

Rationale and goal of the project

European Union Commission puts emphasis on education and training policy that enables all citizens, irrespective of their personal, social or economic circumstances, to acquire, update and develop over a lifetime both job-specific skills and the key competences needed for their employability and to foster further learning, active citizenship and intercultural dialogue. It is also believed that early childhood education and care can lay the foundations for these goals in life in terms of education, well-being, employability, and social integration, especially for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. Educational disadvantage should be addressed by providing high quality early childhood education and targeted support, and by promoting inclusive education. Inclusive education can be defined as the education of children with and without disabilities in the same setting, mostly in classrooms. In most cases, inclusive education is regarded as an evolutionary process which aims at responding to the different needs of children, and that values diversity while promoting the respect of differences. Its primary goal is to fight marginalization and exclusion. Inclusive education can be regarded as an important way to achieve “Education for All”.

The responsibilities and roles of teachers change with inclusive practices and teachers are expected to understand the characteristics of children with disadvantages, adapt the curriculum according to their developmental level and interact with all children, including the ones with disadvantages. In addition to their traditional roles and responsibilities, teachers are also responsible for the development and improvement of all children in their classrooms by creating an appropriate learning environment, involving all of the students in learning activities, and using evidence-based strategies. Moreover, they should have knowledge about the methods for development and implementation of individualized education programs. Furthermore, they are expected to have knowledge and skills in using behavioral interventions and effective classroom management that can facilitate teaching children with diverse abilities. However, previous literature states that preschool and elementary school teachers are not adequately prepared to teach children with disadvantages and they do not have sufficient knowledge and skills to teaching in inclusive classrooms. In addition, since pre-service training offers little to teachers to prepare them for this kind of work, there is concern about inadequacy of teacher preparation in terms of meeting the educational needs of disadvantaged children.

The main goal of the project is to produce a manual with the models of inclusive education of the different participating countries and a created transnational model with all the best components together in the languages of participating countries to be used in teacher preparation for the development of competencies and talents of children in inclusive classrooms, as intellectual output of the project. Next to it, this model will be illustrated with ‘good practices’ from different countries as case studies. The model will also be supported by examples of activities developed by experts of the different countries in different disciplines. This model and the activities for good

practices will be introduced to the pre-service teachers to evaluate the effectiveness of the manual. It will also be provided in the languages of participating countries.

The objectives are:

-To make a snapshot of inclusive education in different countries and to develop a frame with best accents in inclusive education.

-To provide a manual including activities in diverse fields for the education children with disadvantages , which can be used in inclusive classrooms with video recorded case studies.

-To provide the manual developed during the project in languages of participating countries.

-To provide opportunities for participants to gain knowledge and intercultural understanding about developing competencies and talents of disadvantaged children in inclusive classrooms through lectures, workshops and school visits and case studies;

-To provide participants with opportunities to learn about different good practices in developing competencies and talents of children with disadvantages in different countries in international group works;

-To encourage participants to reflect about their experiences and to think how they can implement the good practices they will see in their future teaching profession in international group works;

-To provide an opportunity to participate in an exchange between professionals in European Union about the education of children with disadvantages.