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FROM ACTION TO RECOMMENDATION PACK FOR TEACHERS

**Erasmus+ KA220-SCH Strategic Partnership in School
Education DIGITAL COMICS OF MIGRATION
2023-1-TR01-KA220-SCH-000166103**



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From Action to Recommendation: Pack for Teachers

Teachers are among the most influential actors in shaping students' educational inclusion, development of key competences, and engagement with increasingly digitalized learning environments. As leaders of classroom communities, teachers influence not only academic learning but also the social dynamics that determine whether students feel valued, represented, and able to participate fully in school life. Research consistently demonstrates that inclusive teaching practices contribute to students' academic achievement, sense of belonging, social integration, and well-being, particularly among learners from disadvantaged, migrant, and refugee backgrounds (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011; UNESCO, 2020). In contexts of migration and forced displacement, teachers often become the first institutional actors with whom children establish meaningful relationships in the host society. Their attitudes, expectations, and pedagogical approaches can significantly shape students' educational trajectories and social experiences. Studies on refugee and migrant education show that culturally responsive and inclusive teachers are better able to foster positive peer relationships, reduce experiences of exclusion, and support students' adaptation to new educational environments (Pastoor, 2017; Sattin-Bajaj et al., 2023). Through social-emotional learning (SEL) approaches and inclusive teaching philosophies, teachers can cultivate empathy, cooperation, intercultural understanding, and democratic participation, thereby improving classroom sociology and creating learning environments where diversity is recognized as an educational asset rather than a challenge.

The significance of teacher training therefore extends far beyond improving instructional quality; it directly influences educational equity, social cohesion, and democratic development within society. Teachers are increasingly expected to respond to diverse classrooms characterized by migration, cultural pluralism, digital transformation, and growing concerns about students' social and emotional well-being. However, research indicates that many teachers feel insufficiently prepared for these responsibilities because traditional teacher



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education programmes often devote limited attention to inclusive education, migration-sensitive pedagogy, social-emotional learning, and digital innovation (European Commission, 2023; OECD, 2023). Similarly, studies on technology integration have repeatedly identified inadequate teacher preparation as one of the major barriers to meaningful digitalization in schools (Tondeur et al., 2017). While digital technologies have become central to contemporary education, many teachers receive little formal training on how to integrate digital tools into pedagogically meaningful learning experiences. Even less attention is given to innovative instructional approaches such as comics-based learning, visual storytelling, and multimodal literacy, despite growing evidence that these methods can enhance engagement, critical thinking, empathy, and intercultural understanding (Hosler & Boomer, 2011; Mallia, 2007). Consequently, continuous professional development is essential to equip educators with the competencies required to address contemporary educational challenges and prepare students for participation in increasingly diverse and digital societies.

Within this context, the DICOMI project offers a valuable framework for teacher education, school leadership, and professional development across educational settings. By combining digitalization, storytelling, and inclusive education, DICOMI provides educators with practical tools for addressing complex issues such as migration, identity, diversity, belonging, and social inclusion. The project's digital comics and pedagogical modules expose teachers to authentic migration narratives and lived experiences of displacement, enabling them to develop deeper empathy and understanding of the realities faced by migrant and refugee students. Research on digital storytelling suggests that narrative-based learning resources can strengthen teachers' reflective practice, intercultural competence, and capacity to support students' sense of belonging (Khoo et al., 2024). Furthermore, comics-based learning has been shown to promote multimodal literacy, creativity, critical thinking, communication skills, and student engagement, making it a particularly relevant pedagogical approach for contemporary classrooms (Farinella, 2018). For school leaders, DICOMI offers guidance on fostering inclusive school cultures, supporting pedagogical innovation, and strengthening collaboration among schools, families, and communities. School counsellors, social workers, and other educational support professionals can similarly benefit from the project by gaining greater awareness of the educational and psychosocial challenges associated with migration and displacement. By integrating digital competences, intercultural learning, social-emotional development, and inclusive pedagogies, DICOMI contributes to the professional development of educational stakeholders while supporting broader European goals related to inclusion,



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democratic citizenship, and digital transformation in education. The policy recommendations resulted from small-scale meetings in five countries are listed as:

Teacher Training as a Part of Teaching Profession

Participants in the small-scale meetings consistently emphasized that teachers should receive regular and continuous professional development in inclusive education in order to respond effectively to the increasing diversity of contemporary classrooms. They argued that inclusive education requires more than pedagogical knowledge or policy awareness; it also demands empathy, intercultural competence, and a deep understanding of the lived experiences of migrant, refugee, and displaced students. Participants highlighted that many teachers encounter students who have experienced war, forced migration, family separation, and trauma, yet often receive limited preparation for addressing these complex realities within educational settings. Consequently, they recommended that teacher training programmes move beyond theoretical discussions of inclusion and incorporate authentic, experience-based learning opportunities that help educators understand the social, emotional, and educational challenges faced by migrant and refugee children.

In this regard, participants identified the DICOMI project and its digital comics as valuable resources for teacher education and professional development. They emphasized that real-life stories represented through digital comics can help teachers engage with migration experiences in a more personal, reflective, and meaningful manner. By presenting narratives of displacement, adaptation, belonging, and resilience, DICOMI comics allow educators to encounter migration not as an abstract policy issue but as a human experience that directly affects students and their families. Participants argued that exposure to such narratives can strengthen teachers' empathy, challenge stereotypes, and encourage more sensitive and inclusive responses to students from diverse backgrounds. The visual and narrative nature of comics was considered particularly effective in helping educators understand the emotional dimensions of migration and appreciate the multiple challenges that children affected by war may face both inside and outside the classroom.

Participants further stressed that regular training grounded in authentic stories and lived experiences can contribute to the development of more inclusive school cultures. Teachers who better understand the realities of migration and displacement are more likely to create supportive learning environments, recognize students' strengths and needs, and foster positive relationships among diverse groups of learners. Such training can also enhance educators'

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ability to address prejudice, discrimination, and exclusion while promoting intercultural dialogue and social cohesion within schools. Participants therefore recommended integrating DICOMI materials, digital comics, and other narrative-based resources into both pre-service teacher education and in-service professional development programmes. They argued that sustained and practice-oriented training can help ensure that teachers are equipped not only with the knowledge but also with the attitudes and competencies necessary to support inclusion, respond constructively to migration-related challenges, and promote educational environments where all students feel valued, respected, and able to participate fully.

Teacher Training Need: Comics as an Instructional Method

Participants in the small-scale meetings consistently emphasized that teachers should be provided with targeted professional development programmes on digital storytelling and comic-based learning in order to maximize the educational potential of resources such as those developed through the DICOMI project. They argued that while comics offer significant opportunities for promoting inclusion, empathy, and intercultural understanding, their effective use depends on teachers' ability to integrate them meaningfully into classroom practice. Participants highlighted that teacher training should go beyond technical guidance and provide educators with pedagogical strategies for using visual narratives to facilitate critical reflection, dialogue, and active learning. In particular, teachers should be supported in using comics to compare different migration experiences across multiple stories, enabling students to recognize both common challenges—such as displacement, adaptation, and social exclusion—and the diverse personal journeys that characterize migration experiences. Such comparative approaches were considered valuable for helping students move beyond simplistic or stereotypical understandings of migration and develop a more nuanced appreciation of individual experiences and identities.

Participants further noted that comics provide rich opportunities for connecting personal narratives with broader educational themes and societal issues. Through appropriate training, teachers can learn how to use comics as pedagogical entry points for exploring topics such as stereotypes, discrimination, language barriers, friendship, identity, adaptation, resilience, and the meaning of belonging. By linking stories to curricular objectives in subjects such as language education, social studies, citizenship education, and intercultural learning, educators can encourage students to critically examine social realities while developing empathy and perspective-taking skills. Participants also emphasized that comics can serve as effective



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catalysts for classroom discussions and debates on inclusion, diversity, and social justice. Teachers could use migration narratives presented in comics to initiate conversations about how schools and communities can become more welcoming and supportive environments for all students, particularly those from migrant and refugee backgrounds. Such discussions were seen as important for promoting democratic values, mutual respect, and active citizenship within increasingly diverse school communities.

To successfully integrate comics into educational practice, participants stressed the need for comprehensive teacher training modules that demonstrate how visual storytelling can be used as a structured pedagogical instrument for teaching complex and often abstract phenomena. Topics such as migration, human dignity, social exclusion, identity formation, and intercultural coexistence can be challenging for students to understand through conventional instructional methods alone. Participants argued that comics make these issues more accessible by combining narrative, imagery, and emotional engagement in ways that support both cognitive and affective learning. Consequently, teacher training should equip educators with practical examples, classroom activities, and methodological guidance that enable them to use comics confidently and effectively across different educational contexts. By developing teachers' competencies in digital storytelling, visual literacy, and comics-based pedagogy, schools can strengthen inclusive educational practices while fostering students' critical thinking, empathy, communication skills, and understanding of complex social issues. In this regard, participants viewed teacher training as an essential condition for ensuring that comics are not treated as supplementary materials but recognized as valuable educational tools capable of enriching learning and supporting inclusion in contemporary classrooms.

Inclusive Training not only as a Part of Teacher Training

Participants in the small-scale meetings emphasized that training for inclusive education should not be viewed solely as a professional requirement within teacher education but also as an important component of citizenship education for teachers themselves. They argued that teachers are not only educational professionals but also influential members of their national and European communities whose attitudes, values, and actions contribute to the development of more inclusive, democratic, and socially cohesive societies. From this perspective, inclusive education extends beyond classroom practice and becomes a broader civic responsibility grounded in respect for human dignity, diversity, equality, and social justice. Participants stressed that teachers need opportunities to critically reflect on issues such as migration,



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discrimination, social exclusion, and intercultural coexistence in order to better understand the realities faced by diverse student populations. In this regard, the DICOMI modules and real-life-based digital comics were identified as particularly valuable resources for professional learning because they present authentic stories of migration, displacement, adaptation, and belonging. By engaging with these narratives, teachers can develop a deeper understanding of the challenges experienced by immigrant and refugee children and families, moving beyond abstract policy discussions to encounter the human dimensions of migration. Such understanding was considered essential for fostering empathy, challenging stereotypes, and strengthening teachers' commitment to inclusive educational practices.

Participants further highlighted the importance of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) as a powerful approach for developing teachers' capacities for inclusion. They argued that educators should be familiar with SEL principles not only because these competencies benefit students but also because they support teachers' own professional and civic development. Skills such as empathy, self-awareness, relationship building, perspective-taking, responsible decision-making, and emotional regulation were viewed as fundamental for creating inclusive classrooms and responding effectively to the needs of diverse learners. Participants noted that each DICOMI module integrates at least one SEL objective, thereby providing teachers with practical examples of how social-emotional competencies can be embedded within educational activities addressing migration, diversity, and inclusion. Through engagement with DICOMI materials, teachers can experience how SEL can be used to facilitate dialogue, encourage reflection, strengthen intercultural understanding, and promote positive relationships among students from different backgrounds. Participants therefore recommended that SEL become a more visible and systematic component of both pre-service and in-service teacher education programmes.

Finally, participants emphasized the importance of professional learning communities and peer-to-peer exchange in supporting the implementation of inclusive education. They noted that inclusion is often discussed in abstract terms and may be difficult for educators to translate into concrete classroom practices without practical examples, evidence, and opportunities for reflection. For this reason, participants recommended creating spaces where teachers can share experiences, discuss challenges, and exchange good practices related to inclusion, migration, digital storytelling, and social-emotional learning. The sharing of successful classroom activities, lesson plans, comic-based projects, and strategies for supporting migrant and refugee



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students was considered particularly valuable for making inclusive education more tangible and achievable. Participants argued that concrete examples and demonstrated practices can help educators visualize what inclusion looks like in everyday school life, increasing both confidence and motivation to adopt innovative approaches. In this respect, DICOMI was viewed not only as a set of educational resources but also as a platform for professional dialogue and collaborative learning, enabling teachers to learn from one another while collectively strengthening inclusive and democratic educational practices across Europe.



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