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**Children Hybrid Integration: Learning Dialogue
as a way of Upgrading Policies of Participation**

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Contents

1. Introduction: purpose and structure of the Policy Brief	3
2. CHILD-UP: general objective, core research activities and connections with the present policy scenario.....	3
3. Short account of relevant research results.....	4
4. The impact of the unpredictable uprising of pandemic on educational and social interventions for migrant children and ways of facing it	9
4.1. CHILD-UP research: difficulties during the pandemic	10
4.2. CHILD-UP research: reflections about possible resources in time of pandemic	11
5. Preliminary suggestions for education, inclusion and research policies.....	13

1. Introduction: purpose and structure of the Policy Brief

This policy brief, developed in the framework of the CHILD-UP Project (Horizon 2020 Programme) has two objectives:

Objective 1: Providing information at European level for what concerns activities and research in schools in the era of pandemic

Objective 2: Providing suggestions for a post-pandemic scenario for school activities and research methodology

Information and suggestions are based on the value of CHILD-UP as a research project for what concerns research methodology and provisional results of analysis, before and during the pandemic. It must be considered that the CHILD-UP Project was conceived in 2018, started its operations in 2019 and was affected by the pandemic crisis in 2020/21 when most of its field research activities were scheduled; in spite of the practical difficulties in access to schools and although some delay and scale reduction in data collection, the project – in substance- has been developing according to plans. The unforeseen pandemic element is rather reflected in the importance that COVID19 assumed in the consideration of all target groups and stakeholders, introducing both increased difficulties in personal expression and social inclusion of children with migrant background, and increased awareness of the problem in the education and local support community.

The policy brief is organized in four sections, after this introduction: Section 2 introduces the purpose and approach of the CHILD-UP Project, Section 3 describes the relevant research which has been realized from 2019 to June 2021. Section 4 is about the challenges of the pandemic for the project and the initiatives which it has monitored. Section 5 includes some suggestions emerging from the project.

2. CHILD-UP: general objective, core research activities and connections with the present policy scenario

CHILD-UP is a research project that addresses the issue of children with migrant background in Europe through an innovative perspective, based on the concepts of children agency and hybrid cultural integration. Against the mainstream discourse focusing on children needs, this project puts children self-determination at the centre: children selecting cultural elements of originating country and hosting country, of generational discourse, of local and global perspectives to combine them in original and unique personal synthesis. Against the opposed logics of assimilation and preservation, it is proposing a view of cultural “combination”: the **hybrid cultural integration**. The concept of “hybrid” refers to the way of constructing the child’s identity as negotiated in situated interactions. The child exercises **agency** in these interactions, i.e. s/he can choose her/his ways of acting, thus influencing her/his social and cultural context and actively participating in the construction of her/his identity. In this exercise of agency, the child is supported by “competent” and “willing” school staff, families and community facilitators. Thus, the child actively contributes to shape her/his inclusion strategy at school and in the local and virtual community of reference. Hybrid integration is the result of the combination of adults’ actions that enhance children’s agency and children’s actions that display their own agency.

CHILD-UP studies what are the current practices at school and in the local contexts of seven EU countries (Belgium, Finland, Germany, Italy, Poland, Sweden and the United Kingdom) with different migrant communities' presence and profiles, and taking account of the possible differences based on gender. CHILD-UP aims at identifying, analysing and disseminating evidence of good practices. It is largely based on a broad and intense involvement of stakeholders at the local and international level to discuss the analytical and operational approach, to support the multiplication of good practice elements across countries and to influence public policies.

CHILD-UP offers new evidence to the research community through substantial field research and impact evidence analysis of current practices and policies, thus supporting both policy makers and civil society in establishing more effective inclusion policies, benefitting not only migrant children but the whole local contexts. In particular, it offers the school community first the opportunity to be actively involved in the research, and then a battery of tools to reflect and act for a successful inclusion of children with migrant background; this should result in a feeling of well-being in a supportive environment. This would improve not only the condition of children with migrant background, but that of all children, families and local communities.

In terms of connections to the present policy scenario at EU and national levels, it can be said that CHILD-UP has anticipated the goals, and embraced the principles underlying the first European strategy on the Rights of the Child (2021-2024), adopted by the EU Commission on 24 March 2021. The Strategy aims at protecting and promoting the rights of children, strengthening children's empowerment (more than 10.000 children were consulted), and builds around six thematic priorities: i) combating child poverty, promoting inclusive and child-friendly societies, health and education systems; ii) freeing children from violence; iii) ensuring children's right to child-friendly justice; iv) providing tools for children to safely navigate the digital environment; v) ensuring children's rights across the world; vi) enabling children to actively participate in civic and democratic life.

CHILD-UP, in particular, serves as a tool of reaching the goal set forth in the Commission's priority aimed at promoting inclusive and child-friendly societies and education systems. CHILD-UP also complements the European Child Guarantee - a key action to be carried out by the Commission under the Strategy -, which recommends that EU Member States provide free, readily-available and effective access to key services for at-risk children. These services include, among the others, early childhood education and care, education and school-based activities.

3. Short account of relevant research results

The CHILD-UP project included a research in two phases. The first phase was realised in 2019 and completed with the reports at the beginning of 2020, before the upraising of the pandemic. This **first phase** included; (1) a review of national legislations, policies and practices of integration of children with migrant background in education and social protection systems in seven European countries which included two research reports; (2) a survey involving children, parents, teachers, social workers and interpreters/mediators in the seven countries. A short summary of the relevant contents of this phase in the seven European countries is provided below.

Review of legislations, policies and practices of integration. Migrant children suffer significant delays in starting school and may not be placed in a grade level or programme that is commensurate with their experience and needs. As table 1 shows, in the seven European countries, there are different conditions and approaches to including migrant children into mainstream classes, and while some schools may be overcrowded (Germany, UK), others have migrant students which spent long time out of school (Germany, Italy) or face difficulty in supporting children when they have limited information on the educational background of pupils (Belgium, Germany, Italy, UK). Generally, however, all countries have high concentrations of migrant children.

TABLE 1: CONDITIONS OF MIGRANT CHILDREN INCLUSION INTO MAINSTREAM CLASSES.

Country	Overcrowded Schools	Concentration of migrant children	Time spent out of school	lack of information on child's educational background	Access for undocumented children
Belgium		X		X	Explicitly allowed
Finland		X			Explicitly allowed ¹
Germany	X ²	X	X	X	Explicitly allowed
Italy		X	X	X	Explicitly allowed
Poland		X ³			Implicitly allowed
Sweden		X			Explicitly allowed
UK	X	X		X	Explicitly allowed

In general terms it is evident that when children are separated from the mainstream population for too long, it can begin to have a negative impact on children's wellbeing, integration and school performance. Another problem is that there are not enough qualified professionals who speak the mother tongue of migrant children and who are trained in intercultural competence. Several obstacles for migrant children include teachers' lower expectations, negative stereotypes, significant gaps in education, parents not being well acquainted with school systems, lack of benefit from pre-school and kindergarten classes. Achievement outcomes of migrant children also vary depending on socioeconomic standing and the educational background of parents.

Some new programming in the seven countries involves creating parent groups and using mediators to improve the communication between parents and schools; supporting different languages; cultural mentoring and sponsorship initiatives; promotion of cultural awareness and cooperation of school and non-school actors; teachers' training.

¹ During the asylum process, or in case of a refusal when the family hasn't yet left the country, the organising municipality uses its own discretion in terms of access to education (OKM 2019:24.).

² It is not a general, country-wide problem, but does exist in some areas.

³ Where migrant centres are located.

Survey. Children were involved in the survey through schools, ranging from infant schools to high secondary schools, and in some cases through reception centres. Respondents included 3,958 children, 2,282 parents and 886 professionals (teachers, social workers, interpreters/mediators). The survey provided data about the respondents (experiences of migration for children and parents, professional qualifications of professionals, etc.), children's use of language in schools and family, school and institutional experience, relations and challenges; agency and professionals' support of it; adults' representations of migrants' integration. A short summary of results about the three most relevant issues is presented below.

1. Professionals showed awareness that the migrant background, in particular language barriers, can impact on participation of children and their parents in school. However, the availability of linguistic support services varies across the contexts, above all concerning L2 learning, while language and intercultural mediation and support of the use native language are much less frequent. Lack of language support and monolingual approach in schools have negative consequences for children's opportunities to participate and therefore hinder their agency. Moreover, teachers' face relevant difficulties in dealing with intercultural issues and in coordinating with social work and mediation.

2. Most children are positive about their participation in education; they think they understand teachers, they have good skills for schoolwork and manage school tasks well. However, migrant children are positive towards schooling, but they are more positive with obedience than with enhancement of agency. Moreover, migrant children meet more relevant difficulties in performing school tasks.

3. Representations of cultural differences, intercultural relations and inclusion show an ambivalence between observations of hybridization, the essentialist celebration of cultural difference, the observation of problems related to cultural difference, and, to a lesser extent, assimilation. Moreover, there are rather relevant differences between the representations of teachers and those of parents, where the latter show a more assimilationist and problematic view of migration, and between the representations of teachers and those of mediators, where the latter show a more essentialist view of migration.

Table 2 shows how the results of the survey can be turned into indicators to evaluate the effectiveness of hybrid integration of children with migrant background. If compared with non-migrant children, housing is a weak point, although for a small minority. For what concerns language (point 1), critical aspects concern multilingualism, support of native languages, use of translation, and, according to teachers, L2 teaching and use of mediators/interpreters. Teachers also highlight challenges in communication with migrant parents.

Weaknesses of children's agency concern the possibility to speak freely about feelings, teacher's support of children's initiatives, creative ideas and dissent (point 2). Teachers' training in intercultural issues should be improved: this could have positive effects on teachers' ability to adapt to diversity, to reduce stereotypes and to increase awareness for diversity. Working with parents on intercultural communication could also be important, since some parents show negative representations of diversity, which are more frequent than among teachers (point 3).

Table 2: Possible indicators for evaluating effectiveness of hybrid integration of children with migrant background (percentages from the survey; in bold critical aspects, some when compared to native children)

Indicators	%
Housing with family only	87.5
Language	
Good use of host language (ISCED 1)	80.9
Good use of host language (ISCED 2-3)	89.2
Multilingualism in the classroom	28.8
Support of native language	53.4
L2 teaching/learning (teachers)	69.1
Use of translation	57.4
Use of mediators/interpreters (teachers)	34.9
School experience	
Appreciation of school	69.1
School tasks	71.3
Closeness to classmates	72.6
Perception of teachers' care	72.0
Good communication with parents (teachers)	56.6
Children's agency	
Speaking freely about feelings	68.7
Participating in school decision	69.0
Participating in classroom design	64.1
Teacher's support of creative ideas	45.5
Teachers' support of dissent	33.0
Teachers' encouragement of initiatives	25.9
Challenges for children	
Frequent challenges at school	15.8
Collaboration with teachers in solving problems	25.8

Intercultural communication	
Teachers' training in intercultural issues	58.8
Teachers' adaptation to diversity	47.8
Teachers raising awareness for diversity	42.0
Teachers reducing stereotypes	39.8
Teachers' preference for hybridity	81.0
Teachers' negative representation of diversity	4.5
Parents' preference for hybridity	72.5
Parents' negative representation of diversity	15.9

The **second phase** of CHILD-UP was based on qualitative methods. It was planned to gain qualitative knowledge about the most important results of the first part, in particular about the meaning of representations and practices concerning promotion of migrant children's agency and their inclusion in school and community. This phase included (1) a series of interviews and focus groups with professionals and children attending the contacted schools, investigating representations of school experience and relations, with particular reference to inclusion of migrant children; (2) observations of school activities (e.g., second language teaching, intercultural education, mediation, facilitation of relationships and construction of citizenship) and children's understanding and reception of these activities, based on a mixed method including video and audio recordings of activities, focus groups and questionnaires involving children, to identify best practices or specific problems.

This second phase was foreseen in the months in which the pandemic afflicted the European countries, causing the lockdown of schools. The research activities were thus extended to the following school year (2020/21). However, the pandemic continued to affect the schools and the involvement of children in activities and research. The impact of the pandemic was high in all participating countries, including long periods of school's closure, difficulties in involving children, above all migrant children, and difficulties in admitting external educators and researchers in schools.

In almost all cases, due to remote working, schools denied the opportunity to conduct research among pupils until schools reopened. A relevant exception was Italy, where several school activities and research were done remotely. Against this background, interviews and focus groups with teachers, educators, social workers and interpreters/mediators could be done, above all remotely. Several problems occurred for work and research with children, both focus groups and interviews, and observation of school activities.

Despite these problems, the large majority of focus groups and interviews with children could be done when schools reopened (in Italy also remotely). Moreover, several activities were observed in schools, although with relevant differences among the countries, in particular with relevant difficulties in Finland, Germany and Poland. The number of children who could participate strongly

in these activities was strongly reduced, to ensure children's safety; however, all the activities could be evaluated by the children. In **Belgium**, research regarded an outdoor activity and group discussions with secondary school students. In **Italy**, research included a wide range of activities which were enhanced both by teachers and external educators, regarding second language, conflict mediation, citizenship education, gender differences, facilitation of interpersonal relations, facilitation of narratives. In **Sweden**, observed activities were based on a methodology including individual reflection, discussion in pairs or small groups, joint discussion with all in class, and encouraging the students to express personal experiences and reflections; they regarded second-language learning and training in conversation and argumentation. In **the UK**, the need to secure social distancing reduced the scope for planning of activities, but it was possible to observe the classroom discussions lead by the teachers on topic of interests for the children. In **Finland**, observed activities were few and were mostly built on discussion, whether in pairs or small groups or instances of teacher-led dialogue. In **Germany**, research could be only done in day care centres since they handled the situation through more flexibility and continuity (research will continue after the summer break).

Since the pandemic did not make possible to complete reports for the second part of research in time for this policy brief, the consortium decided to propose a reflection on the impact of pandemic on school activities and research with migrant children.

4. The impact of the unpredictable uprising of pandemic on educational and social interventions for migrant children and ways of facing it

Following the outbreak of the pandemic, the specific condition of children has been widely stressed in the political debate and in the media throughout European countries. An important issue has been protecting children's right to education, stressing the importance of children's need of professionals' guidance and that the pandemic is disruptive for children's learning. It may be noted, however, that children's voice was excluded from this debate. This shows the weakness of the political and educational agenda of children's agency and in particular, of migrant children's inclusion.

Since the last three decades of the Nineteenth century, education has progressively included methods to support children's agency. However, during the pandemic, the consideration of the child as agent has been weakened by the widespread worry for the breakdown of school organization and teaching. The attempt to re-establish education through distance teaching has reduced children to disembodied beings working through media. Thus, the breakdown of educational organizations has dramatically disrupted children's agency.

It is important to stress that the disappearance of interest in children's agency can generate general distrust in education, since children may interpret their agency only when it is not institutionalised. **If children do not have some opportunity of exercising agency at school, their distrust in education is likely to increase** and informal gatherings are likely to be the only contexts of agency.

4.1. CHILD-UP research: difficulties during the pandemic

This negative experience of the pandemic, in particular the effects of school closure and physical distance, has been strongly stressed in the CHILD-UP research. First, several researchers noted that decisions about closure and distance teaching/learning were taken top-down, often *ad hoc*, thus creating serious problems for both teachers and students. Against this background, the CHILD-UP research confirmed the difficulty of involving children, in particular migrant children, to enhance their exercise of agency and hybrid integration.

However, this research also offers some interesting reflections about children's experiences in schools. On the one hand, students and teachers were eager to talk about the impact of the pandemic on their school lives. On the other hand, school activities were used to discuss about the pandemic, for instance in the UK, where the activities, led by the teachers, frequently addressed the impact of the pandemic on children's lives and well-being.

Interviews and focus groups with teachers evidenced that the most important types of problem regarded social and pedagogical disadvantage. This included oblivion of migrant children, widening of the gap between living conditions and participation opportunities of socially disadvantaged children and families - depending on the conditions before the pandemic -, tendencies of ethnic segregation (e.g., Germany, Poland), lack of peer relationships (e.g. Finland, Germany), lack of after-school activities for informal networking and language learning (e.g. Finland).

Several children mentioned sense of isolation as an important dimension of the remote functioning of schools (e.g. Germany, Poland). Above all disadvantaged students became more isolated and less engaged, with a significant impact on migrant students (e.g. Belgium). Lack of contact with peers was most acute for newly arrived pupils (e.g. in Poland). Teachers could attribute this impact to three main factors: underprivileged socio-economic status, lack of access to technology, second language learning difficulties enhanced by the lack of face-to-face contact and opportunities to practice the language and engage socially with the surrounding community (e.g. Belgium, Germany).

Other concerns regarded mental health of students and continued focus on achievement and 'learning loss' over their wellbeing (e.g. Belgium). In general, overwork was signalled by both teachers and students. In the UK, in particular, curricular pressure limited activities in the area of Personal Social and Emotional Development, which is usually the one related to intercultural education, children's rights and citizenships.

Problems also concerned teaching methods. In Belgium, some students reported that after online classes, there was no adjustment to the type of material that would be on exams. Moreover, the research showed that school activities involved very little action on the part of the students. It appeared that, despite the pandemic, the schools carried on with "business as usual", and in terms of teaching methodology and tools, there was little adjustment to the way of conducting classes and teaching. In Sweden, many children expressed that, due to high levels of sickness leave among the teachers, they had many supply teachers; this meant that the progress in teaching was slow and sometimes repetitive.

The **experience of remote learning** was not generalized in the European countries. In the UK, there was no remote teaching, despite a long period of school closure. Sweden was the only country in which schools were never closed for students in ISCED1, and much less for students in ISCED2 than ISCED3. Research in ISCED3 was conducted before the lockdown, and the pandemic was not an issue. The interviews with children in ISCED2 were conducted after the schools had opened up again:

while some expressed that they enjoyed studying from home, most did not. Children suffered from being uncomfortable asking questions in the online environment, missed learning from peers, felt that they learned less. While back in school with restrictions to achieve physical distancing, they did not like that they could not sit next to each other. Focus groups and interviews with children showed some appreciation for distance learning in Italy and Poland. In Italy, focus groups with children showed the existence of conflicting experiences: children observed the importance of going to school, but they also revealed that it was easier to manage their time during distance learning, which gave them the chance to personalize their day, their use of time and preferences, living schooling with less anxiety. In Poland a pupil emphasized that with this form of learning she does not encounter (as it was at school) teasing because of her migrant background. In Finland, individual measures were taken for pupils with special needs: in particular, for some migrant children, accessibility of individual support or native language learning increased to some degree; however, accessibility was linked to the availability of technical equipment in times of lockdown.

4.2. CHILD-UP research: reflections about possible resources in time of pandemic

Despite the difficulties, it is possible to propose a reflection on the ways in which the CHILD-UP research could support children's agency in schools. Obviously, the CHILD-UP project was not designed for the specific aim of contrasting the negative effects of the pandemic on children's agency. However, its realisation provided an opportunity to reintroduce in schools children's agency, and thus children's trust in institutional life, and to support flexibility in the education system, involving three connected contributions: (1) the enhancement of facilitative methods, (2) the innovative use of digital platforms, (3) a method for the observation of agency and dialogue.

Research activities on facilitative methods have been held in several schools in the seven countries participating in the project. Teachers were invited to understand the necessity to re-socialise children to agency. Several types of classroom activities may exemplify the aim to re-establish and analyse children's agency (see Section 3). In several cases, schools did pay attention to children's agency, addressing their different voices with the aim of increasing their abilities to deal with multiple views in a dialogic way.

Research during remote teaching was not possible in several countries. In Finland, research activities were not allowed remotely. In Poland, rejection of research was explained by the unequal access to computer equipment among students, lack of preparation for online teaching, and overwork and responsibilities resulting from the new school situation. In Germany, too, equipment was not equally distributed among the students. In Belgium, some students reported that several teachers did not show up for online classes. In the UK, when open, schools were legally obliged to follow strict rules to minimise social contacts that included the impossibility for the researcher to visit the schools at any time. The collection of data for the observation of educational activities was made possible by the cooperation of teachers who accepted to collect data. However, this was possible only as audio-recording of the activities, due to the teachers' limited confidence in the use of video-cameras.

On the contrary, in Italy, several school activities, which were observed by the researchers, were revised and adapted to the new conditions of distancing and contagion prevention, in particular using digital platforms. The following reflections are mainly based on the experience in Italy, where the activities were successfully completed, remotely or in presence.

An important question is if digital platforms can support methods which enhance children's agency. In recent years, the use of digital platforms in education has been largely explored for what concerns both their ambivalent effects and their ideological meanings. A massive use of digital platforms for teaching has certainly negative effects on children's agency, as we have seen above. However, it may be useful to explore how and with which limitations digital platforms allow participation based on personal needs and interests, and facilitation of children's agency, in conditions in which classroom interaction is not possible or allowed in schools.

First, in Italy the use of digital platforms for focus groups became an important opportunity to enhance children's agency during the school closures. Focus groups could provide children with a chance to become again active in the production of personal points of view concerning their social life during the pandemic. They provided the opportunity for children to share their views on the current situation with the researcher and their classmates.

Adapting focus groups to digital platforms is not easy. Non-verbal communication strategies in face-to-face interactions, such as eye-contact or smiles, which are usually adopted to involve children in the discussion, are not an option during digital meetings. However, some other communication channels may be activated as resources for the interaction with children. A good example is the chat function: the children's use of this function replaces the informal background of small talk which is common in classroom interactions. The chat function is also an opportunity for hesitant students to share views with their classmates without taking the floor orally during a meeting. Thus, the chat may become a tool to share children's viewpoints on topics related to their life in general and their school experience in particular.

Digital platforms can also allow facilitation of agency respecting physical distance and lack of access to the classroom. In some cases, in which mixed groups of children were created for a remote activity, the relationship with new mates was entirely constructed through the digital platform, mainly through the chat function. Facilitators could encourage children's personal expressions through several remote activities, including the use of drawings and images. Involvement of children's parents could also be facilitated through digital platforms.

In "mixed" conditions, i.e. when children were in the classroom and researchers and facilitators were online, some strategies could ensure children's participation. For example, during a focus group in a kindergarten, children were asked to express their opinions by moving through different areas in the classroom or showing objects having certain colours, where each area or colour corresponded to a preference. In another case, during a focus group, children who wanted to take the floor moved in front of the camera and talked directly to the researcher. Although this might apparently compromise dialogue among children, it enhanced each child's participation, positioning as a protagonist of the event. This resulted in an amplified sense of personal responsibility.

The use of digital platforms also allowed the relevant methodological problems of video-recording in Italy. Recordings on digital platform was more discreet compared to a camera in front of children in the classroom and when participating children were at home, they seemed to be more confident for a reduced perception of performance, which enhanced richer personal expressions.

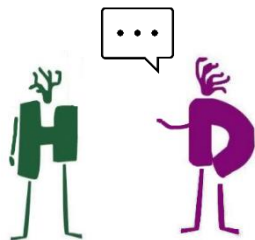
These were ways of introducing flexibility in schools and research through the use of digital platforms, which could enhance children's agency despite the pandemic. Clearly, adaptation and flexibility presented limitations. The lack of eye contact made it impossible to rely on gaze, smiles

or even hesitations to create a relationship with the children. The frequent choice of children to switch camera off added further problems of relational contact. Finally, those activities which included children's use of body as a way of self-expressions could not be realized either through a digital platform or in presence.

5. Preliminary suggestions for education, inclusion and research policies

The research experience which has been presented in section 4 shows how it was possible, and with what limitations, to encourage and investigate children's exercise of agency in schools during the pandemic, through both face-to-face interaction and the use of digital platforms. Focus groups and facilitated activities made the new conditions of life in and out of school evident in different ways: (1) through the specific and unpredictable conditions of the activities, (2) through the teachers' and children's narratives, and (3) through the inclusion of children's agency in the new ways of experiencing schooling.

In general, the CHILD-UP experience highlighted the need of taking planned and systemic actions in schools, considering different possibilities to access computer equipment, different housing conditions of children and teachers, psychological consequences of forced isolation, to avoid the "disappearance" of children, and in particular migrant children, from the education system. What follows is a list of preliminary observations from the CHILD-UP experience during the pandemic, concerning possible resources for the education system.



1. **The creation of spaces for dialogic exchange of narratives related to children's (and adults') experiences can be an opportunity for reflection on experiences based on children's personal expression. The role of the teacher/educator as a coordinator supporting children's agency is pivotal.** It is interesting that, in the UK, the participating schools had been previously involved in a project supporting the use of facilitation to

promote intercultural dialogue based on children's agency which could have empowered the teachers as facilitators, suggesting the beneficial impact of professional development and training. In Italy, several activities were coordinated by educators skilled in facilitative methods. Thus, while teachers and educators can act flexibly within their personal capabilities, strengthening and supporting them in facilitation of dialogue and agency and areas such as intercultural learning and sensitivity to challenges should be a central theme in their (further) education.

2. **It is important to strengthen the digital skills and competence for all participants, in particular an integrated technology use, even when remote teaching is not necessary. There is also a need for well-founded practical guidelines for educators and teachers.** Moreover, families' use of the digital communication applications used by schools is likely to ease the interaction



between families and school personnel. Thus, there should be a **sensitive focus on children / families opportunities to participate in digital learning, including the availability of sufficient**

technical resources and terminal devices. However, it is also important to stress that remote activities should not replace face-to-face teaching and interaction, the lack of which has caused severe difficulties for many learners.



3. The experience of the pandemic has shown that **it is necessary to adjust school requirements and differentiate measures of school success**, particularly for students who struggle with the language of instruction.

4. Schools should develop a **better coordination with a variety of external professionals**, e.g. mediators, speech therapists, psychologists, and social workers. It is necessary to increase **intercultural competences and exchange opportunities for teachers, students and other professionals working with schools**. It is necessary to provide all external professionals with stable employment and good working conditions.

5. **It is important to involve pupils' parents and families more thoroughly in the educational process:** if the parents have a trusting connection to teachers and the institution of school, children can better cope with challenges that they are facing during the pandemic and within daily school life.



6. Through the pandemic, research projects focusing on classroom activities and children's agency in schools have faced an unforeseen and unpredictable challenge. This challenge concerns adaptation of classroom activities to new conditions required by school closures, classroom quarantines, and social distancing. **Research projects require flexibility to grab the unexpected and ability to deal with its effect on social life. They can have the important chance to pave the way to the opening of public space for children's agency, thus facilitating their reflection on changes which deeply affect their lives and the inclusion from the beginning of their agency in school life.** It also seems important that research projects explore and compare conditions of education in different countries. A common feature of these conditions might be enhancement of dialogue, i.e. equal participation in communication based on empowerment of and sensitivity for all personal expressions. Understanding what facilitating dialogue imply in different contexts and what obstacles it may face is the objective of the final phase of the CHILD-UP project.

The recovery of children's personal responsibility requires the recognition of public spaces in which children's views and ways to deal with the unexpected and change are intertwined with adults' constructions of meanings and give valuable contributions to the understanding of a historical condition which can include a sudden outbreak of unpredictable events. In these spaces, children can exercise agency and gain personal responsibility

CHILD-UP shows that European research projects can support the construction of these spaces, highlighting the importance of a collective engagement of adults and children as agents of both support of personal responsibility in school and society, and enhancement of flexibility in the education system.

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