is worthy of note: unlike in most other European countries where the number of second-generation immigrants is significant, many non-Irish nationals arrive in Ireland as adults ie. first generation immigrants (McGinnity et al. 2018). Substantial immigration to Ireland from outside the English-speaking world is still recent; the sharp and sustained growth dates from the late 1990s (OPMI, 2019, p.12). Likewise, the number of immigrants in Portugal remained relatively low until the turn of the millennium (Baganha, Marques & Góis, 2009, p.123-133).

#### 4.2. Demographic indicators in the participating countries

Population data over the period 2010–2019 provide a bird’s eye view of the demographic contexts of our six PCs (see Table 2).

The six countries have very different population sizes, from Malta with less than 500,000 inhabitants to Romania with almost 20 million (See Table 2). Migration plays a crucial role in shaping the level and dynamics of the national populations, contributing to population increase in four of the six PCs. Only Romania and Portugal show a population decrease between 2010 and 2019. Malta, as an island nation in the Mediterranean, shows a 41.7 increase per 1000 persons in 2019 (from 2.3 in 2010). Ireland also exhibits a high population increase over the period. It also has the highest Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (see Table 3), which may have influenced choice of destination country for migrants.

The number (stock) of immigrants living in the PCs differs significantly (Table 2). In absolute terms, Belgium, with its long history of immigration, attracts the highest number (1,399,192 in 2019). In Romania most NAMS are Romanian returnees (Anghel et al., 2016). It is the only country among our six PCs of net emigration (ie net migration rate of -1.2/1000 persons) for that year. At 40.4/1000 persons in 2019, Malta has by far the highest net migration rate. With its geographical position in the central Mediterranean, it is often a ‘first port of call’ for migrants, rather than a final destination. Migrant workers stay on average 3.5 years Borg (2019). The transient and hugely diverse nature of immigration to Malta is reflected in these statistics and in the relatively low percentages of migrants comprised of children (Fig. 1).

#### 4.3. Immigrant children and teenagers to the sample countries

The proportion of total immigrants comprised of children and teenagers (5–19 years old in the period 2014–2019) is quite stable across the PCs (Fig. 1), ranging between 11% in Portugal and 15% in Norway. Malta is the exception, with only 7% children and teenagers of total migrants, reflecting again its position as country of transition rather than final destination. Considering that these young individuals should be integrated into education in the host country, it is of interest to understand how national education policies and systems respond to this challenge.

#### 4.4. Economic profile of the participating countries

Migrants’ selection of destination country often depends on the economic profile of that country. This too differs throughout our six PCs: Ireland appears in 2018 as the country with the highest GDP per capita, which may be a factor as the country with the highest population increase (1.13/1000) and high net migration rate (6.3/1000) in 2019 (see Table 2). Romania, a former communist country, has the lowest GDP across the ten year period (see Table 3) and is the only PC to indicate net emigration in 2019. However, GDP can change over time. The data show that the GDP gap between Romania and for instance Portugal is closing. The recent (pre-COVID 19) economic boom in Malta, reflected in the increased GDP, was accompanied by a surge in net migration (40.4/1000). Portugal, Belgium and Norway show decreased GDP over the period 2010–2018/19, whereas the opposite is true for Ireland, Malta and Romania.

Our PCs show different inequality levels within societies, as reported by several core indicators which often reflect integration suc-

**Table 2**  
Population indicators in participant countries, 2010/2014-2019.

	Population on 1 January (persons)		Crude rate of total population change (per 1000 persons)		Crude rate of net migration plus statistical adjustment (per 1000 persons)		Total number of immigrants (stock)*	
	2010	2019	2010	2019	2010	2019	2014	2019
Belgium	10839905	11455519	10.2	8.2	7.9	7.6	1237065	1399192
Ireland	4549428	4904240	4.7	12.1	-5.6	6.3	527211	611668
Malta	414027	493559	2.3	41.7	0.2	40.4	29020	83267
Portugal	10573479	10276617	-0.1	1.9	0.4	4.3	401306	480270
Romania	20294683	19414458	-4.7	-5	-2.4	-1.2	73147	120783
Norway	4858199	5328212	12.7	7.4	8.6	4.8	480197	581424

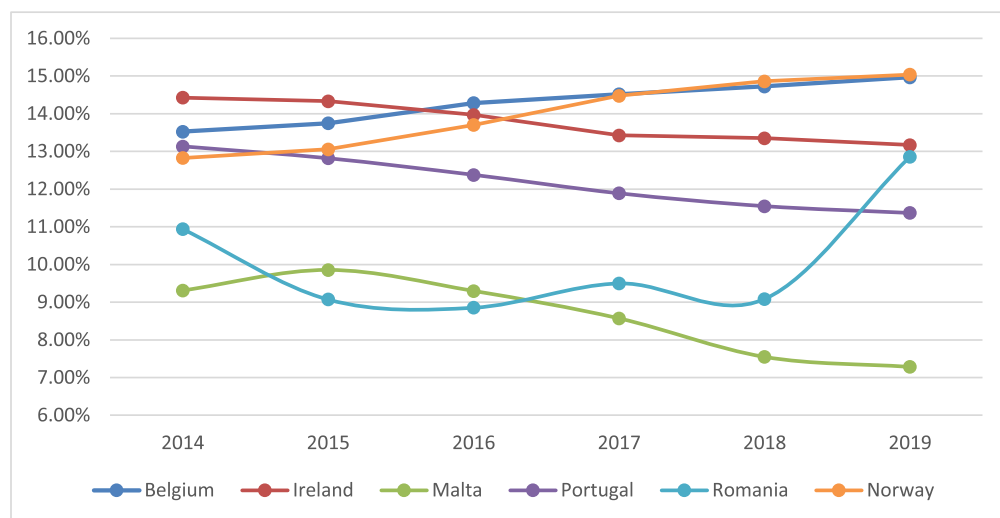
Source: Eurostat data portal, accessed on 2 December 2020.

Note: data on population with different citizenship than reporting country, counting for immigrant stock, are only available after 2014.

**Table 3**  
Economic and social indicators in the PCs, 2010-2018/2019.

	GDP/capita (EU_27=100)		Unemployment rate(%)		People at risk of poverty or social exclusion (%)		Young people NEET(%)		Early leavers from education and training (%)	
	2010	2018	2010	2019	2010	2018	2010	2019	2010	2019
Belgium	121	118	8.3	5.4	20.8	20	13	11.8	11.9	8.4
Ireland	132	191	14.6	5	27.3	21.1	21.7	11.4	11.9	5.1
Malta	85	99	6.9	3.4	21.2	19	12.2	7.5	23.8	16.7
Portugal	83	77	11	6.5	25.3	21.6	13.6	9.2	28.3	10.6
Romania	52	66	7	3.9	41.5	32.5	18.9	16.8	19.3	15.3
Norway	176	153	3.5	3.7	14.9	16.2	6.7	6.4	17.4	9.9

Source: Eurostat data portal, accessed on 8 November 2020.



**Fig. 1.** Proportion of immigrant children and teenagers (5-19 years old) in the period 2014-2019  
Source: Eurostat data portal, accessed on 2 December 2020.

cess (Council of the European Union, 2010), for instance *Unemployment rate* (describes the labour market integration), *People at risk of poverty or social exclusion*, and *Young people Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)* and *Early leavers from education and training*. The latter two are often used as indicators for integration into the education system (Council of the European Union, 2010) (see Table 3).

Comparing unemployment rates for 2010, Ireland and Portugal have the highest values, while Norway has the lowest. In 2019, the situation seems much improved, as the labour markets performs better in five of the six countries and unemployment level decreases. The social inclusion indicator places Romania and Norway at the extremes: in 2010 Romania had the highest share of people at poverty risk (41%), with 15% in Norway. These countries remain at the extremes in 2019, but with significant improvements, particularly in Romania which reported a reduced poverty risk of 32%. The remaining four countries have similar levels of about 20% of the population at poverty risk.

Early school leaving is a process with significant impacts at individual and country level (Brunello & Paola, 2014); it also reflects the effectiveness of different educational policies. Generally, students with a migrant background tend to leave school earlier than local students OECD (2016). In 2010 Portugal had a high percentage of early leavers from education and training (28.3%) but this percentage decreased to 10.6% in 2019. Another marked improvement is the NEET decrease in Ireland over the same period (-10.3%). These differences not only confirm differences at societal level, but also suggests differences in the performance of the education systems in the six countries and their effectiveness at integrating NAMS. These outlier improvements where Portugal and Ireland are concerned are analysed below.

**5. Findings**

Our findings reflect those of Eurydice (2019, p.22): most of the support measures across the six PCs are not specific to NAMS. They benefit all students with a migrant background or help promote diversity in

**Table 4**  
Top level policies in the participating countries - summary of findings

Thematic Areas	Top-level policies	Belgium	Ireland	Malta	Portugal	Romania	Norway
Language Support	Separate from mainstream education system	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Within mainstream education system	X	X	X	X		X
	Support provided to teachers (for teaching the language of instruction)	X	X	X	X		X
Academic Support	Mother tongue instruction						
	Induction programmes specific for NAMS	X		X		X	X
	Targeted support in the form of quotas, scholarships and grants to migrants and schools						
Parental involvement	General support strategies – not specific for NAMS	X	X	X	X	X	
	Providing adequate information through various communication channels		X			X	
	Publications on the school system in the mother tongue of immigrants						
Intercultural Education and Friendly Learning Environment	Training of teachers for diversity	X	X	X	X		X
	Integrating cultural diversity in the curriculum	X	X	X	X		X

general. This is in keeping with the European Commission advice to address ‘the overall structure of the education system and its effects on NAMS’ inclusion rather than the individual support measures targeted at NAMS’ (European Commission, 2013, p.5). We frame our findings using the four thematic areas with respective indicators, as described in Section 2. They are summarised in Table 4.

### 5.1. Linguistic support

Learning the host language is long recognised as a key factor in integrating migrants (cf Rodríguez-Izquierdo & Darmody, 2019). All five countries of net migration (with Romania as the exception) exhibit policies reflecting this concern. Language support is a primary target area in all five, although policies vary considerably among them. Our analysis identified both EC Study (2013) strategies to engage migrant students in the learning of the language of the local ie language support separate from mainstream education system, and/or language support integrated into mainstream education.

#### 5.1.1. Intensive teaching of the language of instruction

In general, policy in the participating countries primarily relates to learning the language of instruction within mainstream education. Ireland, Malta, Belgium, Portugal and Norway all provide additional language support to NAMS using this approach to allow them to take subject lesson along with their peers. However, some countries adopted both systems [Malta, (Ministry for Education and Employment, 2019, p.9) Belgium (Government of the French Community of Belgium (GFCB), 2019), Ireland (Taguma et al, 2009, p.44)]. In Portugal, for instance, language support is integrated into the curriculum: when native students are studying Portuguese in the classroom, immigrant students take a dedicated programme, ‘Portuguese as a Non-native Language’, at the same time in another room (Directorate-General for Innovation and Curricular Development (DGIDC), 2005; Ministry of Education, 2018a, 2018b). Malta adopts a similar strategy (Ministry for Education and Employment, 2019, p.10). In Belgium, the strategy depends on the number of NAMS in the school. Where there are enough (at least eight), NAMS are grouped together with their peers in a ‘bridge class’

(Dispositif d’Accueil et de Scolarisation des élèves Primo-Arrivants et Assimilés -DASPA). Here they benefit from special teaching of French as a learning language for a limited time period (from 1 week to 1 year), before joining a class corresponding to their level. In all the other schools, NAMS are directly integrated into a class corresponding to their school level, with special language support (Français langue d’apprentissage - FLA) (GFCB, 2019). In Norway, the education act allows for slightly different systems in different municipalities, from special introductory schools, to introductory classes, to special second language learning lessons parallel to ordinary classes (Ministry of Education and Research 1998, § 2-8; Official Norwegian Reports (NOU) 2010:7).

Support to teachers is recognised as a means to support intensive teaching of the language of instruction [Malta (Ministry for Education and Employment, 2019, p.12), Portugal (DGE, 2021), Ireland (Eurydice, 2019), Belgium (GFCB, 2019), Norway (The National Centre of Multicultural Education (NAFO), 2021)]. This is generally provided through training, either as continuous professional development (CPD) or through the provision of teaching resources and other materials. In Ireland, for example, teachers receive language assessment kits to identify the initial language proficiency of students and to plan for the appropriate supports. “Follow-on tests” monitor progress, identify strengths and weaknesses, and highlight areas where language support must focus (Taguma et al, 2009, p.40). In Norway, the responsibility for second language learning is decentralized: access to continuing education and training and extra economic resources for teachers, varies considerably between municipalities and regions (Båtevik et al., 2017; 2019; Vedøy et al., 2017). This is also the case in Belgium, where staff from DASPA schools report a feeling of helplessness in dealing with their situation; they report a lack of financial and human support, proper training, or a systematic approach to the inclusion of migrant populations (Unia, 2018; André, Jacobs & Alarcon-Henriquez, 2018).

In Romania, protected minors have legal access to language courses (Romanian Parliament 2006, Government Emergency Order (OUG) 194/2002; OUG 44/2004). However, with few non-Romanian speaking NAMS, very little support for teaching and learning the language of instruction exists in Romanian schools. At the same time, as the only country to provide free education at all levels in a foreign language,

Romania is an outlier among our PCs. The official language of the education system is Romanian, but because of its history of Hungarian and German ethnic minorities (6% and 1% respectively) (National Institute for Statistics (NIS), 2011), education is freely provided to both Hungarian and German ethnic minorities in their mother tongue. This is legally protected in the public system all levels from primary through tertiary education (Romanian Parliament, 2011).

### 5.1.2. Mother tongue instruction

Among our PCs, we found little top level policy regarding mother tongue instruction for NAMS. Generally, migrant students are not supported in the learning of their native language within mainstream education, although some countries acknowledge the importance of this support. In Ireland, for example, schools are encouraged to ‘use every opportunity to respect the children’s native languages and encourage continued development of these languages, where possible’ (NCCA, 2005, p. 165). Whereas Ireland’s Intercultural Education Strategy acknowledges the importance of this support, ‘given the diversity of cultures now present in Ireland, it is not possible to commit to teaching all mother tongues in mainstream education provision’ (Department of Education and Skills & The Office of the Minister for Integration, 2010, p. 47).

In Norway, all pupils with a ‘mother tongue other than Norwegian or Sami have the right to adapted education in Norwegian until they are sufficiently proficient in Norwegian to follow the normal instruction of the school. If necessary, such pupils are also entitled to mother tongue instruction, bilingual subject teaching, or both’ (Ministry of Education and Research, 1998, § 2-8). At face value this may imply that children are taught in their native language. However, it is interpreted as a directive to assist the child to acquire the language of instruction so they can eventually follow learning in the language of instruction on equal terms as their class mates (Båtevik et al., 2017).

## 5.2. Academic support

Students with a migrant background tend to have a lower academic performance and leave school earlier than local students (OECD, 2016). This highlights the importance of the academic support offered to NAMS which varies from specific induction courses to general support strategies offered to all disadvantaged students.

### 5.2.1. Induction programmes

Initial academic support offered to NAMS in the six PCs is largely through induction courses, which may be organised through a centralised system (cf. Malta, Migrant Learners Unit, 2020) or according to region/municipality (cf. Norway, NOU 2010:7). As with language support, this induction may take place as part of or separate from mainstream education. For instance, Belgium provides induction courses only for those students in the DASPA scheme (GFCB, 2019). Neither Ireland nor Portugal recognise NAMS as a specific target group. Their ‘comprehensive support system[s] [are] intended to respond to the individual needs of all students. . . in their criteria for student support they also consider students’ additional support needs arising from their migration background – for example, social and emotional support’ (Eurydice, 2019, p.89). Due to the small number of NAMS in Romania, induction programmes are sparsely included in top level policies (Romanian Parliament, 2006).

### 5.2.2. Targeted support in the form of quotas, scholarships and grants to migrants and schools

By and large, NAMS feed into already existing academic support structures for all disadvantaged students rather than receiving targeted support in the form of quotas, scholarships and grants. Ireland, Malta and Portugal do not apply school quotas. For instance, all Irish schools

offer support for at-risk students, including pastoral care and class tutor systems, with Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) allowing for targeted educational disadvantage additional support measures (Faas et al, 2015, p.462). A government grant (School Books Funding) is available to primary and post-primary schools to help with the cost of textbooks. Most schools use the fund to operate a book rental scheme for a nominal fee (Citizens Information Board, 2020). In Malta all text books are provided for free to all students. Likewise, psychosocial services are offered to all students who may require such support. Students with disadvantaged economic backgrounds are provided school lunches, uniforms and other material support through a centralised scheme (Migrants Learners Unit, 2020).

In Portugal, all students with low socioeconomic status, including NAMS, benefit from School Social Action (Ministry of Education and Science, 2015) – a measure intended to contribute to the students’ school expenses such as purchase of books and school supplies, meals and transport. The Educational Territories Program for Priority Intervention also allocates teachers and resources. This is a program of compensatory policies for schools with high numbers of foreign students and low school results who are in territories with high unemployment rates and low schooling rates (Ministry of Education and Science, 2012).

Belgium employs an educational priority policy aimed at schools enrolling the most socio-economically disadvantaged pupils (GFCB, 2009), but it does not target variables referring to nationality, language spoken at home or immigrant background (Friant et al., 2012; GFCB, 2017). It is worth remembering that the philosophical position of French-speaking Belgium is to avoid as much as possible any ethnic or immigration categorization of the pupils. However, given the overlapping of these variables and the high rates of segregation, NAMS tend to enroll in schools benefitting from this policy (Unia, 2018; André, Jacobs, & Alarcon-Henriquez, 2018).

Targeted measures for systematically supporting NAMS do not occur in the Romanian education system, nor does the Ministry of Education collect or monitor statistical data on NAMS. Supports to target education gaps in Romania are limited and tend to emanate from associations such as Terre des Hommes through specific projects, rather than through top level policy.

### 5.3. Parental involvement/outreach and cooperation

Strengthening cooperation with parents is considered critical to improving the school experience of disadvantaged groups, including minority groups such as NAMS (Driessen, Smit & Slegers, 2005). However, all participating countries lack policy driven programmes to address the needs of parents of NAMS, either to help them support their children’s learning or their children’s inclusion (and their own) into the school community. Whereas parents of NAMS, like all parents, are encouraged to become representatives on school councils and/or involved in parents’ associations [Malta (Subsidiary Legislation 2020), Romania (Romanian Parliament, 2011), Norway, (Ministry of Education and Research, 1998, §11-4/5), Ireland (Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration (OPMI), 2019, p.43), Portugal (Assembly of the Republic, 1986; Ministry of Education, 1990)], engagement seems largely to depend on the awareness, initiative and resources of the local school administrations, leaders and class teachers, rather than top level policies. Although encouraging active partnership, engagement and effective communication between education providers and parents is listed as a key component of Ireland’s Intercultural Education Strategy (Department of Education and Skills (DES) & Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration (OPMI), 2010, p.6), policy measure to achieve this are unclear.

Overall, opportunities for parental involvement are limited to those for parents of native students, reflecting the unchanged nature of top level policies in this area since the EC Study highlighted the gap (2013, p. 70).

### 5.3.1. Providing adequate information through various communication channels

Providing information to immigrant parents is one of the most common actions taken by education systems, as a lack of knowledge of the education system can hinder their children's school career. In Ireland, for example, information dissemination in the most common immigrants' languages is well developed (European Commission, 2013).

The general approach to providing information to parents of NAMS is through channels available to all parents such as school internet homepages, e-mail communication between school administration/class teacher and the parents, and information letters and individual reports sent home.

### 5.3.2. Publications on the school system in the mother tongue of immigrants

There was little evidence for policy regarding this indicator. Communication of this nature with parents of NAMS appears limited and localised, rather than reflected in top level policies.

## 5.4. Intercultural education and friendly learning environment

Whereas all five PCs of net immigration show evidence of policy in this area, official guidelines on intercultural education 'are not easily implemented, or integrated into curriculum and pedagogy' (Taguma et al., 2009, p.45). Whereas practice is not the focus of this paper, we return to this theme in our concluding section.

### 5.4.1. Training of teachers for diversity

Training for teachers of migrant children has been introduced in most participating countries, albeit recently. It is generally offered as part of a broader framework to enhance integration of the migrant communities. In the context of small numbers of immigrants, Romania is an outlier in this regard, with little top level policy in this area.

With the exception of Ireland and Norway, training is mainly limited to CPD courses for teachers. A mix of tertiary education institutions, entities within the education structure, and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) are providers of CPD in this area. For instance, Malta has recently extended training for cultural mediation (University of Malta, 2020). Portugal supports schools through training workshops for teachers and technicians and by acknowledging and disseminating good practices through an award: the Intercultural School Seal (High Commission for Migration (HCM), 2015; HCM, Directorate-General for Education (DGE) & Aga Khan Portugal Foundation (AKF), 2020; DGE, 2021).

Among our six PCs, only in Ireland are issues related to intercultural education included in teacher competence frameworks for initial teacher education (ITE) (Eurydice, 2019, p.21). For instance, the government funded Development and Intercultural Education (DICE) project focuses on the development of intercultural education within ITE (DICE, 2020). This project is currently partnering with the main providers of initial primary teacher education in Ireland. Ireland also provides training to migrant teachers to attract them into teaching positions, for example through the Migrant Teacher Bridging Programme (Marino Institute of Education, 2020).

In Norway since 2016, the national curriculum for primary and secondary teaching programmes require a 15 European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) module in multicultural and multi-religious competence (Ministry of Education and Research, 2016).

### 5.4.2. Integrating cultural diversity in the curriculum

Intercultural education in Romania is largely directed towards the Roma Community. Romania provides a clear strategy for integration of vulnerable minorities such as Roma Rus (2012). In 2012, Rus noted that this approach did not yet emphasize interculturality. On the other hand, intercultural outreach in Ireland, Portugal, Norway, Belgium and Malta is quite structured in top-level education policies, although it looks different in different contexts.

Since 2005, in Ireland, the approach has been one of celebrating and cultivating a positive approach towards diversity. As an overall philosophy, teachers are encouraged to 'demonstrate a positive attitude towards language and linguistic diversity and to communicate this to the other children in their class' (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), 2005, p. 167). However, the reality can be somewhat different with one report finding that 'without financial support for extracurricular activities to help newcomers with their integration, Irish schools are largely left to their own devices' (Faas et al., 2015, p. 462). In the Irish model, intercultural education is 'well integrated into the curricula' (European Commission, 2013, p. 8). Ireland's Migration Integration Strategy (Department of Justice and Equality, 2017), attempts to consolidate this by adopting a broad intercultural strategy to support integration. An evaluation of Action 36 of this Strategy relating to the 'fostering and development of positive attitudes towards diversity and celebrating difference as part of the school curriculum' found it to be 'on track' (OPMI, 2019, p. 45). Policies in Portugal include the design of an intercultural education framework as an area of Citizenship Education and the creation of a network of Schools for Intercultural Education; only approved schools with good practices can enter the network (DGE, 2017; HCM, 2015; HCM, DGE & AKF, 2020; Presidency of the Council of Ministers and Education, 2016). In both Ireland and Portugal, funding is allowed for development of curricula, resources and materials.

Norway's national curriculum of 1997 strongly emphasises awareness and valuing of cultural and religious diversity. This is even more pronounced in the new national curriculum effective in schools from the school year 2020/2021, with intercultural awareness a core aspect of citizenship development even more emphasised (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019, § 1-2, p. 7). Belgium's Openness to Languages and Cultures programme (OLC) which provides the framework for implementing intercultural education is much less systematic. It allows volunteer schools to host one or more teachers from 11 participating countries, with the aim of encouraging children to learn the language and culture of those countries, and of helping all pupils to be more receptive to other cultures (French Community of Belgium, 2007; 2020) In Malta, an underlying principle of the National Curriculum Framework is 'Diversity' (Ministry For Education and Employment, 2012). Inclusive of socio-cultural diversity, this principle is expected to be reflected in all subject teaching since it is also one of the cross-curricular themes within the national curriculum.

## 6. Discussion (of main findings)

Our study found that policy measures in Europe tend to vary depending on countries' immigration and broader historical, demographic and economic contexts, yet at the same time exhibit some common threads. This finding forms the main part of our discussion. We go on to discuss a further point: the challenge and promise of intercultural education.

### 6.1. Common threads and contextual variations

Language support is the biggest challenge and concern across our PCs, with language of instruction still the top level policy priority. This appears to be at the expense of other areas such as outreach to parents. Whereas Ireland is the exception with information produced in some mother tongues, generally, outreach to parents of NAMS is limited to those for parents of native students. Top level policies in this area appear unchanged since the EC Study of 2013 highlighted the gap (p. 70).

Intensive support for the language of instruction was universal, with the exception of Romania. However here, as in other areas, context was a key factor. Romania has very small numbers of NAMS; a tiny proportion compared to popular destination countries such as Belgium. Of these, most are returnees, for whom Romanian is the mother tongue. However, because of its long tradition of providing access to education to its Hungarian and German national minorities, Romania is the only PC to provide education through the public system in the mother



tongue of minority communities. The quasi-absence of top-level policies on NAMS' education support reflects the fact that NAMS are simply not (yet) a phenomenon in the Romanian context.

At the other end of the spectrum, Norway with its low unemployment rate, steady GDP, low population density and low incidence of contra-indicators such as early school leavers has long been a popular destination choice for migrants. Norway has tried to deal with this issue by giving students the right to get instruction in all subjects in a language they can understand. However, this does not yet mean that subjects are taught in their mother tongue nor that mother tongue instruction is provided. It only reasserts for the moment the importance of mastering the language of instruction.

Our study found that changes in immigrant flows can be a determinant for specific policies on education and migration. As millennial newcomers to immigration, Ireland and Portugal were able to devise policies from scratch, learning from the experience of others. For instance, with new migration from non-Portuguese speaking countries, Portugal adopted a strategic blend of both the integrated and separate models regarding the teaching of the Portuguese as a non-native language. Alone among our PCs, Portugal provides targeted academic support to NAMS by means of the Educational Territories Program for Priority Intervention. However, the advisability of this approach may not be supported by the literature, with the EC Study (2013) counselling that 'universal and loosely targeted education mechanisms aimed at supporting all underachieving students or immigrant students are often more inclusive and beneficial for NAMS in particular' (p.5).

Top level policies are also well developed in Ireland, where new waves of migration and demographic changes in a time of high economic growth shaped an integration model. This model demonstrates strong aspects of outreach and cooperation, with intercultural education well integrated into the curricula (European Commission (2013)). Ireland continues to advance top level policies in this regard, with for instance, a bridging programme to attract migrant teachers into the education system, and intercultural education now incorporated into initial teacher training. Norway has also taken this direction in its most recent policies. The fact that these two countries have the highest GDP per capita of our participating countries (see Table 3) is maybe not a coincidence: such policies have a cost. These elements are present to a much lesser extent in Malta – a country with lower GDP and higher proportion of immigrants: at 4.04%, Malta had by far the highest net migration rate in 2019, at least five times higher than any other PC.

On the other hand, a long and consistent history of immigration can also determine policy. Both Belgium and Norway have a 40–50 year long history of gradually adapting their educational systems to an increasingly diverse socio-culturally reality. In these contexts, national policies change not only according to urgent needs, but also to the experience of more or less successful ways of dealing with diversity (cf. NOU, 2015; NOU, 2010, NOU,1995).

## 6.2. Cultural diversity and intercultural education

A final point for discussion is the area of intercultural education, which perceives cultural diversity in a complex and multicultural society both as a risk factor and an opportunity for enrichment (Portera (2020)). Both elements are clear when we consider for instance the situation in Malta, where in a tiny island nation with a GDP of 99 (2018), the rate of immigration has increased exponentially over a 10 year period (see Table 2), resulting in a population density of 1380 (persons/km<sup>2</sup>). When we compare this to Norway with a population density of 15 and GDP of 153 (2018), the risk factor is evident. On the other hand, what the EC Study (2013) labels *intercultural education and a friendly learning environment* promotes cultural diversity as an opportunity for enrichment: an inclusive education policy that benefits newcomers and minorities will also benefit the whole learning community. A culturally diverse environment with pedagogical practices that normalise and value diversity will enrich learning for all; it is a necessary condition for new generations to

learn to live together in a plural society (European Commission, 2013, p.30-33).

## 7. Conclusion

The results of this exploratory study contribute to the literature in the fields of migrants' integration and education policies. The novelty of the study relies not only on using a sample of six different countries to provide an updated comparative approach to NAMS education policies, but also on the dimensions of the educational policies that are surveyed. Alongside more visible dimensions such as linguistic support and increasing efforts towards intercultural education, the paper provides new insights into the under-researched area of involvement of parents of NAMS in their children's education.

The broad overview of the six PCs indicates that the context of each of these countries influences NAMS education policy. Romania is a clear example in this regard. Our only country of net emigration, Romania presents the highest proportion of people at risk of poverty and social exclusion, highest proportion of young people leaving school early, lowest GDP and highest unemployment. As Romania continues to make economic strides, it will be interesting to see if, like Portugal and Ireland in the late 1990s, it moves to a country of net immigration, and what that will mean for support policies.

However, notwithstanding the diversity in context, top level policies reflect an element of homogeneity. The EC Study (2013) recommendation of comprehensive support systems addressing all kinds of individual needs rather than measures specifically targeting NAMS is reflected in our findings on academic support. The majority of these supports, where they exist, are available to all children (Eurydice, 2019, p.22). However, it is difficult to ascertain whether this is by design or default. Are policies deliberately reflective of EC advice, or is it simply that NAMS avail of the existing resources in the absence of an alternative? This is worthy of further investigation.

Although measures may vary, it is evident that all five PCs of net immigration give great attention to linguistic support, particularly for the language of instruction. At the same time, outreach to parents of NAMS remains underdeveloped across the board. Homogeneous features among such diverse countries raise the question whether their approaches to address NAMS are determined by common objectives set by international reports/position documents such as the EC Study (2013). Allowances for context or examination of the role context plays are rarely features of such reports. Countries with very different histories, incidences of migration and economic resources need some flexibility around policy development. The advantages and disadvantages of a trend towards a homogenisation of policy through the increasing Europeanisation of the migration issue should be tested in further research.

A final point to consider is the aspirational aspect of policies; whereas the intention towards integration of NAMS is evident, the concrete operationalisation may appear quite different. This too is a subject for further research and the next step in this study. An examination of what practices schools adopt, and whether such practices reflect top-level policy is the focus for the next research stage.

## Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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## Supplementary materials

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## Appendix

Country	Top level policy documents
Belgium	<p>French Community of Belgium (2007). Circular no 1841 dated 18 April 2007 pertaining to the language and culture of origin. Retrieved from <a href="https://www.galilex.cfwb.be/document/pdf/31882_000.pdf">https://www.galilex.cfwb.be/document/pdf/31882_000.pdf</a></p> <p>French Community of Belgium (2020). Circular no 7522 dated 26 March 2020 pertaining to the openness to languages and cultures. Retrieved from <a href="https://www.galilex.cfwb.be/document/pdf/31882_000.pdf">https://www.galilex.cfwb.be/document/pdf/31882_000.pdf</a></p> <p>Government of the French Community of Belgium (2009). Decree organising a differentiated framework within the schools of the French Community in order to ensure that each pupil has equal opportunities for social emancipation in a quality educational environment. Retrieved from <a href="https://www.galilex.cfwb.be/document/pdf/34295_024.pdf">https://www.galilex.cfwb.be/document/pdf/34295_024.pdf</a></p> <p>Government of the French Community of Belgium (2017). Decree of the Government of the French Community establishing the choice of variables and the formula for calculating the socio-economic index of each statistical sector of each school and each establishment in application of article 3 of the decree of 30 April 2009 organising a differentiated framework within the schools of the French Community in order to ensure that each pupil has equal opportunities for social emancipation in a quality educational environment. Retrieved from <a href="https://www.galilex.cfwb.be/document/pdf/44433_002.pdf">https://www.galilex.cfwb.be/document/pdf/44433_002.pdf</a></p> <p>Government of the French Community of Belgium (2019). Decree on the reception, schooling and support of pupils who do not master the language of instruction in education organised or subsidised by the French Community. Retrieved from <a href="https://www.galilex.cfwb.be/document/pdf/46275_003.pdf">https://www.galilex.cfwb.be/document/pdf/46275_003.pdf</a></p> <p>Unia (2018). Baromètre de la diversité: Enseignement. Retrieved from <a href="https://www.unia.be/files/Documenten/Publicaties_docs/1210_UNIA_Barometer_2017_-_FR_AS.pdf">https://www.unia.be/files/Documenten/Publicaties_docs/1210_UNIA_Barometer_2017_-_FR_AS.pdf</a></p>
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