

Teachers' competencies for working in an intercultural environment

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Abstract.

BACKGROUND: Today, multiculturalism is present in all spheres of life. Teachers are at the forefront to first formally encounter children from different cultures, and as the first ones, children from different cultures will face it in their social life. Teachers are supposed to prepare students to meet and live with people from cultures different from their own. Hence, it is necessary to identify the competencies teachers need to work in an intercultural environment, given the globalising world where different cultures meet more often, coexist, and exchange values and ways of living.

OBJECTIVE: This paper discusses the teachers' competencies to work in an intercultural environment and presents the results from data collected within the RoMigSc project. These data are analysed to identify the competencies teachers need to work in a multicultural environment.

METHODS: In the study, data from the RoMigSc survey were used, where information on the inclusion of migrant students was collected using the survey questionnaire method. All analyses in this paper are on a descriptive level with exploratory purpose.

RESULTS: The results show that teachers don't feel well prepared to support learning or teach human rights, emigration and immigration, shared values and discrimination. They also need more support in teaching in an intercultural and multicultural environment, especially out-of-school support.

CONCLUSIONS: In general, teachers find their school and own practices inclusive for migrant and Roma students, but not in all aspects. None of the teachers has participated in a project to raise awareness of Roma issues.

Keywords: Intercultural competencies, cultural diversity, teacher education, migrants, Roma people



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1. Introduction

Today's world is very diverse. There are many societies, and each has its own culture. With migration, students come from different cultural backgrounds, which require the teacher to understand cultural diversity. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) estimates that there were 244 million migrants globally in 2015, representing 3.3% of the world's population. Europe hosts around 75 million migrants, representing a third of the world's migrant population [1].

In such diverse settings where each migrant is tied to an original identity, one needs to be prepared for interactions with different cultures for the migrant to become an equal part of society. This is especially important in the educational process, as cultural diversity can lead to marginalisation and reinforce stereotypes. The involvement of migrant or Roma children in education depends to a large extent on the ability of teachers to work in an intercultural environment where each migrant student comes with a unique experience and worldview shaped by his or her own culture. Such training requires specific

knowledge and competencies. Teachers need to be prepared for the benefits that student diversity can bring to education [2].

Special attention should be paid to teacher education and the acquisition of competencies. This is the only way for them to treat all students appropriately, regardless of their cultural background. Intercultural competencies are defined as crucial contemporary competencies of the individual [3]. In the Council of Europe's "White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue" [4], intercultural competence is closely linked to intercultural dialogue, which offers the best approach to tackling cultural diversity. It is particularly emphasised that acquiring intercultural competencies is a lifelong process that must be learned, practised and maintained. This approach is not reserved only in the field of education but really is seen as a part of the lifelong process and, thus, is essential also in the business sphere, where so-called "intercultural intelligence" is emphasised. With the term intercultural intelligence, authors [e.g. 5] mean "consciously appreciating diversity and considers it a great resource that can bring the actors a personal wealth".

It is the responsibility of teachers to encourage the development of this competence in students as well. Only an intercultural sensitive teacher can promote and develop intercultural ability in his students. However, research has repeatedly shown that teachers do not feel sufficiently qualified and competent to work with students from different cultures [6].

This article focuses on teachers' competencies for working in an intercultural environment and their role in working with migrant and Roma children. We also look at the teachers' perceptions on the inclusiveness of their school and their cooperation in external activities related to intercultural and multicultural issues. We first highlight the theoretical definitions of intercultural competencies and then present research related to competencies in an intercultural environment. Given that schools and teachers need to be prepared for teaching in an intercultural environment, the research questions of this study are as follow:

1. To what extent do teachers feel prepared to teach different topics in an intercultural environment to promote students' understanding of cultural diversity?
2. What perception do teachers have on the support (in- and out-of-school) in their preparation to teach topics and skills in an intercultural environment?

3. To what extent do teachers perceive their schools as inclusive for students coming from a different cultural backgrounds?
4. Did school personnel cooperate in various external activities related to intercultural and multicultural issues during the last school year?

To answer these questions, we use data collected by the “Inclusion of Roma and Migrants in Schools: Training, Open Discussions and Voluntary Youth Activities” (RoMigSc) project,¹ With an emphasis on teachers' competencies [7], RoMigSc is a 3-year project implemented in Slovenia, Italy, Germany, Turkey, Spain and the Republic of Northern Macedonia. The project's purpose was to support the better inclusion of Roma and migrants in education by carrying out various activities. Five main goals project goals were set, namely [8]:

- Creating inclusive and democratic learning environments;
- Promoting youth participation, developing inclusive and youth awareness practices;
- Preventing and combating all forms of discrimination and segregation in education;
- Fostering mutual understanding and respect between people; and
- Improving the quality of non-formal forms of education, youth work placements and volunteering.

The richness of the data collected by the RoMigSc project is appropriate to answer these questions.

2. Intercultural competences

Often term multiculturalism and interculturalism are rooted in theoretically contested terrain. However, a clear distinction among those two terms can be described from the point of perspectives we take when interacting with other cultures, as multiculturalism refers to a society that contains several cultural or ethnic groups, where people live alongside one another. Still, each cultural group does not necessarily have engaging interactions with each other. On the contrary, interculturalism describes communities with a deep understanding and respect for all cultures,

¹ The general objectives of the project, as well as theoretical foundations and countries experiences, are presented in a monograph entitled “EU Challenge to Build a Cohesive and Diverse Society” (Dermol et al., 2019).

therefore presupposing intercultural communication [9].

While its near-namesake “multiculturalism” is heavily contested or even discarded in more and more places, especially in Europe, interculturalism enjoys unbridled support, particularly among policy elites, and it has been firmly institutionalised, for instance, in pedagogy or social work, whose curricula now include required courses in “intercultural competence” [10].

Modern society faces the challenge of diversity and the tremendous increase in cultural heterogeneity in all areas, especially in the field of education [11]. The European Commission states that teachers should be able to support migrants and/or minority groups, address the specific needs of all students, promote tolerance, respect, diversity, civic responsibility, and all must be based “on the benefits diversity brings to education” [2].

With the increase in migration, intercultural competencies began to be talked about in the 1960s. For example, Spitzberg and Chagnon [12] define intercultural competence the following way:

“... the appropriate and effective management of interactions between people that are more or less characterised by different emotional, cognitive, and behavioural attitudes toward the world. These attitudes are most often reflected in normative categories such as nationality, race, tribe, ethnicity, religion, or region.” [12]

Particular emphasis is placed on the ability to act effectively and appropriately when interacting with culturally different people [13]. Huber [14] understands intercultural competence as a key component of education where interculturality must be included in everyday practice. This way, the skills and knowledge needed for interpersonal relationships are developed. This is gained through learning, developing and maintaining a lifetime [14]. Furthermore, intercultural competencies lay the foundations for peaceful coexistence by acknowledging the differences and communication between the cultures. As UNESCO [13] notes:

“Intercultural competencies aim at freeing people from their own logic and cultural idioms to engage with others and listen to their ideas, which may involve belonging to one or more cultural systems, particularly if they are not valued or recognised in a given sociopolitical context.” [13]

Intercultural competencies are understood as a prerequisite for successful intercultural dialogue and play a key role in learning to live together. They refer to appropriate knowledge of other cultures, as well as general knowledge of the types of issues that arise during the interaction of members of different cultures, encouraging the establishment and maintenance of contacts with diverse others, the development of skills needed to acquire knowledge and attitudes in interacting with others from different cultures. In terms of intercultural competencies, we distinguish between knowledge of culture, communication skills, interaction skills, openness and critical cultural awareness [13]. Summarising regional reports, Dearnorff [as cited by 13] made a list of skills necessary for developing intercultural competence: respect, self-awareness/identity, view from another perspective, listening, adaptation, building intercultural ties, cultural humility. Further, the two central social institutions to address intercultural competencies are the legal systems and the education systems. The former act on the societal and organisational levels. The latter acts on an individual level [13]. The education system reaches the individuals directly through the school they attend and the teachers. Thus, it is crucial what competencies to interact with students coming from other cultures the teachers have and how, and through what means, this interaction takes place. Intercultural competencies are part of social and civic competence, which “equips individuals to fully participate in civic life, based on knowledge of social and political concepts and structures and a commitment to active and democratic participation” [15]. Further, the European Commission stresses that:

“These competencies cover all forms of behaviour that equip individuals to participate effectively and constructively in social and working life, and particularly in increasingly diverse societies, and to resolve conflict where necessary.” [15]

Thus, it makes sense to talk about intercultural competencies in teachers, as key competencies of providers are too often overlooked in the design of educational programs. The characteristics of intercultural competent teachers are defined by the following variables [2]: personal characteristics, education and experience, methodological competencies, pedagogical knowledge. Intercultural competencies are closely related to learning to know, do and be. Knowledge of other cultures is the

first step in acquiring intercultural competencies [13].

Vižintin [16] list the needs and characteristics of teachers with intercultural competence:

- continuous training;
- awareness of the impact of their attitudes and expectations;
- acceptance of co-responsibility for successful integration;
- awareness that learning the language of the environment and integration into the new environment;
- participation in projects and exchange of examples of good practice, active citizenship, with their knowledge and activities promote the development of intercultural education; and
- continuous development of their intercultural capacity and intercultural capacity of their students.

3. Attitudes toward culturally different

If we look at teaching as a profession where personal, social and institutional factors intertwine, then intercultural competent teachers have a special role to play. Intercultural competence needs to be emphasised in education because it “is a central precondition for every individual. Since it is not automatically acquired, it needs to be developed, learned and maintained throughout life” [14]. Moreover:

“It is clear that without appropriate policies, which place intercultural competence at the heart of all education, and, above all, without the everyday practice of developing the necessary attitudes, skills and knowledge needed for mutual understanding, no sustainable societal change is possible” [14].

Teachers who can communicate with students, parents and other teachers of different cultural backgrounds, who can discuss differences between nations and in the classroom, should have developed intercultural competence. Such teachers offer help and support in cross-cultural contacts, are empathetic, and understand foreign views [17].

Most teachers see all immigrants as equal, so Bergoč [18] points out that most teachers “have not been able to learn about intercultural content in regular university education, at least not to the extent

required by modern social circumstances" [18]. Precisely because of prejudices, teachers also have lower expectations of immigrant children. In this regard, Bennett [17] claims that, like all people, teachers are often unaware of their prejudices and consequently are not even aware of their lower expectations of some students. Low expectations of teachers lead to students starting to behave under these expectations. Such misguided expectations mainly affect vulnerable groups such as migrant children [19, 20].

Research has shown that migrant children perform worse in school than local students [21] and drop out earlier [22]. It has also been shown that primary school pupils who speak languages other than the language at school have a poorer sense of belonging to the school and are more exposed to violence at school [6, 23]. Such data point to the need to make efforts to support the children of migrants. Pupils are better motivated and positive if they receive teacher support when they need it [24, 25].

On the other hand, international research shows that teachers feel least prepared to work in an intercultural environment (OECD, 2014). The European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice [6] reports that teachers recognise that they need more robust competencies to work in an intercultural environment in two-thirds of countries. Nieto [26] also mentions a study in which teachers pointed out the unwillingness to work in a multicultural environment, even though they had subjects related to this topic during their studies.

The results of PISA research reveal significant differences within countries in their willingness to work with culturally diverse learners and in their perception of diversity as a barrier or as an opportunity [27].

Diversity in the classroom is an opportunity for teachers to redefine their views and pedagogical approaches and adapt them to migrant children. In this way, they can improve their work with all students. However, if teachers do not receive support, all students can suffer. Today, most countries strive to include intercultural themes in initial teacher education. However, it has been pointed out that each educational institution determines how and to what extent it contains these topics [20].

Teachers need to have the opportunity to update their skills. Only in this way do they respond appropriately to changes in the classroom. In most countries, teachers can further develop competencies for working in intercultural classrooms and are provided with continuous professional development [6].

However, the decision on additional training is up to the teachers themselves.

Klemenčič and Štremfel [28] state that the successful development of intercultural competencies requires the transformation of many aspects of education, namely:

“educational goals, content, methods and teaching and learning strategies, including assessment, through the organisation and management of schools, to the issue of teaching materials, school climate, students' rights and responsibilities, teacher education and ethnic rules, and the relationship between the school and parents and the local community.” [28]

The importance of “equipping” teachers with intercultural competencies stems from their responsibility to support student growth, regardless of their background, to create an atmosphere where all cultures contribute to mutual well-being. Teachers who do not see problems in diversity can develop in students non-discrimination, acceptance of the values of others, and the potential in students to actively transform their lives [29].

4. Methodology

In this paper, we explore the ability of teachers to integrate and teach in an intercultural environment in terms of the integration of migrant children into school and society. We use the data from the RoMigSc survey [8], where information on the inclusion of migrant students was collected, as it was one of the main aims of the study. To achieve this goal, RoMigSc used the survey questionnaire method. The survey was sent to education professionals with experience in working with migrant and Roma children via the 1KA web portal [30]. The survey was conducted in November 2019. The target population consisted of all education professionals and volunteers who have experience with Roma and migrant children in schools. In addition, the sample ($N = 301$) is represented by all professionals and volunteers who participated in at least one RoMigSc project event or activity in the first three years of implementation.

The questionnaire included socio-demographic questions and statements where respondents chose their answers on a four-, five-, or seven-point Likert scale. The statements measured attitudes towards the inclusion of migrants and Roma, attitudes towards inclusion and volunteering, attitudes towards the

school's most important goals for better inclusion of migrants and Roma in school, and attitudes towards multiculturalism.

For the analysis presented in the article, we used the set of questions in the questionnaire. In addition, data on selected questions (Q11, Q13, Q14, Q16) were included in the analysis. The questions are presented in the Appendix. The choice of questions is motivated by the research questions of the study presented in the introduction: participation of teachers in activities related to diversity, the willingness to teach on intercultural topics, the level of support teachers have inside and outside the school, views on the development of identity in students, knowledge of the socio-economic background and living conditions of students, and relationships with students' families. Each of these questions contains multiple statements to respond to. Here is a summary of what the questions are concerned with:

- Q11 – if the respondents have taken different activities towards cooperation with external groups or organisations: human rights projects; activities for underprivileged groups; multicultural activities within the local communities like promotion and celebration of cultural diversity; campaigns to raise awareness about migrant issues; and campaigns to raise awareness about Roma issues.
- Q13 – how prepared do respondents feel to support learning the following topics and skills: human rights; emigration and immigration; equal opportunities; diversity; common values; and discrimination.
- Q14 – the level of support respondents receive in and out of school on teaching the topics and skills from above.
- Q16 – how inclusive the school is: enough time to help students develop positive individual identity; knowledge on student social, economic background and living conditions; classroom environment enables acknowledging, recognising and celebrating student diversity; building relations with students' families; respondents create space for conversations on current events, and respondents ensure students are working together.

The data on the questionnaire items from above suit the research questions of this study. All analyses in this paper are on a descriptive level with exploratory purpose. Due to the low response rates, we used the data from all countries that collected data together:

Slovenia, Italy, Turkey, Spain, and the Republic of Northern Macedonia. Therefore, the data can be interpreted only on the level of respondents who answered the questions. For the first, second and third questions, only the data from teachers teaching at schools were collected, which decreased the number of actual responses. Thus, the tables presented in the results section report the frequencies and the valid percentages due to the low response rates.

5. Results

This section presents the results from the analysis of RoMigSc data. Table 1 shows the results related to the **first research question** – to what extent do teachers feel prepared to teach different topics in an intercultural environment to promote students' understanding of cultural diversity. The table reports only the answers of those respondents who are teachers, which explains a large number of missing responses and, thus, only the valid percentage of respondents is included. As the table shows, the number of teachers who don't feel prepared to **support learning or teach human rights** at all is very low, less than one per cent. The percentage of teachers who feel very well prepared is just 8%. The percentage of teachers who feel pretty well prepared is 45.5%. However, the percentage of teachers who don't feel very well prepared is the same (45.5%). That is, the respondents' opinion is divided equally between not very well and quite well prepared to support or teach human rights. The responses on **supporting learning or teaching emigration and immigration** are somewhat similar. However, the valid percentage of respondents who do not feel very well prepared is almost 11% higher than those who feel quite well prepared (51% vs 40.4%). The percentage of those who feel very well prepared is relatively low – just 6.7%. When it comes to how prepared the respondents feel **supporting learning or teaching equal opportunities**, most respondents stated that they are quite well prepared (60.7% valid responses). The share of those who believe they are very well prepared is much higher than for the previous questions (15%). This is similar to the following statement, how well prepared respondents feel about **supporting learning or teaching diversity**, although none of them answered they do not feel prepared at all. Also, the valid per cent of those who feel not well prepared is relatively low (19.3%), and the valid percentages of those who feel

Table 1
The extent to which teachers feel prepared to teach different topics in intercultural diversity

Answer	Human rights		Emigration and immigration		Equal opportunities		Diversity		Common values		Discrimination		
	Count	Valid %	Count	Valid %	Count	Valid %	Count	Valid %	Count	Valid %	Count	Valid %	
Valid	Not prepared at all	1	0.9	2	1.9	1	0.9	–	–	1	0.9	–	–
	Not very well prepared	51	45.5	53	51.0	25	23.4	21	19.3	28	26.2	31	30.7
	Quite well prepared	51	45.5	42	40.4	65	60.7	68	62.4	60	56.1	56	55.4
	Very well prepared	9	8.0	7	6.7	16	15.0	20	18.3	18	16.8	14	13.9
	Total	112	100	104	100	107	100	109	100	107	100	101	100
Missing	Omitted	189		197		194		192		194		200	
Total	Total	301		301		301		301		301		301	

Table 2
Teachers' perception of in- and out-of-school support in preparation to teach in intercultural background

Answer	When I need it, I have support for my work inside the school		When I need, I have support for my work outside the school		
	Count	Valid %	Count	Valid %	
Valid	Not enough	14	12.1	18	16.8
	Neither enough/neither not enough	31	26.7	41	38.3
	Enough	71	61.2	48	44.9
	Total	116	100	107	100
Missing	Omitted	185		194	
Total	Total	301		301	

pretty well and very well prepared are much higher (62.4% and 18.3%, respectively).

Concerning **supporting learning or teaching common values**, 1% of the respondents stated that they don't feel prepared at all, and nearly 17% said they feel very well prepared. Most of them (56.1%) feel pretty well prepared and about a quarter feel not very well prepared. None of the respondents stated they do not feel prepared at all supporting learning or teaching on topics related to discrimination and almost 14% feel very well prepared. More than half of the respondents (55.4%) feel quite well prepared, but nearly a third of all respondents (30.7%) do not feel well prepared.

Table 2 presents the results related to the **second research question** – what perception teachers have on the support (in and out of school) in their preparation to teach topics and skills in an intercultural environment. This research question is related to the

previous one but focusing on the support in their activities in the complex settings the intercultural environment represents. Teacher responses are somewhat different depending on the support providers (in- and out-of-school). In general, the perceived in-school support is much higher than the out-of-school support. Enough support is perceived by 61.2% of teachers in-school, while out-of-school is perceived by 44.9%. Also, the percentage of neither enough nor not enough is perceived by nearly 12% more by teachers when it comes to out-of-school. On the other hand, the percentages of teachers who do not find enough support in both in and out-of-school are quite close – 12.1% vs 16.8%.

Table 3 presents the analysis results related to the **third research question** – to what extent do teachers perceive their schools as inclusive for students from different cultural backgrounds. The responses vary from 1 (completely disagree) to 7 (completely

Table 3
Teachers' perception of their schools' inclusiveness

Answers	I have enough time to help students develop a positive individual identity		I have some knowledge of student's social and economic backgrounds and living conditions		The classroom environment enables acknowledgement, recognition, and celebration of the diversity of my students		I am building relationships with the families of my students		I create space for conversations conversations events		I ensure that all students work students work		
	Count	Valid %	Count	Valid %	Count	Valid %	Count	Valid %	Count	Valid %	Count	Valid %	
Valid	1	2	1.9	1.0	0.9	1.0	0.9	8.0	7.5	4.0	3.7	1.0	0.9
	2	9	8.3	3.0	2.8	3.0	2.8	7.0	6.5	2.0	1.9	1.0	0.9
	3	13	12.0	9.0	8.4	8.0	7.3	14.0	13.1	6.0	5.6	2.0	1.9
	4	31	28.7	29.0	27.1	30.0	27.5	20.0	18.7	17.0	15.9	16.0	15.0
	5	30	27.8	22.0	20.6	27.0	24.8	16.0	15.0	28.0	26.2	20.0	18.7
	6	13	12.0	28.0	26.2	21.0	19.3	21.0	19.6	28.0	26.2	31.0	29.0
	7	10	9.3	15.0	14.0	19.0	17.4	21.0	19.6	22.0	20.6	36.0	33.6
	Total	108	100	107	100	109	100	107	100	107	100	107	100
Missing	Omitted	193		194		192		194		194		194	
Total	Total	301		301		301		301		301		301	

Table 4
School personnel's cooperation in external activities on intercultural and multicultural issues

Answers	Human rights projects		Activities for underprivileged people or groups		Multicultural and intercultural activities within the local community		Campaigns to raise people's awareness, migrant issues		Campaigns to raise people's awareness, Roma issues		
	Count	Valid %	Count	Valid %	Count	Valid %	Count	Valid %	Count	Valid %	
Valid	No	169	72.2	111	45.7	109	44.7	158	69.0	–	–
	Yes	65	27.8	132	54.3	135	55.3	71	31.0	–	–
	Total	234	100	243	100	244	100	229	100	0	0
Missing	Omitted	67		58		57		72		301	
Total	Total	301		301		301		301		301	

agree). The teachers responding choose the middle of the scale (4) for most of the questions, i.e. in general, they estimate the time to help students develop positive identity, have knowledge on students' socio-economic background and lifestyle, the classroom environment acknowledging diversity, and building relationship with the student families **at around average**. The teachers estimate their schools' inclusiveness somewhat above the average for their own ability to create space for conversation about current events (26.2% choose each of categories five and six). Notably, the highest percentage of teachers (nearly 37%) respond that they ensure that all students work together (last statement) at the highest level of the response scale.

The last table (Table 4) presents the analysis results related to the **fourth research question** – did the school personnel cooperate in various external activities related to intercultural and multicultural issues during the last school year. Again, the answers are on a dichotomous scale (yes/no). Most of the respon-

dents answered that they did **not** participate in human rights projects (72.2%) and campaigns for raising awareness on migrant issues (69%). None of the respondents provided a valid answer about participating in campaigns related to Roma issues. The only cooperation in external activities related to intercultural and multicultural issues where more than 50% of the respondents participated were activities for underprivileged groups (54.3%) and intercultural and multicultural activities within their local community (55.3%).

6. Conclusions and implications for practice

This paper focused on the teachers' competencies for working in an intercultural and multicultural environment, their perception of the schools' inclusiveness and cooperation in external activities related to various issues on migrant and Roma students. The analysis of the data provided by the RoMigSc

survey [8] delivered insights into the competencies and practices of school personnel in Slovenia, Italy, Turkey, Spain, and the Republic of Northern Macedonia. Although the sample is not representative of the population(s) and this is a limitation of this study (details are explained above).

In general, the respondents in these countries feel relatively unprepared to support learning or teach topics in human rights and emigration and immigration. They do, however, feel better prepared to teach topics related to equal opportunities and diversity. Concerning the shared values and discrimination topics, most of the teachers feel well prepared, although the share of those who feel not that well prepared is also sizeable. Given that targeted teaching and learning in a multicultural environment is crucial to promote students' understanding of cultural diversity and common living, we recommend that teacher preparation units and in-service training pay more attention to preparing teachers in teaching topics on human rights, emigration and immigration. These topics are essential at schools, especially where students with various backgrounds are mixed. In addition, we would recommend that more attention is paid to common values and discrimination topics; these are especially important in multicultural/intercultural environments where students from minorities are present. Although teachers in our study feel better prepared to support learning or teach equal opportunities and diversity compared to other topics, more attention shall be paid to them as well – about a fifth to a quarter of the teachers still feel they lack enough competencies to teach these topics. All of these are essential topics, and their teaching at school is crucial for the students to become intercultural competent because:

“interculturally competent individuals must possess the capacities (1) to act appropriately and effectively in the intercultural encounter, (2) to know about their own and their interlocutor's cultural conventions, and (3) to demonstrate positive feelings towards cultural difference.” [31].

However, intercultural communication, on which we focused in this article, is not reserved only for the education sector, although important sector for future individual and community development, but are a necessary condition for the operation of any system in today's global world, even more on a level of operating cross-sectoral. As Zeleny [32] states, intercultural experience is needed for acquiring the understanding and knowledge of Integrated Productive Environment (IPE) as an essential prerequisite

where cultural adjustments to build environments is required [32]. Therefore we could say that for intercultural competent individuals, some similar approach as “theoretical knowledge + examples of good practices + exercises + individual projects” [33] is vital too. This means that intercultural competent individuals (so be it students or teachers) cannot become only with heaving theoretical knowledge about different cultures. However, this component is one of the bases for transferring intercultural competencies towards learners.

Teachers' perception of the in-school support to teach topics and skills in the intercultural background is worrisome that more than a third do not feel enough support or cannot judge if it is enough. Perhaps schools shall pay more attention to this issue, especially schools with a higher proportion of migrant and Roma students. For the out-of-school support, this share is more than a half. In addition, local communities and education authorities shall become more involved with schools to support teachers in teaching different topics and skills in intercultural and multicultural environments.

Teachers perceive their school settings and their teaching practices as rather inclusive when creating space for conversations on current events and their own efforts to ensure all students work together. However, their perception on the availability of time, own knowledge, classroom environment to recognise diversity, and relationships with student families, teachers seem to face issues. Of course, we need to acknowledge that teachers also face challenges with other issues, not just intercultural and multicultural, and their time is limited. However, more needs to be done so that teachers can create an inclusive environment in their classrooms. Perhaps help from the school management and the local community can be provided as well in this regard.

According to the responses of the surveyed participants, a bit more than a quarter participated in human rights projects within the last school year. Such projects shall be organised more often. More teachers and other school personnel shall be involved; human rights are at the core of the intercultural and multicultural coexistence and exchange. The same is valid for participation in campaigns raising people's awareness about migrant issues. It is worrisome that none of the respondents answered that they participated in campaigns to raise awareness about Roma issues. Unfortunately, the RoMigSc project does not provide data about such projects in separate countries. Still, it could be that such projects did not take place,

and school personnel did not have the opportunity to participate. If this is the case, such campaigns shall be organised on a national level, and schools shall be attracted to take place.

Our results relate to other studies [e.g. 34] by emphasising intercultural competencies of in-service and pre-service teachers that need to improve. This is visible for different aspects. Concerning other studies, e.g. in the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS cycle 2016), teachers were asked how well prepared they feel (how confident they are) teaching different topics. Immigration was among the topics in which teachers of eight-graders in Slovenia (we are exposing results for Slovenia only, because other countries which the RoMigSc project targeted were not involved) do not feel very confident to teach [35]. While speaking about cultural similarities of different regions in Europe and citizenship education in compulsory education, it is worth noting that different patterns in Europe were found for differences in levels of expected civic participation of eight-graders which seem to be related not only with the countries' experience with democracy but also with their cultural similarities and common history [36]. For future research, this aspect - if cultural similarities are driving similarities in intercultural education - would be interesting to investigate.

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Supplementary material

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