

# Inclusion4Schools

## D3.2. Online Communication Platforms for School-University Partnerships at National Level



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## Inclusion4Schools Project Summary

The emerging European context is to a large extent characterized by widening and deepening inequalities, the crisis of democracy, and the disintegration of communities. It is especially the case in the Central-Eastern European semiperipheral, post-socialist context, where there is a growing tendency of rearticulating authoritarian, nationalist, neoconservative discourses, which are increasingly infiltrating the political landscape within and beyond Europe. This „retrotopia“ is conducive to the hegemonic production of an imaginary social homogeneity, which consequently stirs up reactionary xenophobia, fear, and hatred through the construction of external intruders (e.g. the migrant) and enemies within (e.g. the Roma). Such a milieu steeped in fear tears up old wounds and produces new divisions as well, hence the construction of new walls – symbolically, as well as physically. Since the leitmotif of this programme is primarily educational, the proposed action targets such (imaginary, symbolic, and real) walls of exclusion which are intended to segregate children (based on class, ethnicity, gender, etc.), which are meant to divide and alienate the local communities to which those children nonetheless belong, thus actively (re)producing inequalities. **In contrast to the power- relations of exclusion, the culture of silence, and the reproduction of unjust structures, the project aims to foster and promote pedagogical relations of inclusion, a culture of dialogue, and the transformation of unjust structures through education.** Running in parallel to the research and innovation actions the central objectives of the proposed action are

(1) to support and coordinate community schools (as being central to the constitution and maintenance of cohesive local communities) and their respective communities of practice, and

(2) to create a place and culture of sharing (knowledge, praxis, solidarity) between such communities by initiating and coordinating the convergence and synergies of local, regional and transnational communities.

The expected impact of the proposed project is to contribute to the European initiatives and interventions that aim at reversing inequalities. Adopting a mission-oriented, impact-focused approach to address the specific challenges of the call, synergies will be enhanced between the relevant stakeholders through coordinating and supporting the cooperation between teachers, researchers, local communities and other relevant stakeholders (such as policy-makers), in order to generate networks of policy development and to promote the policy uptake of the project.



## Partners

Participant No	Participant organisation name	Country
1	<a href="#">Regional Centre for Information and Scientific Development</a>	Hungary
2	<a href="#">John Wesley Theological College</a>	Hungary
3	<a href="#">C.E.G.A. Foundation</a>	Bulgaria
4	<a href="#">J. Selye University</a>	Slovakia
5	<a href="#">Oltalom Charity Society</a>	Hungary
6	<a href="#">Albanian National Orphans Association</a>	Albania

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## The objectives of the project, by setting up the Online Communication Platform

One of the objectives of the Inclusion4Schools project is to promote cooperation between institutions, organisations working with disadvantaged children and teacher training institutions. During the implementation of the project, the feedback and sharing of experiences of the different actors led to the conclusion that there was a need to improve the efficiency of communication. Students studying at university and participating in teacher training courses are generally not from disadvantaged backgrounds and have not studied in schools where students from such backgrounds constitute the majority. School experiences are crucial in shaping their own teacher identity and influence students' career choices. The majority of teachers have no direct experience of such institutions either. Thus, the specificities of such schools may be left out of the curriculum of teacher education. Students in TE might not get an idea of the specific dimensions of the work in such schools.

On the other hand, schools for disadvantaged children accumulate a lot of important and useful knowledge that often fails to be incorporated into the curriculum taught in universities. Good practices in schools represent knowledge that could contribute to the enrichment of knowledge in universities.

Among the various forms of communication, online interaction is a prominent one, which can bring together actors from different fields. Our aim was to create a platform to facilitate knowledge sharing, joint thinking and collaboration between universities, teacher training institutions and schools.



## One of the functions of the Inclusion4Schools portal

As we have already indicated in previous reports, in this project we did not create separate online platforms for the various tasks, but a single portal capable of handling different knowledge sharing activities. Thus, part of the development of the portal was to consider the needs of universities and schools for disadvantaged children. The portal provides them with an opportunity for dialogue and communication. This is integrated into the knowledge sharing of the different actors in general. Dedicated features can serve the dialogue between universities and schools. Our aim is to encourage and facilitate this dialogue on the portal throughout the project.

## The opportunities on the portal for this function

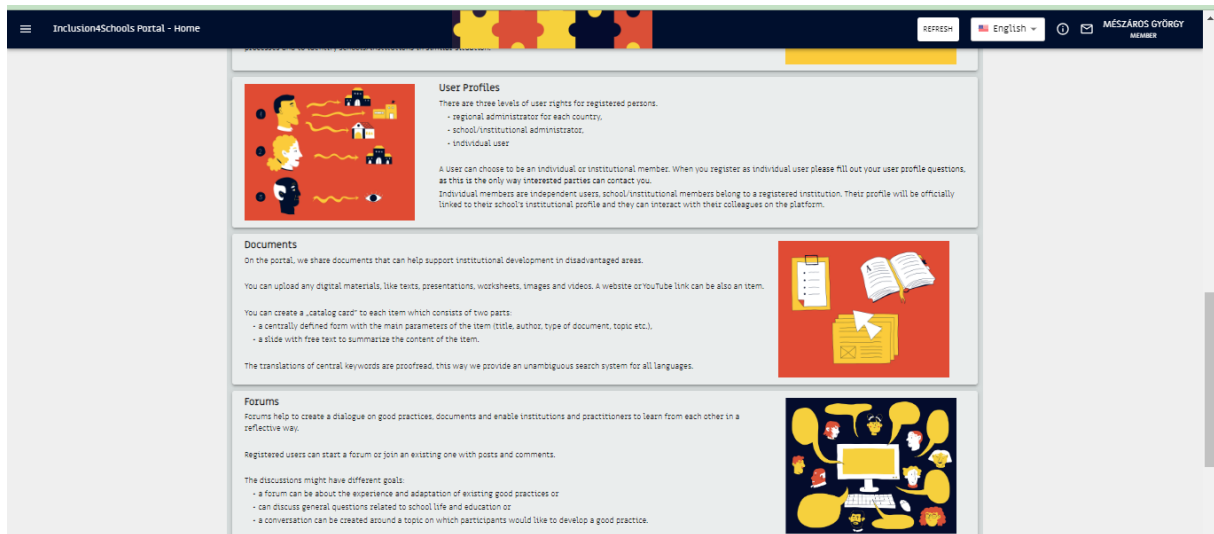
The portal contains catalogues of institutions, documents, various digital materials, events and good practices, which can be uploaded and searched by attributes, characteristics and keywords. On the other hand, the portal creates a platform for communication between the different actors through forums and workshops.

**Events**  
In addition to sharing digital material, the portal also allows you to organise meetings in person or online.  
Any registered member can announce an event. A centrally defined form describes the necessary data to fill, but it can be adjusted to the specific circumstances of the event. E.g. different data are needed to an online event than a live event.  
A potential target group can be addressed if they are invited to the event. Interested members can join the event by filling the prepared registering form, and after the event they can give feedback on it.

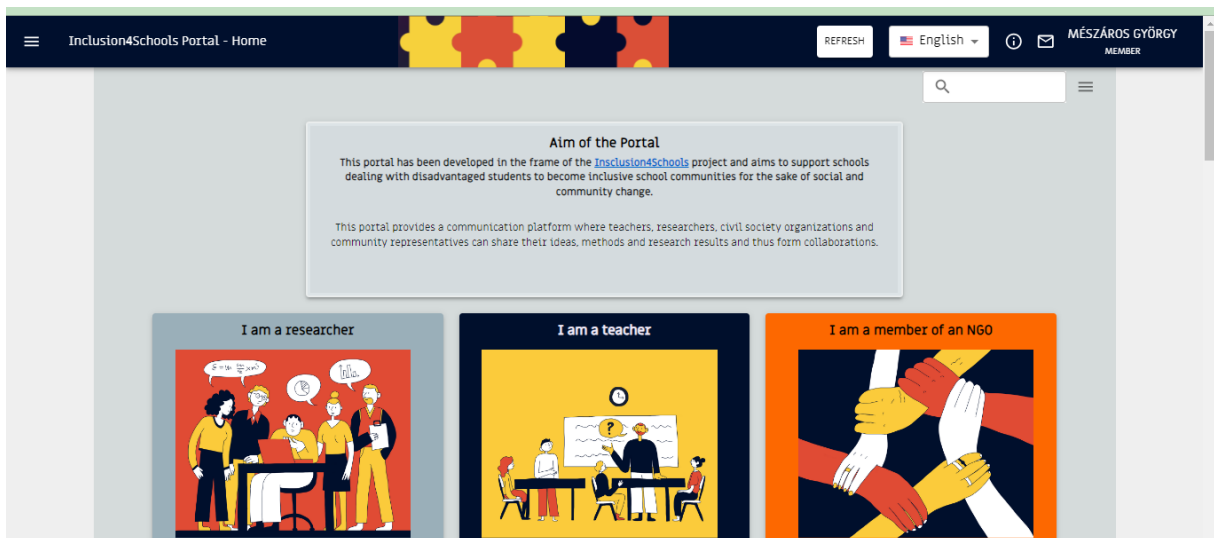
**Good Practices**  
The aim of this portal is to provide a collection of good practices that have been developed in communities of disadvantaged schools.  
Anyone can share good practice on the portal if they are registered as an Institution or Individual.  
You can share your own good practice by  
- creating a presentation of slides or posts in which you can describe the practice and  
- answering a short questionnaire.  
By filling in the questionnaire, you can help others to adapt the good practice by sharing information on the development process, results and

**Institute Profiles**  
A key aim of the website is to create a dialogue between institutions, both, the similarities and the differences, the weaknesses and the strengths of schools (and other institutions) can be a fertile ground for building learning communities.  
The administrator of an institution can register a school, or other institution or organisation. For this  
- he/she must provide the institution's data in response to the questionnaire,  
- and has the opportunity to introduce his/her institution in the form of a presentation.  
The institution is also supported by a self-evaluation questionnaire, the data from which can be used to contribute to both internal learning processes and to identify schools/institutions in similar situation.





The landing page currently addresses three main target groups: teachers, researchers and NGO members.



It would have been inefficient to target too many smaller groups: thus, among teachers and researchers, the site also targets teacher trainers, teachers from disadvantaged schools, and university staff. In the future, if necessary, more explicit reference to teacher training could be included in the descriptions of the various actors.



The features will provide the opportunity to:

- to bring together teacher training institutions (universities) and teachers (schools);
- to find each other and to share useful materials;
- learn from each other's good practices;
- to enter into dialogue with each other;
- collaborate with each other and develop common materials (e.g. through the Workshop function).

## Functioning of the portal in relation to university–school communication

Currently, one teacher training institution is registered on the portal, but we have contacted several institutions. University departments and institutes are expected to register, and many actually registered individual users are already working in TE.

Among the good practices, there are some concerning teacher training and learning:

- Effective co-teaching using modern methods, tools and procedures
- The staff discussion in the Helper pair-system
- School as a learning community

And some elements from different not directly teacher education related good practices contains various dimensions relevant for teachers' development. Moreover, many good practices uploaded by segregated schools on the portal can also be a starting point for universities to better understand the practices of schools working with disadvantaged children and to transmit the experience into teacher training.

Most of the documents are materials that can be used in teacher training and in teachers' professional development: methods for inclusion, supporting materials for school development, methodological guidelines, etc.





One workshop on the portal was specifically created to explore the possibilities for cooperation between teacher training institutions and segregated schools in Hungary, in particular with regard to a new element of the Hungarian teacher training curriculum: career socialisation practices, and to develop a concrete document on this issue.

Among the forums, several topics are indirectly related to teacher education and one directly addresses the possibilities of cooperation between teacher education institutions and schools.

## **The development of the portal and a pilot programme with one university**

The technical development of functions to facilitate dialogue between actors involved in teacher education, including the workshop function, continued until August 2023. The development was accompanied by continuous professional testing by project participants, particularly those working in teacher education, to ensure that the portal is truly useful for all target groups.

In the autumn semester, a pilot process was carried out in a teacher training institute in Hungary: the Eötvös Loránd University, led by György Mészáros, with a total of 100 students in four courses. The students attended the full-time and evening Hungarian-language and full-time English-language classes of the Philosophies and Theories of Education course, as well as the PhD course in Society and Philosophy of Education. The courses are theoretical in nature, but their basic aim is to link theory and practice, the kind of reflection that is well related to the project's concept of transformative practice: thinking about values, anthropologies, implicit and explicit theories and perspectives behind pedagogical action. In both the evening and the English language courses, there were a number of students who were already practicing teachers and had attended the course to obtain their Master's degree. Similarly, the doctoral course was attended by several practicing teachers. The English language group was an international and multicultural group, with students from Azerbaijan, China, Croatia, Germany, Indonesia, Jordan, Mongolia, Russia, Sierra Leone,



Ukraine. These students were able to share experiences from their own countries, enriching the course and the portal.

The process of engaging students was a multi-stage procedure. Firstly, they were introduced to the objectives of the project, and in particular to the concept of transformative practices, which was well linked to the theme of the course. This introduction included a discussion on the issue of social and educational inequality and, in this context, a reflection on the situation of segregated schools in Hungary dealing with disadvantaged children. The students first academic assignment was to present some theory in the form of 'input' for teachers (presentation, poster, mind-map, video, essay, other creative solutions, etc.). For this, each one chose a topic and, after elaboration, submitted it for discussion on the course e-learning platform. In addition, the second task was a portal activity. (Some could be exempted from this by completing other tasks if they perceived the portal topics as too far from their own professional field). After the introduction, they had to browse existing content and then choose to search for relevant documents for the portal and contribute to forums, or create a forum themselves on a topic or upload a good practice they knew well. The choice and the specific content: types of documents, forum topics, subject of the good practice were discussed with the instructor before uploading. The documents were uploaded by the teacher. During the process, the students were asked to reflect on the characteristics of disadvantaged schools and to consciously relate them to their own teacher's identity. After the task, they had to reflect on the assignments they had completed, on the content and use of the portal, and on the experiences, they had while carrying out the assignment.

The process was also monitored by Edit Győrik from the project side, who followed the activities on the portal. The monitoring and the feedback from the students also revealed possibilities for further improvement of the portal, in particular regarding the functioning of the forums. Several technical difficulties were reported by students. Some of these were due to not going through the registration process. However, in the case of the forums, it was found that the commenting function was not working properly. The project has taken steps to change this.

The experience of the course has shown that the content and use of the portal can be integrated into teacher training themes: linking theory and practice, sociological dimension of education, reflection on one's own teacher identity



and practice. The participation of students also helped to make the portal more alive.

## Next steps and sustainability

In the next semester, two more teacher training courses at Eötvös Loránd University will incorporate a similar process to the previous semester: two groups of the course Schools and Learning Communities will use the portal. In addition to the previous assignments, students will also visit one of the institutions listed on the portal to gain direct experience and engage in dialogue with the staff. The portal-related activities of these two courses will also involve several other colleagues not involved in the project. In teacher training, the experience will be disseminated on and off campus.

One of the main objectives for the next period is to involve more teacher education institutions in the use of the portal. As a first step, we have contacted Hungarian institutions. We will present them the experience gained during the pilot and provide them with a description of the process. Several of them already have contacts with the schools on the portal. We will promote the deepening of these with the institutions' teacher education officers.

The next step is to promote similar use of the portal by our partners. To do this, we will share with them the process and experiences of the pilot process. Teacher training institutions in their own countries have already been contacted to develop cooperation. In Slovakia, one of the partners is itself a teacher education university. In the coming months, the partners will be tasked with developing intensive cooperation.

The portal has already attracted students from several countries outside the partner countries because of the international community. They will disseminate the site among their own colleagues. In addition, we would like to promote the use of the portal to universities and public education institutions in Europe especially among RIA partners.

Dialogues and workshops on this platform could help to maintain the established links. In the dissemination of the portal, we will also specifically address schools and universities, teacher training centres that can find each other on the portal. This is part of our intensified dissemination strategy in the



final period of the project. The useful catalogues available on the site will be disseminated as widely as possible. We plan and will promote the uploading of further documents, forums and good practices on university-school cooperation.

## Summary

One of the functions of the Inclusion4Schools portal, which is intrinsically linked to the others, is to enable the networking, dialogue and collaboration between universities, teacher training institutions, schools for disadvantaged students and professionals: teacher trainers, educators, professionals and other community actors. The catalogues on the portal can also be used for teacher training and teachers' continuous professional development. For the remainder of the project, we aim to further strengthen these functions through dissemination and facilitation activities, in partnership with universities.

