TUTOR

Teachers' upskilling aiming at a holistic inclusivity in learning

The Teacher Academy for
Inclusive Education

**Co-funded by
the European Union**

Word from the TUTOR team

Dear Readers,

We are thrilled to welcome you back to the second edition of TUTOR Newsletter.

We would like to take a moment to reflect on the progress we've made thus far and provide a sneak peek into the exciting initiatives that lie ahead:

- Over the past months, our dedicated team has been working hard to develop and deliver the first outcome of the TUTOR project: <u>The desired state in terms of inclusiveness in the school community</u>. We've engaged in open consultations with secondary education and VET teachers, and stakeholders in Greece, Austria, Turkey, Ireland, and across the EU. These interactions enabled us to gather invaluable insights on key themes such as inclusive education, intersectionality and diversity in education in relation to the specific student cohorts, Initial Teacher Education and Continuous Professional Development for teachers in inclusive education.

- We are involved in the process of completing the current status report on inclusive education based on the information and inputs acquired from our online survey and in-depth conversations with educators and relevant stakeholders. This report promises to be a valuable resource for educators, policymakers, and advocates, shedding light on the current state of inclusive education and offering insights for the road ahead.

- Additionally, TUTOR consortium partners are actively engaging in targeted meetings both at national and European levels to connect with stakeholders and policymakers invested in inclusive education with the shared goal of promoting our project's mission, fostering collaboration, garnering support, and ensuring our project's message resonates far and wide.

- In recent months, TUTOR partners have been actively engaged in the creation of the Ambassadors Forum, a platform to enhance communication and knowledge sharing among them, and organizing a Stakeholders' Validation Consultation to deepen comprehension of inclusive education through research findings.

Stay tuned for the upcoming project deliverables and initiatives that will continue to shape the landscape of inclusive education across Europe. We encourage you to keep following our journey and join us in our mission to create a more inclusive and nurturing educational experience for all.

Enjoy reading, and stay tuned for all the upcoming updates on our progress in the coming months!

Why TUTOR Project?

The TUTOR project aims to improve educational systems in Europe, by implementing inclusive education. This is not just a goal, but it is a means to a brighter and inclusive future, ensuring that every student receives the education they deserve, regardless of their background or abilities. Are you aware of what inclusive education entails?

At the end of the day, inclusive education brings diversity to the educational environment, in other words, it means an enriched learning for the students, learning from each other and promoting critical thinking. On the other hand, it reduces the prejudices and stereotypes, and promotes not only understanding, tolerance and empathy, but also better decision-making, while collaborating effectively with people with different backgrounds, bringing to the table diversity on perspectives.

At this point, dear reader, you might be wondering: what about the teachers?

The educational journey starts with teachers, who play a key role in implementing inclusive education, making teachers more conscious of issues related to diversity, inclusion and intersectionality. This increased awareness is essential for enhancing educational systems, with a special focus on catering to the needs of historically marginalized groups of students, including LGBTIQ+ students, migrants, refugees, asylum-seekers, and socioeconomically disadvantaged students. That is why, TUTOR project aims to focus on:

1. Effective Instruction

Build on the innovations and effective practices in order to improve teachers' abilities to use resources to create an inclusive environment

2. Promoting Inclusivity

Foster inclusive classroom environment through which learners of diversified backgrounds know that their thoughts and ideas matter, and their opinions and concerns can be voiced in a safe and supportive atmosphere
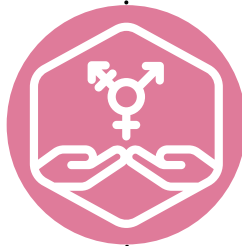
3. Improving education policies & practices

Develop a joint curriculum on inclusivity contributing to the improvement of teachers practices at the EU level
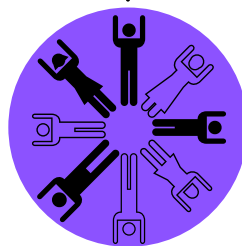
4. Preparing for diverse realities

To provide a response to the need of an efficient adaptation of the traditional classrooms to a new, more inclusive environment, open to migrants, socio-economic backgrounds, disabled students, LGBTQI+, among others, with a special focus on safeguarding tolerance, acceptance and inclusion

Find Out More

Main Activities and Updates

First Deliverable of the Project

We are delighted to introduce the first output of the TUTOR project – the Desired Status Report. This comprehensive report delves into the landscape of inclusive education within our partner countries: Greece, Austria, Turkey, and Ireland, as well as the broader European context. The report incorporates insights gathered from an open consultation process conducted in December 2022 and January 2023.
Let's explore the report's key components:

Transnational Literature Review

This section provides a detailed overview of literature reviewed in our partner countries and at the EU-wide level. It delves into national and EU policies, frameworks, and research regarding inclusive education. A special focus is given to students from LGBTQI+, migrant and ethnic minorities, and socio-economic backgrounds. The report highlights the concept of "intersectionality," which explores how various social identities, such as race, gender, class, and ability, intersect to create unique experiences of privilege, oppression and discrimination. It emphasizes the need to broaden the definition of inclusive education beyond just students with disabilities and education special needs.

Findings from Open Consultation

The second section presents findings from an open consultation process involving teachers and education stakeholders. These consultations occurred in diverse educational settings, including second level, Vocational Education and Training (VET), and Further Education and Training (FET). The open consultation process mirrors the themes explored in the literature review, including inclusive education, intersectionality, diversity in education, and Initial Teacher Education (ITE) and Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for teachers, with its key themes and recommendations presented on the next page.

## Themes and Recommendations from Partner Countries:

Greece

Identifies a lack of holistic inclusive education in teacher training. Recommendations include empowering teachers through cooperative teaching, promoting lifelong learning, and creating support networks. Policies and laws supporting diverse needs for inclusion, teacher training in inclusivity, and improved learning environments are also encouraged.

Austria

Advocates for raising awareness of diversity and inclusion, particularly regarding the Roma community. Focuses on systemic approaches, resource-oriented teaching, and fostering teacher-parent collaboration. Calls for changes at personal, school, and policy levels, emphasizing the need for training and resources.
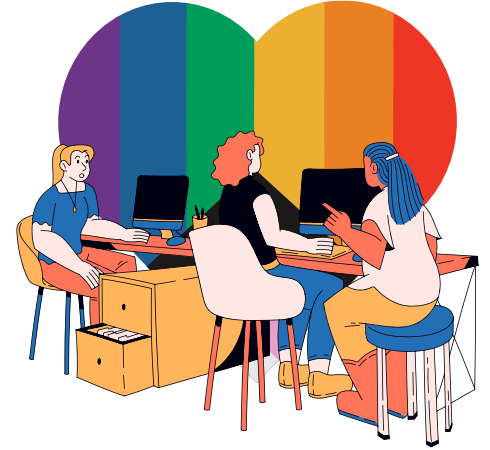
Turkey

Highlights the importance of equipping teachers with skills for inclusive education. Suggests ongoing professional development, increased resources, and awareness campaigns. Collaboration among stakeholders and a stronger curriculum on diversity are crucial. Teacher support in creating inclusive classrooms is also emphasized.

Ireland

Acknowledges a gap between inclusive policies and practical implementation. Challenges include teacher shortages, housing costs and diversity representation in the teaching profession. Advocates comprehensive system changes, teacher training addressing diverse student needs, and the inclusion of various issues within inclusive education.

Find Out More

Showcasing TUTOR Project's Inclusivity Mission

TUTOR Teacher Academies project at Irish conferences in 2023

Margaret Nugent and Michael Kenny introduced the TUTOR Project to Irish academic and research audiences at the 2023 Educational Association of Ireland conference in Stansmills, Belfast in May 2023 and the International Action Research Colloquium in Dublin City University in June 2023. These key conferences for Irish education researchers warmly welcomed the aims of the TUTOR project to enhance holistic inclusivity in learning. The primary focus was to address the gaps and explore inclusive capacities that educators employ to respond to the growing diversity evident in their classrooms.
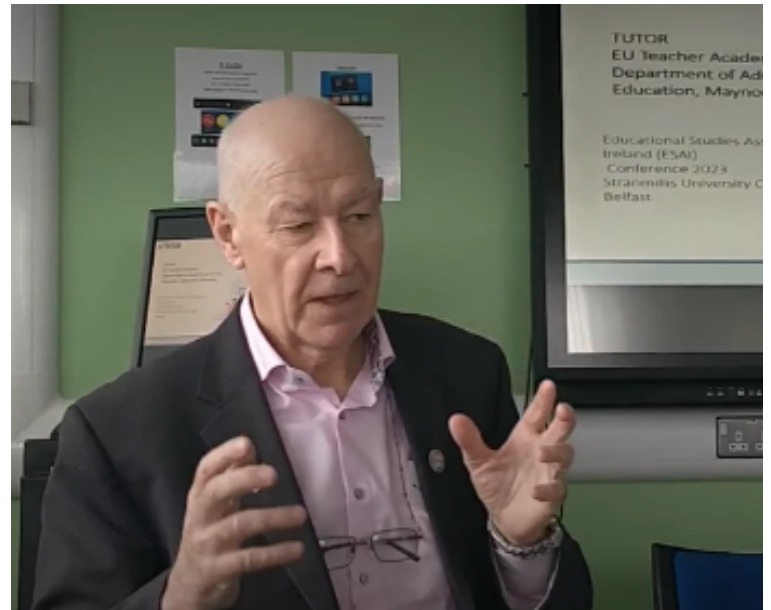
At the heart of the TUTOR project lies a commitment to ensuring that every learner, regardless of their background, abilities, or differences, can thrive in an inclusive educational environment. The conferences provided a unique opportunity to engage in meaningful dialogue with education researchers, educators, and practitioners. The discussions were not only enlightening but also offered valuable insights into the challenges faced by educators in meeting the needs of a diverse student population.

Participants at the Irish conferences were enthusiastic about the TUTOR project's goals and eagerly shared their experiences for creating more inclusive classrooms. The commitment to inclusivity and the dedication to addressing the unique needs of each student were evident in the discussions and presentations.

Amplifying Impact: The TUTOR Ambassadors Forum Takes Flight

The TUTOR Ambassadors Initiative aimed at fostering communication and knowledge exchange within our transformative project has been launched. Our consortium members from Greece, Ireland, Turkey, and Austria have come together to create a dedicated forum that will extend the reach and impact of our project's mission. We are in the process of selecting TUTOR Ambassadors who will be the driving force behind "spreading the word" about our project and its myriad benefits. Their impact will extend from their professional networks, reaching a wider audience at regional and national levels.

The Ambassadors will be the catalysts behind our project's dissemination and exploitation process, creating a promotional movement through engaging Facebook Live Events and connect with national influencers in their field to mobilize support for inclusive education. Ambassadors will be entrusted with various roles, including spreading awareness of the project's scope, objectives and actively participating in our project's training activities.

Exciting news!

We are thrilled to announce that Jamie Kenny has been appointed as the TUTOR Country Ambassador for Ireland, joining our esteemed team of Ambassadors dedicated to advancing inclusive education. Jamie Kenny's extensive experience and commitment to creating inclusive spaces make him a perfect fit for this pivotal role.

Meet Jamie Kenny:

Jamie currently serves as the Executive Director of Dublin LGBTQ+ Pride, where he plays a significant role in advocating for LGBTQ+ rights and creating safe and inclusive environments for all. His journey of advocacy extends across several LGBTQ+ organizations in Dublin, Belfast, and Derry, where he has worked in both youth work and community engagement positions.

His passion for supporting marginalized individuals and ensuring accessibility to Queer Spaces aligns perfectly with TUTOR's mission to foster inclusivity and diversity in education. His commitment to tackling stigma and discrimination resonates deeply with our project's objectives. As a TUTOR Ambassador, Jamie will leverage his extensive network and knowledge to promote the cause of inclusive education and will actively participate in our project's training activities and engage with influencers in his field to mobilize support for our mission.

Building an Inclusive Advisory Group for Teacher Upskilling

We are delighted to announce the initiation of the identification process for the members of TUTOR Advisory Group. The establishment of this Advisory Group represents a key step in ensuring that TUTOR's policy recommendations that will be drafted during the upcoming months are not only well-informed but also practical and comprehensive. The Advisory Group will act as the primary point for providing strategic advice on project activities and policy validation. It will consist of 5 experts with proven expertise in the field of inclusive education. These members will be carefully chosen based on their skills, knowledge, and alignment with the project's goals, ensuring that they are deeply committed to inclusive education and knowledgeable about the issues that affect diverse student populations.

The members of the Advisory Group will play an important role in ensuring the policy relevance of our work through providing feedback to TUTOR project partners. Their responsibilities will include making sure that the policy recommendations align with the needs of secondary education and VET teachers, while also ensuring that the project is in line with EU policy trends on inclusive education.

To sum up, TUTOR Advisory Group will be instrumental in shaping and validating policy recommendations that are not only responsive but also impactful. With their involvement, the TUTOR partners will be able to design policy recommendations that are socially relevant, financially feasible, and technically achievable.

Unlocking Collaboration: Engaging Stakeholders in Inclusive Education

We're excited to share our latest initiative to engage stakeholders and policymakers deeply committed to promoting holistic inclusivity in educational settings and enhancing teacher education policies and practices in Europe.

In recent weeks, TUTOR project partners have initiated a series of meetings with those who hold a vested interest in inclusive education to actively involve them in our mission. Our project is not only about research, it's about making a tangible impact on teachers' education policies and practices in Europe. For this reason, these meetings serve several important purposes, by ensuring that stakeholders who can make a difference in the domain of inclusive education are well-informed about the scope and significance of our work and the impact we aspire to achieve.

Their involvement brings diverse perspectives and valuable insights to the table, enriching the collaborative process. By fostering a sense of shared ownership in our project, we aim to strengthen the connections that bind us together in this endeavor. By involving stakeholders, we're ensuring that the outcomes we develop are not just recognized but also put into active use. Our aim is to see these resources actively incorporated into educational practices of secondary education and VET teachers in project implementing countries and beyond.
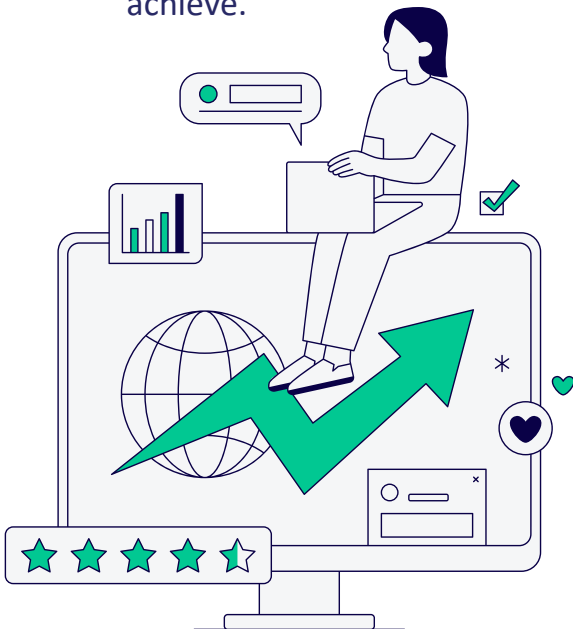
Inclusive education is not a solitary endeavor; it's a collective commitment. By collaborating with stakeholders and policymakers, we are forging the path toward a more inclusive educational landscape.

Good Practices & Guidelines

Creating an inclusive and equitable educational environment is paramount for all students to thrive. Here are some valuable practices that foster inclusive learning experiences, accessibility, respectful interactions, community-building, and support for diverse students. These practices provide a roadmap for fostering inclusive and equitable education, where all students can thrive and reach their full potential.

1 Change the focus

Don't focus just on creating programmes for specific target groups. Inclusive education not only means creating these specific programmes but offers learning opportunities and learning environments where all students feel welcome.

2 Foster Inclusive leadership & Whole school approach

School leaders need to advocate for activities targeted at improving inclusion, and all teachers, non-teaching staff, parents and local communities' involvement are proved to be beneficial.

3 Focus on local needs & specificities

Awareness of the socio-demographic context is vital to be able to design activities focused on inclusive education. Insights can be obtained through statistical data, complemented by intensifying dialogues between school and community, and between staff and individual learners.

4 Inclusiveness of education offer

Teachers must be competent and master a range of methods and tools for creating inspiring and inclusive learning. This calls for a focus on continued professional development of teachers.

5 Use variety of learning environments

Varied learning environments, including hands-on and non-formal learning, stimulate creativity, self-esteem, and courage to express oneself are crucial to fostering inclusion and well-being. Including virtual and outside school premises environments, has a positive Impact on students' motivation, well-being, and academic achievement.

6 Include peer-to-peer mentoring

It is an effective way to support students and to help them integrate into the school environment.

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Resources on inclusive education

Promoting diversity and inclusion in schools in Europe

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Policies and practices to support successful and inclusive education

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Equity and Inclusion in Education: Finding Strength through Diversity

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Meet the Team

Partners
11 partners from 5 countries:
Greece, Ireland, Austria, Turkey, Belgium

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