**STEPs Towards Ecological Planet 2022-1-FI01-KA220-SCH-00008667**

**WORK PACKAGE 3- Greener, More Digital and Inclusive STEPS in School Ecosystems**

**INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY STRATEGY**

**Introduction**

Our collaborative project, "STEPS Towards Ecological Planet" unites schools from Finland, Turkey, Croatia, and Spain. Recognizing the pivotal role of an inclusive and diverse learning environment, this strategy paper outlines our commitment to establishing a framework that addresses the unique challenges faced by students with economic, geographical, social, communicational, and academic barriers.

**Objectives**

Our primary objectives are to:

- Enable effective inclusion for all students, particularly those confronting barriers.

- Align our strategy with the European Commission's inclusion framework.

- Cultivate diversity within our partner schools.

**Our specific objectives for Inclusion**

**Finland:**

For us it’s important that all the students have a chance to participate in all school activities despite economic or social barriers, which is why all the activities and materials are free for everyone. All the students take a starting level test in mathematics and a test to find out possible dyslexia at the beginning of their studies to ensure the right kind of support measures e.g. remedial instruction from the start.

**Turkiye:**

In our school, for this specific Erasmus+ project, we planned to include the students who are sincerely willing to be included. We planned to observe their level of interest during local studies about the project which were announced and open to all students regardless of their age, gender, economical status or academic success to promote equal access. We have designed collaborative studies to engage students in projects that highlight diversity and inclusion, fostering teamwork and mutual respect. We tried to give our boarding students equal opportunities to take part in hosting and mobilities.

A thorough needs assessment can be conducted in each partner school to understand their unique challenges and resources. As the needs and priorities of each partner school can be different, we tried to develop customized action plans that would be evaluated regularly.

**Spain:**

Our school pays a lot of attention to the importance of our students becoming better citizens continuously. As a bilingual and diverse school in which there are students from different geographical areas, we are convinced that there will be better inclusion and therefore academic success if our students and teachers are exposed to educational experiences and exchanges in other European countries. We have given this opportunity to all students, no matter their economical, social, academic or ethnic context. We think that if we open and internationalize our school, our students will not only come to know their own environment, but also they will face enriching experiences with other students with the same interests.

We always try to open our school and to offer our students with social barriers tools so they can become excellent european citizens. Our inclusion strategy has the aim of helping all students to feel integrated and to participate in projects such as this Erasmus one. It has helped to raise environmental consciousness in our students too, considering that they share with their same age-group students from all Europe (and the world) the responsibility to confront the challenges of climate change.

**Croatia:**

Our school relies on the principles of inclusion, which means that we pay particular attention to include in the school activities the students of lower economic status, students with some social barriers or the students of other nationalities- who we now have in many of our classes. The extracurricular activities are open to all students in our school and that counts as well for various projects, Erasmus+ projects included.

**Guiding Principles**

Our strategy is underpinned by the principles of equality, accessibility, and respect for diverse backgrounds and abilities. We aim to create an environment where every student feels valued and has an equal opportunity to thrive.

**Framework for Inclusion**

We will develop a flexible framework that serves as a guide for our partner schools, allowing them to adapt strategies to their unique contexts. This framework will be designed to accommodate the diverse needs within each school and align with the European Commission's inclusion framework.

Framework for the inclusion of pupils with fewer opportunities:

**Innovative Aspects**

Our strategy will go beyond traditional approaches by incorporating innovative elements tailored to the specific challenges faced by students in our partner schools. Leveraging new and European-level opportunities, we aim to create an inclusive community of learners.

**Target Barriers**

Our strategy specifically targets the following barriers:

- Economic challenges, ensuring financial constraints do not limit participation.

- Geographical constraints, especially for students in remote or less serviced areas.

- Social obstacles, including limited social competences or social marginalization.

- Communicational barriers, addressing language and cultural inclusion difficulties.

- Academic challenges, providing support for students struggling within educational systems.

**Participation Criteria**

To ensure inclusivity, we will establish clear criteria for student participation. At the project's outset, students expressing interest will be invited to submit motivational letters explaining why they should be chosen. Prioritization will be given to students with fewer social or economic resources, aligning with our Inclusion and Diversity Strategy.

**Implementation Plan**

Our detailed implementation plan will include:

- Timelines for key project stages.

- Identification of responsible parties within each partner school.

- Specific actions to be taken at each stage of the project.

**Monitoring and Evaluatio**n

Regular monitoring and evaluation will be integrated into our strategy to assess its effectiveness. By establishing clear indicators, we will measure progress toward our objectives and make data-informed adjustments as needed.

**Flexibility and Adaptability**

Acknowledging the diversity within partner schools, our strategy will emphasize flexibility and adaptability. This ensures that the framework remains responsive to the evolving needs of students and schools throughout the project.

**Communication and Collaboration**

Effective communication and collaboration among partner schools are critical. We will establish channels for sharing best practices, insights, and challenges. Regular collaborative sessions will be organized to strengthen the collective impact of our efforts.

Our collaboration approach:

**Finland:**

Frequent communication and exchange of good practices. Potential challenges may be caused by the fact that the partner schools are of different sizes which may lead to different kinds of practices.

**Turkiye:**

Organizing teacher and student mobilities to facilitate firsthand learning of inclusive practices.

Language barrier could have been a potential challenge especially for some students however they would be encouraged to express themselves with their background knowledge and the understanding of communicating in a language which is ‘foreign’ to their peers would be imposed.

**Spain:**

There has been frequent communication with the rest of schools participating in the project and also between the students. We have used and will continue implementing the use of Google mail, Whatsapp, Google Classroom and e-Twinning.

This communication between teachers and students is in English and this helps them to get better at their Linguistic Competence in the foreign language. We will try to reduce communication barriers and overcome cultural differences.

**Croatia:**

The partner schools should communicate as much as possible, in person or via social media platforms to exchange the examples of good practices. Potential challenges would be still the language barrier for some students and for the teachers as well who should broaden their knowledge of the foreign language.

**Sustainability**

Our strategy extends beyond the project's duration. We will explore opportunities to integrate successful practices into long-term school policies, ensuring the sustained impact of our inclusion and diversity initiatives.

For sustainability in inclusion, our schools will focus on professional development in all partner schools.

**Finland:**

Frequent meetings and discussions among teachers. Opportunities to participate in updating training.

**Turkiye:**

Offering sharing sessions that help teachers understand and respect cultural diversity. Establishing environments where teachers can regularly discuss challenges and share successful practices related to inclusion.

**Spain:**

Teachers should attend training courses related to inclusion. In that respect some of our teachers have attended a training course in Athens: “Multicultural education” within an Erasmus+ KA 122 in which we are participating at the moment.

It is also very positive to work in teams. In that respect, we have created an Erasmus Group in which there are teachers from different subjects. We meet once a week and we share our successful practices.

**Croatia:**

Educators or NGOs could offer their expertize regarding inclusion i.e. they could elaborate on their examples of good practices in relation to inclusion which they could share with the teachers during teachers’ meetings.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, our project's Inclusion and Diversity Strategy is a dynamic and collaborative effort aimed at creating an environment where all students can thrive. By prioritizing inclusivity, respecting diversity, and leveraging innovative approaches, we aspire to make a lasting impact on the educational experiences of students across our partner schools.