



Networking the Educational World: Across Boundaries for Community-building

Deliverable 1.2

Report on ethical, legislative, political and social context of the partners' countries

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Introduction

NEW ABC is working to deliver 9 pilot actions to enhance the inclusion of immigrant children and young people in education. These pilot actions were co-designed and will be co-implemented by all stakeholders, including children. By relying on the whole-child, Participatory Action Research and bottom-up approaches, will enable and empower children and young people to become true actors of change, and will attain an effective and sustainable process of co-participated creation and implementation of new good practices for their inclusion through formal, non-formal and informal learning.

Therefore, this report responds to Task 1.2. that will lead to Deliverable 1.2. - Report on Legislative, Political, Social and Technological Context of partners' countries. This report assesses any changes to the contexts that may have intervened during the project proposal submission and the beginning of the project. In fact, the truth is that since the submission of the project, in March 2020, until the beginning of the project in January 2021, Europe, and by





extension, the European countries involved in this project, have been dealing with a pandemic due to Covid-19 that undoubtedly had an impact on NEW ABC partner countries' political, legislative, social and technological environment, that may hinder the normal development of the project.

This report is inspired by the PESTLE Analysis (Marmol, 2015) procedure, aiming at evaluating the environment that will surround the pilots, by describing changes occurring in (in this report) Legislative, Political, Social and Technological dimensions, as well as opportunities and risks associated with these changes regarding pilots' implementation. This analysis may be of use for identifying an effective strategy.

Concretely, the analysis will comprise an appraisal of newly passed national and regional immigration and integration legislation and policies, as well as changed educational policies that may affect the implementation of the planned course of the project. Finally, this report will also propose solutions to overcome any difficulties that may have arisen with changes in the partners' countries context.

Legislative Context

Legislative changes that may affect the implementation of the project

Legislative context pertains to any change in laws or regulations that might have been introduced and may affect the development of the project, namely legislative regulations or laws, in this case regarding (im)migration/children's rights or protection/education. When asked whether such a change had occurred partners from the United Kingdom and Poland responded affirmatively.

In the case of the United Kingdom, the changes that have occurred are mainly related to Brexit. Due to the abandonment of the European Union, the United Kingdom has incorporated the provisions of the EU GDPR into the UK domestic law. On the other hand, Brexit is also influencing settlement rights for children migrating both from outside and within the EU. This has implications because both EU and non-EU children may be experiencing unsettled status rights in the UK.





In order to mitigate the impact of these legislative changes, the UK states that it is committed to maintaining the high standards of the GDPR and the government has incorporated it into UK law (the UK GDPR) alongside the Data Protection Act 2018. Thus, in practical terms, the UK is in line with EU law. Moreover, partners from the UK will continue to follow Universities' Ethics and Data Management approval procedures to ensure compliance. Regarding settlement rights for children, the UK team will remain cognisant of the potential immigration precarity experienced by any of the young people taking part in the 'Empowering Young Translators' pilot action. They will provide the links to support services, such as Coram Children's Legal Centre, if needed.

Regarding Poland, the legislative changes that were identified pertain to the closure of schools, because this can have an impact on the development of the pilot action. But, as the Polish partner pointed out, since most teachers were vaccinated between February and March 2021 it is foreseen that schools will operate normally from September 2021. It is however important for the planning of the Pilot action to consider if present and further lockdowns may interrupt some of the events. In order to overcome such difficulties, the situation will be monitored on an ongoing basis to adapt the action planned to the situation.

The other partners did not report any legislative changes that may affect the implementation of their pilot actions.

Legislative changes that may foster the implementation of the project

With regard to legislative changes that may promote the implementation of the project, only the University of Porto, from Portugal, Interkulturalni from Poland, and Synthesis, from Cyprus, stated changes on this level.

Namely, the Portuguese team reported that the Portuguese government legalized all migrants who were waiting to have their status situation approved, in order to give them all access to the national health system. This measure is also applied to asylum seekers. Therefore, these people have the same rights as national citizens and free treatment at national hospitals.





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This measure might promote the test and retest of the pilot actions because it will allow to include migrants that otherwise would not be included, and therefore, further people will benefit from the intervention.

Interkulturalni, on the other hand, stated that since April 2020 the Polish government introduced a law that allowed automatic prolongation of residence permits, visas and other types of stays. It also froze all deportation orders until 30 days after the pandemic state or pandemic threat is revoked. In November 2020 all Belarussians were allowed to go to Poland using simplified border and migration procedures which resulted in the rise of the domestic population of this minority. Since June 2020 the “Polish Charter” establishes that Polish ancestry is accessible to anyone who can document their Polish roots or heritage. Previously only people residing in former USSR states were covered. This allows more foreigners to come and settle in Poland and this increase is visible in the Krakow region where the Pilot is going to be carried out. This is an important factor as the pilot action focuses on regional history and heritage and building transformed identity around it. Having Polish ancestry might bring important positive input to the planned action.

Synthesis offered some input regarding refugees, a target subgroup of the NEW ABC project. During the third quarter of 2020, 885 first instance decisions were made by the national authorities of Cyprus. Among them, 705 were positive (out of which 665 were granted subsidiary protection and not full refugee status to the applicants) and only 175 were rejected. This measure might promote the test and retest of the pilot actions because those (mostly Syrian) refugees who were granted subsidiary protection have better access to healthcare and education services. This will allow the involvement of a greater number of people (and children) in the piloting.

Political Context

Political changes that may affect the implementation of the project





All partners reported political context changes that may affect the implementation of the project and offered solutions to overcome them. The main change reported refers to the unpredictability and uncertainty that the pandemic has brought to our lives. Even though WP4 – and work for the co-creation and implementation of the pilot actions will only start in September 2021 and there is hope that the situation will be better by then, the future is still unstable.

Since the submission of the project up to March 2021 most of the countries have faced at least two lockdowns, with school closures and distance learning measures introduced. However, this situation has had a different impact on different communities and it creates inequalities namely because different tools and needs arise with distance learning, and Covid-19 has had a greater impact on some communities with migrant backgrounds (Griffin, 2020; PHE, 2020).

Despite these difficulties, partners have mentioned alternative ways to deal and cope with the situation, namely by adapting the pilot actions to online environments. This is not the desired course of action and the activities remain in place as planned. If by September 2021 the situation impedes the commencement of WP4, some partners will adapt the pilot actions to online activities. This will imply the reduction of activities and the number of children and young people involved. However, if the situation allows for in-person implementation but with Covid-19 restrictions, partners are willing to adopt the recommended health and safety measures, like social distancing, masks and meetings with a reduced number of people. Those partners who cannot adapt to online environment, will carry out all necessary backstage work and wait until the lifting of lockdown measures to start in-person implementation.

Besides the pandemic, partners from Italy and Poland have mentioned political instability due to governments. In Italy the political government was replaced by a technical one. Therefore, it is not known how long it will remain in power and since it is a very recent change, it is not possible to foresee if the anti-Pandemic measures will have the desired effect in the short- or medium term. On the other hand, in Poland, given the fact that the government is turning more and more to the right, there might be some resistance to conducting activities referring to multiculturalism.





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Political changes that may foster the implementation of the project

All partners responded that their countries are facing political changes that may instead promote the implementation of the project. The vaccination campaign is viewed as the main hope for bettering the situation and allowing the planned intervention. Even if Europe is still in an early-stage of vaccinations, the United Kingdom plans to have all adult population vaccinated by July 2021 and the rest of Europe by September 2021. If these plans go ahead it will mean that the start of WP4, in September 2021, will most likely occur in-person. Additionally, countries are promoting mass-testing in schools and giving priority to teachers to be vaccinated. This is a sign that in-person learning is a required measure in partners' countries, which implies that governments want to keep schools open.

Social Context

Social changes that may affect the implementation of the project

The social dimension reflects changes occurring in society on cultural and demographic characteristics, social norms, interpersonal trust, social cohesion and proximity, lifestyle and social wellbeing.

The Covid-19 pandemic has brought many social changes and posed many challenges at the social level. All partners have mentioned that working from home and the balance between this and family has eroded. With school closures parents have to combine work at home with their children's homeschooling. This might be particularly difficult for women, who traditionally take on the work home burden, but also for children for whom the division of home and school times and practices may become more blurred.

Social distancing, restrictions to social contact and travelling also have an impact on the well-being and mental health of both adults and children. Moreover, unemployment and the reduction of income also has impacted a wide portion of the European population.

These changes have had a greater impact on the migrant population, as they seem to be more affected, since they are generally financially vulnerable and less integrated. This means





that given their lower socioeconomic status it is harder to support their children and young people with homeschooling and to provide the needed resources for digital learning.

It was also mentioned that several stakeholders have lost track of many unaccompanied minors and young adults since the pandemic started and the difficulties in obtaining legal documentation is a reality in some countries.

Despite the many social changes that may have a direct and indirect impact on the implementation of the project, partners have put forward ways to overcome or to adapt to them. Research teams will be attentive to situations of poverty, hunger and emotional distress among migrant children and young people. If any of these issues arise, research teams will forward these situations to social services and local authorities.

With regard to the participants' well-being, pilot actions, even if in an indirect way, will aim to better their emotional well-being, through the promotion of activities that aim to foster inclusion by means of care and compassion practices, one of the tenets of the theoretical and methodological approaches of NEW ABC.

The digital divide has been addressed by some schools that will be involved in the pilot actions and the establishment of contacts with stakeholders to resume contact with unaccompanied minors and young people has been made. All these measures try to tackle the social changes that affect the due implementation of the project.

Social changes that may foster the implementation of the project

Only two partners responded affirmatively when asked if any social change has occurred in a way that promotes the implementation of the project.

Interkulturalni, from Poland, reported that an intercultural centre was established in Krakow and it will provide a space for multicultural activities, as well as increase the visibility of foreigners in a positive way. Moreover, foreign students receive social assistance and this is in line with IPL's pilot activities that aim to build bridges between cultural assistants, teachers and the local community.





As for Synthesis, Cyprus, they report a greater willingness on behalf of different stakeholders to promote and to foster migrant inclusion. They hope this will further engage the community with the piloting.

Technological Context

Positive or negative technological changes that may affect the implementation of project

Technological dimension in PESTLE Analysis (Marmol, 2015) (directed to industry/companies) is usually linked to innovation, automation and effectiveness. Regarding our purposes, technology also assumes an important meaning but in a different way. The pandemic and consequent lockdowns in partner countries brought to the fore the need to implement distant learning and establish and consolidate social interactions with technological resources.

All partners reported that, due to the pandemic, technological changes have been introduced in their countries. While positive changes are reported, such as the possibility for new learning, the engagement with different virtual communication systems and platforms, the contribution to digital literacy, the offer of valuable resources, and the investment by governments in technological incentives and in creating effective tools and patterns of distant learning, partners have expressed concern for lack of resources, such as computers and wide internet access for all children and young people equally, especially for social vulnerable groups.

In order to overcome technological difficulties, partners mentioned that they will be attentive to children and young people's needs, and if necessary they will report and engage local authorities and governments to supply children and young people with the needed resources.

Conclusion and recommendations





It is clear that the Covid-19 pandemic has introduced many changes and challenges to the normal lives of all people across the globe. However, as “resilience” seems to be a word put in the limelight since the beginning of lockdowns, partners involved in the project have also planned alternative ways to respond to these changes if necessary when the intervention begins. Thus, if the situation regarding the pandemic gets better by September 2021 because of the predicted effectiveness of vaccination, all partners will be able to implement their pilot actions as previously planned. However, if the situation should not improve, it is important to note that planned activities can be adapted to the evolution of the pandemic thus ensuring that the timeline and planning will not be altered. The main variation that was mentioned was the possibility to adapt the pilot actions to online context, which almost partners are willing to do. Those who cannot adapt to online environments will reschedule their planned activities within WP4 timeline and wait until restrictions are lifted.

The reported changes show that partners must closely follow the evolution of the pandemic and all impacted contexts, so they can plan in advance with schools and children. A recommendation would be to prepare contingency plans in case the situation does not improve, or gets worse.

References

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