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

**Deliverable**

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## **D8.4 Policy Recommendations**

Deliverable Responsible: Università degli Studi di Modena e Reggio Emilia (UniMoRe)

Deliverable due date: 31/05/2022

Actual submission date: 31/05/2022

Version: 1.0



The project has received the Financial contribution of the *European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme* under the grant agreement No 822400.

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**Document Control Page**

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<b>Title</b>	Policy recommendations
<b>Creator</b>	University of Modena and Reggio Emilia
<b>Description</b>	Policy recommendations
<b>Publisher</b>	Child-Up Consortium
<b>Contributors</b>	All the partners
<b>Creation date</b>	31 May 2022
<b>Type</b>	Report
<b>Language</b>	English
<b>Rights</b>	copyright “Child-Up Consortium”
<b>Audience</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> restricted
<b>Review status</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Draft <input type="checkbox"/> WP leader accepted <input type="checkbox"/> Technical Manager accepted <input type="checkbox"/> Coordinator accepted
<b>Action requested</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> to be revised by Partners <input type="checkbox"/> for approval by the WP leader <input type="checkbox"/> for approval by the Technical Committee <input type="checkbox"/> for approval by the Project Coordinator
<b>Requested deadline</b>	N. A.

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## 1. Introduction

This document is proposed, at the end of the research activities of the CHILD-UP Project, as a synthesis of possible inputs for the present and future policy making at the different institutional levels. Not all recommendations are formulated in a classic operational way, as they have different nature and require some contextualisation work.

It is important to stress that the recent emergency created by the massive flow of children from Ukraine has contributed to the general perception of a sense of urgency that unfortunately was not there before. At this stage, policy makers are searching for practices that can be adapted and reproduced, instruments that can be immediately used to support schools, teachers and other professionals in the integration of migrant children.

However, the relation between researchers on the one hand, and practitioners and policy makers on the other, is not intended here as provision of a set of instructions, but as stimulation to choose actions and strategies autonomously, thus exercising agency.

Moreover, from the CHILD-UP project perspective, innovation processes are scaling up more effectively when they emerge from good practice at a local level and are progressively transferred from a local context to the next local context through an active contribution of local stakeholders fully engaged in the dissemination process. Nevertheless, a reflection on how some lessons learnt from the CHILD-UP research can inform and inspire national and European level public policy on inclusive education can produce favourable conditions for a systemic and quicker improvement of hybrid integration policies and approaches.

First, these recommendations concern the use of core concepts of the CHILD UP project, namely hybrid integration and migrant children's agency as a way to think of integration in a non-conventional way. Second, these recommendations point the connection between a bottom-up perspective and the intervention of public policy in terms of plans and orientations able to transcend the logic of a "project after project" progression.

The recommendations are useful for grassroots professionals like teachers and mediators. However, their implementation requires policy orientation and support, in terms of directives, organisational flexibility, encouragement and reward for achievement, creation of opportunities for exchange of information and network building. Thus, the practice-oriented recommendations are followed by recommendations that have a major focus on creating education policy orientations suitable to actually encourage and consolidate the recommended practices. For instance, the recommended shift of focus from migrant children's performance to migrant children's agency implies a profound review of the way teaching and evaluation are organised at school.

Recommendations are also inspired by the outbreak of the pandemic, which suggests taking remedial as well preventive actions in case of unpredictable conditions and their heavy consequences for migrant children and families. These recommendations are elaborated from the first CHILD-UP policy brief.

The final recommendations concern the innovation proposed by CHILD-UP: the archive of school practices, the training resources and the guidelines, which can support teachers and accelerate the process of hybrid integration, giving children more chances to be active knowledge producers. These recommendations are directly addressing the education and in-service tool for teachers and other education professionals, challenging much of the current practice in this field and calling for a

substantial review of how teaching, assessment and migrant learners' support functions have been codified in formal education.

## 2. CHILD-UP contributions to education policies

### General recommendations

The CHILD-UP data-driven project provides **two general recommendations** for orientation of all educational policies to the **understanding of hybrid integration**.

1. The use of the term “integration” is not neutral and is critical according to several organisations and activists working with migrant children, since it suggests a process through which these children should adhere to the social and cultural conditions of the host country. The rather frequent suggestion to use the term “inclusion” does not seem sufficient to account for the specific social and educational conditions of migrant children. We recommend the use of the concept of “hybrid integration” which stresses that integration is not based on the reduction of cultural differences, but on the interlacement of different personal cultural trajectories that leads to conditions in which new hybrid forms of narratives are produced in communication.
2. In school contexts, hybrid integration can be supported by children's exercise of agency, rather than by children's reception of adults' choices. It is therefore important to empower migrant children to become authors of choices and knowledge, by narrating their personal trajectories and dialoguing with other children and adults. It is also important to support communication with migrant children's parents in order to involve them in their children's experience of school. The combination of children's agency and parents' support of this agency, both based on teachers' action, can enhance migrant children's authority in producing important knowledge on their personal cultural trajectories and changing the social and cultural context in which these trajectories are produced.

### Recommendations for local policies

We highly recommend that **local policies** support **the bottom-up processes**, giving primary value to local conditions and effort in promoting and supporting hybrid integration:

1. It is important to support local practices rather than abstract values, in particular when dealing with sensitive themes, such as migration, intercultural relations, dialogue, citizenship, and so on.
2. The support of sustainability for local practices should not be occasional or based on specific or sporadic projects. An accurate policy is based on a sustainable and systematic implementation of plans that allow the enrichment of direct knowledge on what is important in school life to improve it in the direction of migrant children's agency and hybrid integration.

Further recommendations for **local policies** concern **specific actions to take in schools**, with the aim:



1. To discourage the widespread use of monolingual classroom communication with migrant children, by improving the use of language mediation when there are language barriers and supporting opportunities for migrant children to speak their mother tongue, in particular through interrelated discursive practices that can enhance and support migrant children's languages in the classroom (tranlanguaging).
2. To support a more friendly school as a meeting place, including non-hierarchical and more relaxed relations, reducing the distance between migrant children and teachers, and supporting children's planning of changes of the physical space.
3. To support migrant children's interest in participating in their own education, their responsibility for this participation, and their production of personal narratives about their feelings and experiences.
4. To support migrant children's creative ideas, dissent, initiatives, active participation in school decisions and classroom design.
5. To support engagement and solidarity in case of discrimination, and appropriate reactions to migrant children's problems, in particular problems in the language of instruction.

The implementation of local policies requires particular attention for the relations between schools and their community contexts. CHILD-UP was primarily focused on education, but it also involved families and professionals working with educational institutions, such as social workers, educators (working in cooperatives and agencies), mediators or interpreters. In particular, the CHILD-UP project implemented Local Stakeholders Committees which were very useful to create connections at the local level. In the light of this experience, to promote hybrid integration, we recommend to implement:

1. Interactional processes between schools and external stakeholders to construct knowledge and practices. Involving external stakeholders in local practices is much more productive and effective for the education system than supporting national or international actions which are not sufficiently attuned to local conditions.
2. The systematic use of language mediation, to improve interactions with migrant parents, not only providing information to parents, but also collecting their points of view and discussing the meanings of agency and hybrid integration in the relation between schools and families.
3. The enhancement of active collaboration between teachers and external facilitators/educators to create the conditions of successful facilitation of classroom/group activities.
4. The use of facilitation in meetings between teachers and others professionals or organisations in the local community.
5. The exploitation of all opportunities for migrant children's language acquisition in the community.

### **Recommendations for national and European policies**

The implementation of local policies cannot be isolated from policies at wider level. Rather, this implementation requires strong and radical policies at national and European level. These policies can promote:

1. The shift of focus from migrant children's performances to migrant children's agency, as a more appropriate way of improving learning, since exercise of agency can show children's abilities and competences.



2. The shift of the way of interacting in the classroom, from hierarchical to facilitative, thus taking into account migrant children's interest in methods that are open to their own needs and interests.
3. The use of facilitative actions in all types of school, since they can be used from early childhood to adolescence to promote hybrid integration.
4. The teachers' responsibility for adapting facilitative actions locally, depending on age, gender, language proficiency, conditions of hybrid integration (e.g. number of migrant children, time spent by migrant children in the local school system, conditions determined by their families, etc.) and their own specific abilities.

### **Recommendations about the ways of facing unpredictable conditions and their consequences**

After the pandemic, the support migrant children's agency in case of unpredictable conditions has become particularly important. Unpredictable conditions can increase poverty in migrant families and difficulties of hybrid integration of migrant children, due to isolation, lack of equipment for online teaching and contacts, lack of parents' expertise in technologies or contacts with schools. Against this background, the CHILD-UP experience cannot provide suggestions against poverty and marginalisation in general, but it can suggest some specific actions based on its observation of the effects of the pandemic. CHILD-UP recommends:

- To strengthen the digital skills and competence of migrant children and make available technical resources and terminal devices to them.
- To adjust school requirements and differentiate measures of school success for migrant children who are isolated, still struggle with the language of instruction and have no more opportunities to improve their language skills.
- To support the active involvement of migrant parents and families, so that migrant children can better cope with the challenges they face.
- To introduce flexibility to grab the unexpected and ability to deal with its effect on social life by opening public spaces for migrant children's agency and facilitating their reflection on changes which deeply affect their lives and the inclusion of their agency in school life.
- To recover migrant children's personal responsibility in providing views and ways to deal with unexpected changes, co-constructing their meanings with professionals and thus giving valuable contributions to the understanding of the historical inclusion of the outbreak of unpredictable conditions.

### **Resources that can be used to apply CHILD-UP recommendations**

Starting from its research findings, the CHILD-UP project has provided three important resources that can be used in local situations. This use can be oriented and supported at National and European levels.

**The archive**, which includes 124 written documents and 32 audio-video of selected facilitated interactions to support local schools and stakeholders in the implementation of new practices. With a single meta-search, quantitative data, qualitative data and, if available audio-video files can be reached, distinguishing between genders, school grades, any combination of these, and more. We sustain that the construction of specialised and interactive digital archives is much more effective to support migrant children's agency and hybrid integration than big and general datasets.

**The data-driven training package (including a Massive Open Online Course)**, which is designed to support professional, offering practical tools to transform promotion of migrant children's agency and hybrid integration, to promote skills and communication strategies in professional practice and to empower users as agents of innovation in communicating with migrant children. Users can choose to work independently (using the MOOC) or share their training with colleagues to analyse materials included in the training handbook.

**The guidelines**, which aim to give orientation to those professionals who are interested to enhance dialogue, migrant children's agency and hybrid integration. The guidelines aim to support the planning and design of activities that are inspired to innovation following the results of the CHILD-UP research.

The combined use of CHILD-UP archive, training programme and guidelines can extend the promotion of agency and hybrid integration to European schools and communities, supporting educational policies that aim to enhance local practices. For this purpose, the **political encouragement** of the following aims of innovation among professionals is highly recommended:

1. To increase recognition and ability to support agency and hybrid integration, rather than knowledge about cultural values and intercultural issues.
2. To clarify the differences among hybridisation, value of cultural differences and forms of assimilation.
3. To learn to use basic facilitative actions that can enhance and support children's agency.
4. To learn to support children's narratives of personal cultural trajectories and interlacements among these narratives, by using appropriate materials.
5. To learn to use facilitative actions and mediation to support the effective participation of parents.