

SIRIUS Watch 2019

Mapping prior learning of newly arrived migrant pupils in Europe

Teaching and learning strategies should take account of learners' linguistic and cultural diversity and capitalise on this potential. The educational offer in the host countries must build on the strengths and already acquired knowledge of newly arrived pupils.



Schools need to have capacity and tools to map and adequately assess competences these learners already have.

Key stages of prior learning mapping and assessment

Government
recommendations, regulations
or provided support tools



I Stage Arriving to a host country

Accessing information about education system (in the reception centres, organised information workshops, other).



II Stage Assessment

- ✦ **Place of assessment** (school, reception centres, other).
- ✦ **Involved educational and social actors** (teachers, psychologists, parents, counsellors, other).
- ✦ **Assessment criteria** (age, certification, specific skills/competences, social context, other).
- ✦ **Assessment process** (timing, language, specific procedures).



III Stage Outcome

Use of assessment results (identifying suitable grade level, developing individual learning plan, other) and placement.



Research questions

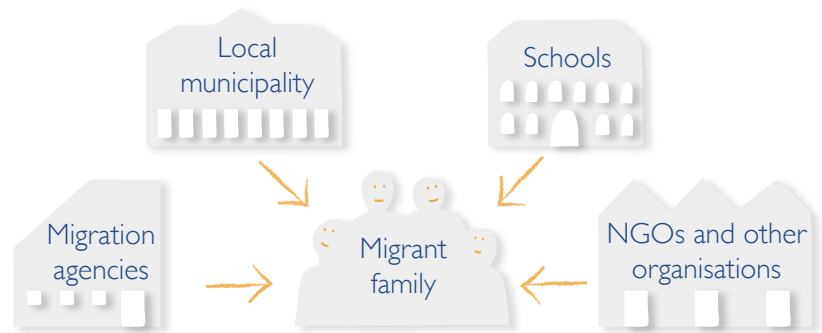
1. What are the current procedures and frameworks across Europe to assess competences and talents that newly arrived migrant children bring to the classrooms?
2. How are these procedures and frameworks implemented in schools?

Maximum time period for schools to enrol newly arrived migrants in primary or general secondary education (days)

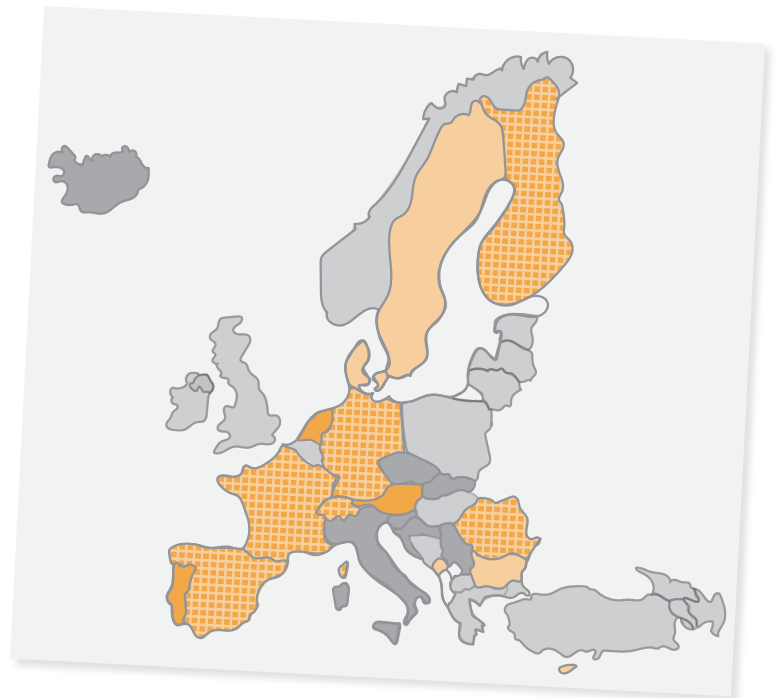
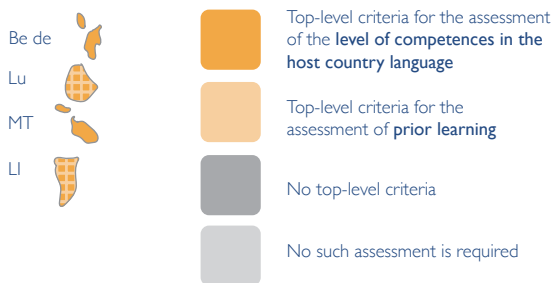
In most countries the time period from application for residence permit, asylum or international protection until the enrolment of children of schooling age in public education institutions is legally defined, although the time itself varies.

Country	BE (NL)	BE (FR)	DK	EE	EL	CY	LV	LT	LU	
Days	60	0	21	84	84	84	91	30/90	84	
Country	AT	RO	SI	SK	SE	EN	WA	IS	LI	NO
Days	3	90	90	84	28	20	20	84	0	28

Various actors providing information on education in the host country



Existence of top-level criteria for the assessment of prior learning and competences in the host country language across Europe



Source: European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice (2019) "Integrating Students from Migrant Backgrounds into Schools in Europe: National Policies and Measures" Eurydice Report. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, p. 81

National guidelines or regulations mainly refer to the registration process, which consists of two main elements: the enrolment of newly arrived migrant students in the education system and their placement in schools. In countries where regulation or guidance is available, the education authorities have a more active and relevant role in the registration process, while in countries with limited or no national-level guidelines, the schools become the central actors.

Existing guidelines and regulations on reception and assessment of newly arriving pupils with migrant background emphasize different aspects of assessment to a varying extent:

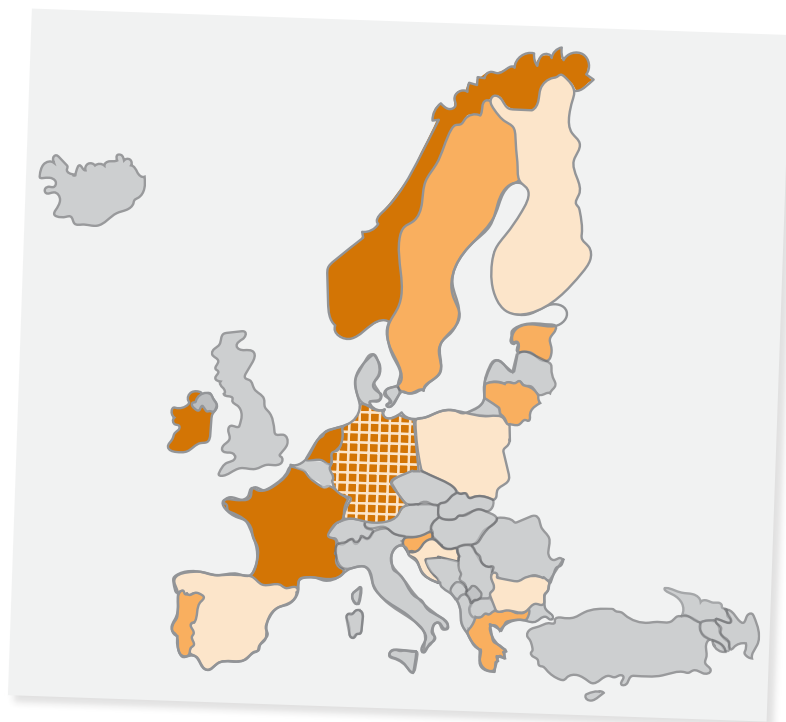


- ✦ Many define the responsible actor.
- ✦ The scope of assessment is rarely indicated.
- ✦ In many countries, **content of assessment depends on individual school provisions or the staff.** Three main trends in assessment, namely:
 - 1) the assessment includes only the language of the host country;
 - 2) the assessment includes a variety of subjects (such as maths, science, literacy); and
 - 3) the assessment includes socio-emotional and psychological tests – or the combination of these elements.
- ✦ In most cases, the assessment results will become part of the child's **individual portfolio** – a folder which includes all relevant academic and personal information of a child and can be used to track progress over a longer period of time.

Documentation of assessment results across SIRIUS countries

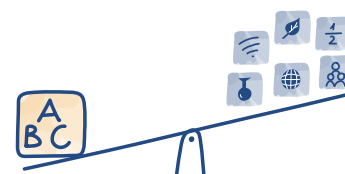


Source: PPMI, compiled based on country reports



Findings

- ❖ **Practices employed in assessing previously gained knowledge are not yet comprehensive in many Member States.** In some cases, children's limited knowledge of language of instruction may stand as a barrier for adequately assessing children's educational background and children may end up being enrolled in school grades that are significantly below their age and cognitive abilities. Misplacement, linguistic barriers and various other factors explain the large share of migrant children among low achievers as assessed by PISA 2015.
- ❖ **While progress is being made in the recognition of foreign diplomas and certificates, countries across Europe lack clear strategies and materials for the assessment of prior learning by migrant children.** Few regulations and policies exist, which point mainly at the procedures for enrolment. Where national provisions on assessment are present, they rarely refer to the scope and content of assessment, but merely indicate that assessment for NAMs is mandatory. As a result, schools are the main actors in assessment in almost all countries and they receive little support in the execution of this responsibility.
- ❖ **In most countries involved in the study, language of the host country is the focus point of the assessment procedure.** Since comprehension of this language is crucial for proper integration in mainstream education, the importance of proficiency in the host country's language cannot be downplayed. However, experts noted that the strong focus on linguistic skills limits the attention of assessors to other competences of the child. A lower score in the language test can cause a child to be placed in an educational pathway that is below the child's abilities. Therefore, assessment practices should create a holistic picture of a child, including a variety of competences and subject knowledge.
- ❖ **Schools across Europe have significant autonomy in the assessment of prior learning of migrant children due to the lack of clear and coherent strategies and procedures on the national levels.** Teachers and school staff are free to select the assessment materials they find suitable or to develop materials themselves. While experts pointed to the benefits of individualised assessment materials, building on the strengths of each individual child, the lack of national strategies, guidelines or financial support significantly limits the resources available to assessors for conducting a thorough assessment of the skills and competences of a child.



Recommendations

- ✦ **Ensure on a national level that sufficient resources are available for schools to conduct a holistic assessment of migrant children that highlights their strengths, weaknesses, skills and competences in a variety of subjects.** This includes the availability of interpreters and of psychologists for children who may have experienced trauma, as well as the financial and time resources to establish assessment committees or at least a second person reviewing the placement decisions.
- ✦ **Develop national-level guidelines for assessment which provide enough (standardized) test materials or other tools for teacher to use, but allow for sufficient autonomy for teachers to adapt tests to the individual circumstances of a child.** This approach should ensure that the risk of teacher bias is limited (which could occur if teachers rely mainly on interviews and linguistic capacities), but also allows teachers to adapt materials and techniques to ensure that each child has the chance to show their full capabilities.
- ✦ **Encourage teachers to effectively use the assessment results both to determine the suitable grade, as well as the individualised learning path.** The assessment results should indicate which subjects or skills are more challenging for a child and require additional attention. Subsequently, efforts should be made to ensure that these challenges are addressed through additional classes, separate classes, or through individual support within the mainstream class.
- ✦ **Continue the assessment throughout the year to monitor the progress of the child and determine whether the grade placement and supporting learning plan are effective.** Various factors can contribute to lower performance during the assessment (e.g., trauma or limited linguistic skills). Therefore, teachers should continuously assess whether the child demonstrates new or improved skills throughout the year that were not noted during the initial assessment. If so, the child's educational pathway should be amended.

