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POLICY BRIEF ON CURRENT LANDSCAPES OF EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR A NEW APPROACH TO A TEACHING CAREER

**WP4 – BUILDING POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FROM
THE FIELD ACTIVITIES | DELIVERABLE 4.2 – POLICY
BRIEF 1**

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1. INTRODUCTION

This document, *LOOP Policy Brief 1 on the current landscapes of the educational systems: challenges and opportunities for a new approach to a teaching career*, is a delivery of the work package number 4 – *Building policy recommendations from the field activities*, of Project LOOP – Empowering Teachers.

The LOOP project focus is on improving teaching careers paths, in terms of rethinking career structure and guidance and also how to empower teachers to better navigate throughout the career system, creating opportunities to promote excellence in teaching at all levels, by continuing to support professional development, causing an increase in quality of the profession and the level of attractiveness.

It is ensured in research that among all phases of a teacher's career pathway, the early career years are those that deserve the greatest support and attention to ensure effectiveness and well-being. So, *LOOP Policy Brief 1* has analysed the current landscapes in different countries of the consortium (Portugal, Spain, Croatia, Italy, Germany, Greece, and Slovenia) and their reflexes in the educational systems in terms of existing teachers induction formal programmes and teachers induction informal practices (at macro and micro level) as well as of Mentorr capacity programmes for teachers.

The research shows that Europe is now facing the challenge of attracting a large number of new teachers in the coming years and continuously having to support those who are already in the career system and provide support for ones that are facing demotivation although they can still contribute a lot to the system, as they have a high degree of knowledge in multiple subject areas, including pedagogical aspects.

The current situation of teachers, generally speaking, in European countries is similar. Teachers are experiencing great professional instability, due to audiences' increasingly challenging, feeling lack of resources and recognition, as well as fatigue, generated by the average age (OECD average 44 years old).

Moreover, on average across OECD countries and economies in TALIS 2018, report, 39% of teachers want to leave teaching within the next years. This could be explained by an aging teacher workforce approaching retirement, in certain countries and economies, since only 14% of teachers are aged 50 years or less.

On the other way, there are relatively few young teachers (under the age of 30), and the proportion decreases with the level of education. Young teachers make up 10% of the teaching population, on average across OECD countries (OECD, Education at a Glance, 2020).

In this context, the Policy Brief includes the analysis of alternative options and their potential consequences for the educational systems and the target groups, bearing in mind the lessons learned from the co-design/participatory approach and the field experimentation of the policy tools that were considered, focusing on three contexts, identified in this document as dimensions. The Policy Brief will



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express a set of recommendations that are understood to have a positive impact, after a brief characterisation of their current state in the different countries of the consortium, related to the dimensions: Teachers' careers, Induction programmes, and Mentors' capacity programmes. The recommendations also present a roadmap and a structure whose ambition is to allow their use as a reference in the design of new policies, seeking constant updating.



2. THE FRAMEWORK OF THE POLICY BRIEF

2.1. CONTEXT AND OBJECTIVES

The LOOP aim is to construct a policy measure that will help enhance the development of formal mentoring and Induction programmes for teachers’ professional development, supporting:



The key objective of the Policy Brief is to recommend ways of supporting teachers at different stages of their professional careers, facilitating their transition, drawing the attention of the different levels of decision making to the urgency of implementing induction and mentoring programmes, taking as an evidence-based data and conclusions from the fieldwork done under the LOOP project, specifically:

- i) the inputs gathered from the field (outcomes validated in the field),
- ii) the objectives that new policies aim to address, representing the conditions of the educational system that are relevant criteria to evaluate policy (outcomes of interest),
- iii) the risks and uncertain forces (external forces, vulnerabilities, including societal conditions).

This Policy Brief intends to propose a set of actions, in the following dimensions with aim of improving their current state in different countries of the consortium. Thus for:

- ▶ **Dimension 1 – Teacher's career:** the intention is that it can be improved, through the support provided at entry into the profession, with an induction that allows the reception and motivation of teachers for the career and prevents them from giving up the profession. On other hand, enables diversification of the professional career, allowing teachers to take on new functions, supported by the restructuring of their career;
- ▶ **Dimension 2 – Induction programmes:** with the wish to effectively implement this type of programme and improve its intentionality, whose focus should not be only pedagogical, but also on administrative and bureaucratic aspects of the profession, the socio-cultural characteristics, supported by peer mentoring.
- ▶ **Dimension 3 – Mentors’ capacity programmes:** with attention to the need for a formal, certified, and/or accredited mentoring programme, which may or may not mean improvements in the implementation of the Induction programme, but may or may not also translate into a new opportunity for career diversification for professionals.

The ambition is to intervene in the aforementioned dimensions, through the constitution of evidence-based policy instruments, such as this publication, whose intention is **to:**

- ▶ Attract and increase the motivation of new teachers by contributing to their social and cultural inclusion, increasing the capacity of the schools in integrating them, and providing support to experienced teachers;



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- ▶ Launch or put into practice Induction programmes already defined by national laws in partners countries;
- ▶ Reinforce and innovate national training offers for teachers' professional development;
- ▶ Integrate principles of peer-to-peer learning and evidenced-based training in teachers' professional development programmes, as a strategy to assure knowledge management and intergenerational learning in schools;
- ▶ Promote Induction and Mentoring programmes as high-impact professional development activities;
- ▶ Establish and strengthen teaching career paths and opportunities through the development of a formal teachers' Induction programmes based on mentoring activities;
- ▶ Make known the opportunities for teachers' career diversification, analyse the implementation characteristics (normative and accessibility) and their main actors, increasing access and quality of offer;
- ▶ Recommend ways of supporting teachers at different stages, facilitating their transition, drawing the attention of different levels of decision making to the urgency of implementing Induction and Mentoring programmes;
- ▶ Align the objectives and results with European goals;
- ▶ Extend the scope of the LOOP project to other territories.

2.2. POLICY-WORKING GROUP

The Policy-Working Group created within the scope of the project is a body that guarantees the permanent adjustment of the project's results to the interests of its target groups, enabling change through the creation of methodological and collaborative spaces and structures.

To assure that LOOP results are translated into policymaking at a national level, the consortium integrates:

- ▶ Public Authorities with competencies to take the strategic leadership of the call and project topics;
- ▶ Researchers in partners countries that will carry out independently and robustly the research/field trials, while acting as the main point of contact between the Coordinator and the Public Authorities;
- ▶ One partner with strong expertise in experimentation and evaluation will act as an "external assessor", despite being a full partner of the consortium (will not be involved in the implementation of the field activities), and he will lead the building block 4 dedicated to Building Policy Recommendations from the field.

This Policy-Working Group fostered strict cooperation between the research organizations and the public authorities (ministries or ministries representatives) intending to reach desirable results, reflecting overall experimentation, and consolidating the findings of the project in building layers of knowledge and evidence-based results.



3. METHODOLOGY

The design of a work methodology on educational phenomena always carries some risk, because there are specific characteristics, peculiar to these phenomena. The educational reality is complex, dynamic, and interactive, since the educational phenomenon is located in a social context, in historical reality, and it includes important aspects such as beliefs, values, and meanings that are not directly observable and are therefore difficult to analyse. For that reason, the methodology applied was qualitative.

The methodology that enables the design of LOOP Policy Brief 1, focuses on the following documents, taking into account their objectives and contents:

- ▶ 7 National research reports on the state of the art:
 - Framework for designing the Induction programme
 - Framework for designing the Mentors' capacity programme
 - Suggestions of policy changes that can be done to implement Induction programmes in the school context
- ▶ 1 Catalogue of good practices for teachers' Induction programmes and Mentors' capacity programmes:
 - Examples of good practices in Induction programmes for teachers to open up the options for the design of the policy instruments
- ▶ 1 Comparative research report: a framework for the design of innovative peer-induction programmes:
 - Includes a comparative analysis of the national findings and the identification of common aspects, learnings gaps, and recommendations for the policy instruments design.

The Methodology used was developed in different phases:

- ▶ **Phase 1:** identification of categories and their description;
- ▶ **Phase 2:** design of indicators for each category;
- ▶ **Phase 3:** recognition and analysis of the documents, allowing the identification of the units of record from which the units of record that corroborate the indicators are extracted;
- ▶ **Phase 4:** the production of inferences.

Phase 1, concerning the constitution of categories of analysis, resulted in the following definitions:

A. The teaching career is attractive to teachers

This is the category that includes all references to teachers' careers and how the different countries ensure the continuity of the profession, not only in regulatory but also in operational terms, seeking to improve the implementation and accessibility of measures and support to professionals at different stages of their career and in the exercise of different actions.

B. The programmes of initial training prepare teachers for the exercise of the teaching function in different dimensions of their action (are current, have quality, and are appropriate to the professional realities)

This category aims to infer from the records whether the initial training of teachers is sufficient for the exercise of teachers' functions and whether teachers recognize the existence of weaknesses,



trying to verify the nature of the support that should be ensured and who could provide that support.

C. Teachers at the beginning of their professional activity have access to a career Induction programme supported by appropriate supervisors

This category provides insight into whether teachers are supported, how they are supported, and by whom, in an attempt to improve Induction programmes (indicating activities, methodologies, and practices), demonstrating their relevance, and their urgency, as well as the activities that should be incorporated, considering the beginning of the teaching activity and beyond.

D. In-service teacher training programmes prepare teachers for the exercise of the teaching function in the different dimensions of their action (are current, have quality, and are appropriate to the professional realities)

This category aims to analyse whether in-service training programmes are appropriate to the challenges, incorporate collaboration, and are a real support to teachers, reflecting on their quality, monitoring, systematically and accessibility, and recognizing the importance of different actors.

E. The training programmes for mentors are adequate.

This category aims to analyse the existing Mentors' capacity programmes, the profile of their participants, their facilitators, and the practices they integrate, looking for suggestions for improvement.

The categories defined above were consistent with the objective of the work and allowed the incorporation and distribution of a set of indicators that helped to better understand the meaning of the category itself, according to the different documents.

Thus, having overcome phases 1 and 2, it followed the analysis of the presence of the indicators, to complete phase 3 of the methodology.

In phase 4, inferences production is understood as the phase of searching for answers, interpretation was made in light of the literature on the subject and fieldwork conducted at LOOP. The conceptual framework was very important at that stage so that one can understand, more comprehensively, what the results mean. In that way, the results won validity, because they matched the objectives and therefore, they are relevant and productive, ensuring the legitimacy of the produced content.



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4. KEY CONCEPTS

- ▶ **Induction programmes:** allows teachers, at all stages of their professional activity, to observe their peers, to be observed, and integrate learning communities that foster joint reflection and learning, promoting the quality of teaching and professional development as a collective and not just individual responsibility.
- ▶ **Mentoring:** a professional relationship, in which an experienced professional (the mentor) supports another (beginning professional) in developing skills that will enhance the professional and personal growth of the less experienced teacher.
- ▶ **Beginning teacher:** a teacher with at least 5 years of experience and less than 25 years old.
- ▶ **Experienced teacher:** a teacher with more than 20 years of experience and more than 45 years old.
- ▶ **Initial teacher training:** academic training obtained in a higher education institution.
- ▶ **Teachers' continuous training:** training that takes place after the initial training of teachers in the perspective of their continuous improvement throughout life, being seen as a structural process in the improvement of quality, effectiveness, and efficiency of professional development.



5. CHALLENGES

The challenges that were expected to be encountered were varied, which forced a constant search for solutions. Therefore, it is possible to assume that the challenges were overcome to some extent because situations were anticipated in advance and a set of actions were planned to mitigate the occurrences. For this purpose, it was important to ensure that:

- ▶ **Policy-Working Group possesses knowledge about the area of action in question:** overcome, by ensuring that the elements of the Policy-Working Group had the right profile, knowledge, and experience and can draw on the support of a network of partners;
- ▶ **Results of the LOOP can be relevant and aligned with European policies and strategies:** overcome, by investing in a strategy of constant updating that allows the alignment of action to contextual needs, and it seeks the explicit improvement of the European and international educational framework, taking into account, among other things, the state of the art;
- ▶ **Target groups show motivation and interest and participate in the activities:** throughout the project, awareness-raising initiatives are planned, and the network of contacts that supports LOOP is to be continuously expanded to attract interested parties, who will find the results of the project useful. Their motivation can also be ensured by the topic of the actions, which aim to improve the career conditions of teachers (more stability, more recognition,...) and educational success;
- ▶ **Documents produced to find a sufficient number of teachers for the recommendations to make sense:** this can be achieved by increasing the geographical area of action, which can be accomplished by changing the characteristics of the target teachers, namely age and/or years of experience and/or career position;
- ▶ **Produced work may find top interlocutors who recognize the validity of this action and are interested in its implementation:** ensuring that the action carries a set of supports and resources and the certification of the actions and their actors;
- ▶ **Ministries find the necessary support and can implement the actions:** ensuring meaningful, relevant, and pertinent actions.



6. DIMENSIONS OF POLICY BRIEF

6.1. DIMENSION 1: TEACHER'S CAREER

Whether a career is perceived as prestigious, rewarding, and fulfilling or not can have an impact both on the type and number of candidates entering the profession and on the job satisfaction of those already in it. This dimension aims to characterise teachers' careers using several parameters which have been analysed in different countries of the LOOP consortium, and which are described below based on the analysis of collected data.

- A. The attractiveness of a teaching career for a young teacher.
- B. The social relevance of a teaching career.
- C. Incentives at the beginning of teaching activity.
- D. Motivation and stability in teachers' careers.
- E. Teaching professional challenges and collaborative support.
- F. Support measures for teachers.
- G. Teachers' career workload perceptions.

A. THE ATTRACTIVENESS OF A TEACHING CAREER FOR A YOUNG TEACHER

Most of the beginning teachers in Portugal feel empowered (90%) and committed (95%) to their job since they are eager to learn more and put into practice what they learned in the initial training. However, regarding motivation the beginning teachers have different opinions, while 79% feel motivated about their job, 5% expressed their lack of motivation regarding it. Although it is a small percentage, it is significant since the reasons behind it are related to a progression in careers and the lack of support teachers feel¹. Slovenian teachers reported high levels of commitment and dedication to their work and teaching is generally considered to be a comfortable profession, with plenty of free time, a solid salary, and long 'holidays'². Lack of differentiation pathways during their careers, lack of a coherent continuous professional development, linked to the acquisition of new responsibilities or roles, and the disconnection between excellence and professional progression, are important variables to explain the absence of incentives available for teachers to progress *within* the teaching profession³. In Greece, the working conditions and overall stability of the career are still an attractive choice, because permanent teachers enjoy Permanent Civil Servants status⁴. Almost all survey participants, in Croatia, agree that a teaching career is not attractive to a young teacher. On the other hand, a lot of young people study at universities to be teachers in the future. Also, teachers recognize that their careers could be more attractive. In Italy, a teaching career is not attractive to young teachers largely

¹ LOOP National Portuguese Report.

² LOOP National Slovenian Report mentioned that three-quarters of participants in the questionnaires strongly agree with the statement that they are committed/dedicated to their work. Less than 1% of them report that they do not agree with being either committed or motivated.

³ LOOP National Spanish Report, section 1.1.4 & OECD (2021), Education at a Glance 2021, Paris, OECD Publishing.

⁴ LOOP National Greek Report".



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owing to the long period of insecurity, and low expected income, furthermore, they are burdened with bureaucratic activities that almost overwhelm strictly educational ones. The teaching career is attractive in Germany, with teachers finding jobs easily and quickly due to open vacancies. A study by the Bertelsmann foundation estimated that 105,000 teachers would have to be hired by 2025 to meet the needs of Germany's elementary schools, while a maximum of 70,000 university graduates could be expected to begin working in the field in that time⁵. Furthermore, studies show that teachers' salaries in Germany are in the upper third of salaries in Europe⁶.

B. THE SOCIAL RELEVANCE OF A TEACHING CAREER

Only 9% of teachers in Portugal reported feeling that their profession was valued by society, while only 65% reported that, if they could choose again, they would still become a teacher, compared to the respective OECD averages of 26% and 76%⁷. In Slovenia, before negotiating austerity measures in the public sector, the data was used to find out how much Slovenian teachers are burdened. In Spain, a significant division between teachers' beliefs is noticed – with the perception that the profession is not socially valued. In contrast, existing data, not included in the LOOP national report, shows that teaching is among the most valued professions. Despite the relatively low salaries, numerous studies have shown that Greek teachers are very satisfied with their job, considering the nature of the work, and the ability to work with and help their students, but less satisfied with their working conditions⁸. Although most respondents in the Croatian survey believe that the teaching profession is not socially relevant, it does not seem to be the case, when teacher studies showed that the career is still attractive to young people and lots of them want to work in schools. One of the reasons is related to the teachers' salary, which is slightly higher than the average salary. In Italy, the teaching profession is not socially relevant, or at least it isn't as it once was. According to a recent survey carried out by trade unions, 40% of teachers would change work due to: low pay grades, and long negotiations for the renewal of the national employment contract. Teaching is a socially relevant and well-respected profession, in Germany. Teachers are civil servants in Germany and as such have a high rating: high salaries, a secure future, and a standardized work schedule - often Germans strive to get into the civil service due to numerous preferences.

C. INCENTIVES AT THE BEGINNING OF TEACHING ACTIVITY

In general terms, in Portugal, most school principals and beginning teachers believe they did not receive enough support in the initial years of their careers, confirming that the schools where they worked didn't have access to any planned support (such as Induction programmes). So, the only support they received was informal from other experienced teachers, voluntarily. A vast majority (72%) would have

⁵ BertelsmannStiftung, <https://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/en/home/> and in Germany is desperate for teachers, <https://www.dw.com/en/germany-is-desperate-for-teachers/a-45246978>

⁶ In: <https://www.alumniportal-deutschland.org/en/career/teachers-salaries-teacher-educator-remuneration>

⁷ LOOP National Portuguese Report from & Education Policy Outlook, 2020.

⁸ Anastasiou & Papakonstantinou, 2014; Koutrouba & Michala, 2017; Anastasiou & Belios, 2020), p. 25.



appreciated the opportunity of participating in a formal Induction programme with a mentor's support. Portuguese teachers also reported when they start, felt a lack of stability, as they were placed in different schools for many years and were dependent on vacancies and replacements, which entails high financial costs without any support, as Greek teachers.

Greek teachers also mention that they must cope with an unbalanced timetable to support their families and with an extensive teaching component, which includes multiple challenging tasks. In this regard, they often must deal with the most challenging classes at school, without effective knowledge of the school context.

Teachers in Slovenia enter the profession in two ways: through Induction programmes or by applying for open recruitment job positions advertised by schools. The induction system is not compulsory, and schools might – on vacancies – hire beginner teachers (with finished adequate initial teacher education), who have yet to take the state professional examination to be fully qualified.⁹ There are two *formally implemented Induction programmes* run by the Ministry and co-funded also by the European Social Fund. These programmes are in part based on a traineeship programme¹⁰ but have not effectively been run since 2014. In this same period, the programmes “First Employment” and “Learning to be a teacher” have been the entry point into the profession for about 10% of beginning teachers every year.

During the initial years, Spanish teachers have significantly better salaries than their colleagues across OECD countries (OECD, 2021). That said, while statutory salaries of teachers with maximum qualifications at top of their salary scales were, on average, between 86% and 91% higher than those of teachers with the minimum qualifications at the start of their career, in Spain maximum salaries were only 42% to 50% higher than minimum salaries.¹¹

Compulsory weekly teaching time for Greek teachers ranges from 18hrs to 25hrs, depending on the level and length of service (i.e. more experienced teachers teach fewer hours). On the other hand, the existing culture in most Greek schools is those beginning teachers are expected to carry out the most demanding and intensive school tasks. These tasks include, for example, organising extracurricular activities (e.g., study visits), preparing various events, bureaucratic/administrative work, and updating the school's website, and social media¹². So, Greek, as well as Italian teachers, don't enjoy incentives for their teaching activity at the beginning of their professional activity. Continuing professional development is compulsory for all teachers in Croatia (including school heads and their deputies), at all education levels, and the basic goal of organized continuing professional development is to use and enhance educational workers' potential to improve the educational process and pupils'/students' results. Educational goals are described in the principles of the National Curriculum Framework.

⁹ Schools must hire teachers already holding the professional certification and can hire applicants without it only if no teachers with qualification have applied.

¹⁰ Described in the Organisation and Financing of Education Act.

¹¹ LOOP National Spanish Report, section 1.1.4 & OECD (2021), Education at a Glance 2021, Paris, OECD Publishing.

¹² LOOP National Greek Report, p. 37.



Preschool teachers and primary and secondary school teachers must show their basic competencies and basic knowledge in Induction Programme. The Induction programme ends with the so-called State exam. Teachers are not happy with how this Induction programme is carried out. They claim that depends on what kind of mentor they get. Teachers think that the Induction programme is OK, but its implementation is not good.

There are no special incentives at the beginning of a teacher's career, in Germany.

D. MOTIVATION AND STABILITY IN TEACHERS' CAREER

In Portugal, regarding the perception, satisfaction, and motivation about the Teachers' careers in general, most of the surveyed experienced teachers feel empowered (97%), motivated (79%), and committed (92%) to their job, as well as integrated and supported by their peers in the tough decisions of their daily work (73%). According to collected data, 54% of participants, when looking at the future are happy with being a teacher during their whole career, however, 21% disagree. On other hand, 64% would like to have the opportunity to diversify their teaching career options, embracing other roles rather than teaching, and only 15% had the opposite opinion.

In Slovenia, looking into future teachers only express lower satisfaction with the prospect of spending their entire career being teachers. Two-thirds of the respondents agree or strongly agree with the statement that they would be happy to spend their entire career as teachers. About 70% of teachers expressed that would like to get an opportunity to mentor beginning teachers. The teaching career in Spain is stagnant¹³, and it does not encourage professional progression to higher levels of responsibilities. However, there is a big difference in privileges between beginning teachers and career teachers.

Greece has a flat career structure too, where teachers cannot move to higher levels, other than that of a school principal, an educational advisor (corresponding to only a few hundred posts), or a local/regional director (corresponding to about one hundred posts in total), so teachers' salaries are essentially linked only to their years of service¹⁴.

In Croatia, teachers' first motivation to be a teacher is the financial benefits of the profession. The motivation for teachers to participate in continuous training education is the possibility of getting a promotion and continuous professional development, together with other factors success in working with students. Only teachers that regularly attend continuing professional development programmes and events can be promoted to teacher-mentor and teacher-counsellor. Also, it's interesting that motivation for mentoring for more than half of experienced Croatian teachers (54%) would be the possibility of sharing their knowledge and experience with beginning teachers, and (15%) of experienced teachers were the opportunity to diversify their teaching careers (but keeping partially their teaching responsibilities) and financial benefit.

¹³ LOOP National Spanish Report, section 1.1.3.

¹⁴ LOOP National Greek Report, p. 25.



Once teachers, in Italy, have entered the world of education, they continue throughout their careers (both precarious and permanent teachers).

German teachers have a very stable profession. Regarding motivation, is more of a personal affair than an organizational one. However, teachers have opportunities for training and continuous professional development.

E. TEACHING PROFESSIONAL CHALLENGES AND COLLABORATIVE SUPPORT

Several authors refer to the need of strengthening collaborative dynamics in schools, either through training workshops or projects aimed at improving teaching practices, valuing the continuous training that emphasizes research and the search for collaborative learning solutions, which should be formally and consistently provided in the teachers' schedule, which in Portugal is not institutionalized. Most teachers at the beginning of their career would appreciate being supported and/or collaborating with other teachers. The experienced teachers¹⁵ said that they have different motivations to support other colleagues. The majority (42%) would like to have the possibility of sharing knowledge and experience with teachers initiating their careers. So, 29% would like to have the opportunity of diversifying their teaching career, partially keeping their teaching responsibilities. And 15% stated would be motivated if they would be offered a decrease in the total working time per week to support other teachers.

In Slovenia, collaborative work is not included in the teacher's schedule. In the LOOP Report, about two-thirds of participating experienced teachers have already had an opportunity to mentor younger colleagues and practically all of them are interested in doing that. The main motivation is predominantly intrinsic – having the opportunity to share their knowledge and experience to form younger colleagues, to potentially be given a direct responsibility, gain some recognition, and diversify their careers. Reducing the workload of direct pedagogical obligations or increasing the earning potential seems to have low levels of importance when deciding on the role of mentors.

Supporting and collaborating with other teachers, in Spain, is not incentivized by current regulations. In the interviews¹⁶, teachers commonly refer to these activities as rewarding and extremely useful, although these are extremely difficult to put into action given the scarce time allocated for this or inexistent kind of incentives.

The time of service of a teacher as a mentor, in Greece, is an additional qualification that according to law is taken into consideration in the process of selecting teachers for acquiring posts in the hierarchy of education administration¹⁷. In Greek legislation is foreseen that supporting colleagues provides a reward. However, this provision has not been implemented yet.

Officially, collaborative work isn't included in teacher's activities in Croatia, but if look at collaborative activities that are most often present in schools, it can be seen that they primarily relate to setting

¹⁵ LOOP National Portuguese Report.

¹⁶ LOOP National Spanish Report.

¹⁷ LOOP National Greek Report, p. 17.



common standards in the assessment of students' progress. On other hand, unfortunately supporting other colleagues isn't rewarding in Croatia. More than two-thirds of participating experienced teachers have already had the opportunity to mentor younger colleagues. A total of 71% of experienced teachers stated that they feel capable of mentoring a beginning teacher, 19% of them confirmed that they would feel capable, but only if they received training, and the rest of them, 10%, detailed that maybe they would feel capable.

The relationships that teachers establish at school between peers or between beginning teachers who have just entered the probationary year and their tutors are rewarding in Italy. Collaborative work is also encouraged in Germany, but not really included in the teacher's schedule and is not officially rewarded, but it is up to the school management to acknowledge them and emotionally incentive the teachers.

F. SUPPORT MEASURES FOR TEACHERS

The research in Portugal showed that the paths of Induction as an action to support teachers have a great focus from an administrative perspective. The aim of helping teachers start their careers should be shifted to a more pedagogical one, concerned with promoting excellence among teachers – both beginning and experienced – throughout their careers. In Portugal, the Induction programme comes as a support in the probationary year, which applies when the teacher finds a permanent post and starts his/her career as a teacher. This situation can occur when the teacher already has many years of service as a contract teacher, and thus a lot of experience as a teacher. These programmes are seen as continuous professional development that should be triggered with more premature situations of initiation into professional practice¹⁸.

The Induction programme, in Slovenia, includes the familiarization with the actual subject-specific teaching processes in a preschool institution or school and with various methods and forms of teaching. Beginning teachers deepen their knowledge of and improve their skills in subject-specific didactics. They learn to design lesson plans, prepare lessons and execute them while observing the mentor's lessons and other teachers. They cooperate with classroom management and leadership of the school, organising parent meetings and consultations. In addition, they gain knowledge and skills outside their preschool institution or school, particularly in areas important to teaching professional examination.

Spain has a significant number of training schemes available for teachers but lacks coherent and holistic measures targeting support of beginning teachers, or creating career progression. Moreover, some scattered support measures are officially stated to support beginning teachers but are scarcely implemented and evaluated. There are no formal mentoring practices in Greece. Only recently, i.e., July 2021, the government passed a new law (law no. 4823/21) which reintroduces the role of mentor in the Greek system¹⁹, but this new law has not been implemented yet.

¹⁸ Manso, J., and R. Garrido. 2021. "Los que empiezan: el reto pendiente de acompañar a docentes noveles [Those who start: the challenge of supporting novice teachers]. *Profesorado*, 25(2): 145-163. DOI: 10.30827/profesorado.v25i2.18441.

¹⁹ LOOP National Greek Report, p. 17.



Under the “Strategy for Education, Science, and Technology”²⁰ set up by the Croatian government in 2014, a teacher’s career path is defined under the strategic goal no. 4 – Improving the system of continuous professional development and training of educational employees. According to the Strategy, the Government recognizes that educators, teachers, counsellors, principals, and professional associates are faced with several new challenges, and so they are expected to have modern competencies. Thus, continuous professional development is imperative for all teachers and professional associates in the processes of recognizing, acquiring, developing, and directing the knowledge, skills, and abilities of individuals. Croatian beginning teachers are obliged to undergo a one-year traineeship under a mentor’s supervision, and after they pass the licensing exam, they become qualified teachers. For the Croatian context, it is significant to highlight this formal right and obligation that every teacher is ensured with a mentored introduction to the profession in one year.

In Italy, collaborative work is fully included in the teacher’s schedule. There is an official Induction programme for beginning teachers in Germany that last for one and a half years. After that, support comes from colleagues and school management.

G. TEACHERS' CAREER WORKLOAD PERCEPTIONS

Teachers in Portugal, apart from their teaching duties, are overloaded with meetings and multiple tasks of bureaucratic nature, and because of that, any additional activity, such as being a mentor, might be perceived negatively, even if it is related to supporting the colleagues.

In Slovenia, the consensus among teachers²¹ is that mentoring is paramount to the induction processes and a way to support teachers. A very similar fraction of survey participants agrees that mentoring should be done alongside direct teaching practice and should not exceed the work obligations. So, the participating teachers agree that mentors should maintain their work with students, and add mentoring to that, rather than completely replacing one career path with other.

The current problem in Spain²² is that until now – though this “now” will be soon drastically changed by new education law – support actions are acknowledged but not implemented in the existing teacher career²³.

The weekly compulsory teaching time of Greek teachers ranges from 18hrs to 25hrs depending on the education level they work and their years of service (i.e., the more experienced teachers teach fewer hours). Even that, teachers must stay at school for 35hrs per week, covering apart from their teaching duties, others such as administrative tasks, meetings with parents, preparing their lessons, etc.

Teachers claim that their career is overloaded in Croatia. Beginning teachers are not prepared for the administrative load that awaits them; experienced teachers also complain about the administrative

²⁰ https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2014_10_124_2364.html

²¹ LOOP National Slovenian Report.

²² LOOP National Spanish Report.

²³ Manso, J., and J. Moya (Coord.). 2019. Profesión y profesionalidad docente [The teaching profession in Spain]. Madrid: REDE and ANELE.



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burden. Both, beginning and experienced teachers need more time to focus on their class activities, not on administration duties. From teacher experience, they are not overloaded with their main job – teaching students and other class activities, but they are overloaded with other activities in schools that are not related to the teaching process. Teachers' career is overloaded by bureaucratic activities, cooperative planning, and school board meetings. In Italy, it will be difficult to include more tasks in teaching activities.

In Italy, teachers' career is overloaded with bureaucratic activities, cooperative planning, and school board meetings, and then they could hardly include more tasks in their professional activities.

Teachers' careers are pretty overloaded in Germany. Teachers usually are overwhelmed by administrative duties and duties unrelated to teaching. Furthermore, a study commissioned²⁴ by a teacher union shows that, in Germany, teachers work one hour and 40 minutes longer than other public employees per week. As a result, between 14% and 19% of teachers work excessively long working hours of more than 48 hours during the school week.

6.1.1. MAIN FINDINGS OF TEACHER'S CAREER

We currently live in a political, economic, social, and cultural environment that does not motivate the choice to pursue the teaching profession in most European countries and, as a result, some are currently experiencing difficulties in renewing and maintaining a stable and motivated teaching workforce.

Teachers do not feel accompanied, socially recognised for the work they do, nor adequately and sufficiently prepared to fulfil the responsibilities they face in the early years of their profession.

Most teachers in different countries, when they choose to become teachers, know that they will face professional **instability in the first years of their professional activity, low salaries, and boring and time-consuming administrative tasks**, but they try to maintain their activity with the perspective of enjoying other stability, other benefits, recognition and performing other more rewarding functions in the future. This is because there is, in most countries, a big difference in rights between teachers at the beginning of their career and experienced teachers. On the other hand, in most countries, there is no attractive career concept, i.e. **career progression is very difficult to make**, preventing deserving teachers from making it, or very competitive or even non-existent in some countries. It has been found that in some European countries, **career progression is very similar throughout the professional activity and is therefore discouraging as it does not reward work, effort, and dedication.**

According to several authors and national reports, teachers suffer from **professional loneliness**, often resulting from fact that they are placed in difficult conditions, which lead them to dangerous phases of disenchantment, disillusionment, and professional demotivation.

²⁴ In: <https://www.gew.de/aktuelles/detailseite/studie-zur-arbeitszeit-lehrkraefte-sind-hochmotiviert-aber-hochbelastet/>



On other hand, **the support given at beginning of teachers' careers is reduced**, difficult to access, or non-existent, which forces beginning teachers to seek voluntary support from colleagues, who in turn are overloaded with work, as they accumulate a multitude of tasks and therefore do not have much time or specific training to be able to support and guide younger colleagues consistently and systematically as would be necessary.

Experienced teachers and school principals note that all teachers would be motivated and would benefit from having the support and time of their peers to do so. However, existing collaborative working is not defined, so one could run the risk of not being encouraged or rewarded. Most teachers feel overloaded because they have many tasks that go beyond teaching and, although they recognise that collaborative working could support them in developing their professional activities and that they **would benefit if it were planned, they consider that it would be important to create other conditions for it to be effectively implemented and for teachers to be able to develop it formally with the necessary support conditions.**

6.2. DIMENSION 2: INDUCTION PROGRAMMES

Teaching implies the appropriation of a set of competencies and qualifications, in which higher education is required, it fits in the context of learning throughout life, includes mobility, and is based on partnerships. The key competencies for teaching are the ones that enable working with information, technology and knowledge, people (students, co-workers, and other education partners), and society at a local, regional, national, European, and Global level (Common European Principles for Teacher Competences and Qualifications, 2010)²⁵.

Over the years, studies have been developed with different scopes, in national contexts and internationally, about the importance of training, the models, and the organisation of training. This overview is going through one of these moments since new demands are placed on the teaching profession that requires more complex and diversified competencies to which initial teacher training cannot remain indifferent.

The OECD report (TALIS, 2018), in the analysis of all most evolved educational systems, including the majority of countries that are part of the LOOP consortium, found that a period of teaching practice after the initial training has an Induction programme mandatory. The results of the last two TALIS cycles (2013 and 2018) show that this integrated training does not exist or is almost inaccessible.

Induction is programme-level support that spans all of the roles and responsibilities teachers fulfil and can be used to improve their effectiveness in the success of students (LYNCS, 2015). The term induction is used to refer to various processes by which beginning teachers are inducted into the teaching profession and is normally associated with the first years of teaching, after completing a programme of

²⁵ Available in: <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/news-and-press/news/common-european-principles-teacher-competences-and-qualifications> (accessed in 25.05.2021).



initial teacher education. Teacher induction was most understood by the three target groups involved in research in six of the seven countries of the partnership as “a professional development programme that incorporates mentoring and is designed to offer support, guidance, and orientation for beginning teachers during the transition into their first teaching job.”

Only the target groups from GR and DE were selected, induction is a systematic and long-lasting process of professional development, of a collaborative nature, involving a network of teachers and specialists, focused on school context, promoting student learning, and developing the educational system.

Additionally, some important comments were mentioned by some partners as the keyword of the definition of “induction” is “mentoring”, so Induction programmes should have mentoring and experienced teachers also expressed the interest and idea of mutual learning as a relevant aspect of Induction programmes.

So, this dimension, Induction programmes, were characterised by the following parameters:

- A. Teachers’ needs at the beginning of their careers;
- B. Teaching practice opportunities during initial teacher training;
- C. Teachers support at the beginning of the career;
- D. Teachers and Induction programmes;
- E. Induction programmes accessibility, structure, differences, and similarities;
- F. Role of the School principals in the integration of beginning teachers.

A. TEACHERS' NEEDS AT THE BEGINNING OF THEIR CAREERS

In a recent study taken by Kokkaliari, in 2017, about the conditions of service of beginning teachers²⁶, with experience between 1 and 4 years in Greek primary schools, it was found that are other factors, besides the initial teacher training, that prevent smooth integration and inclusion into the profession, such as:

- ▶ personal factors (low self-efficacy, professional stress),
- ▶ school factors (school climate, lack of collaboration and understanding by colleagues), and
- ▶ teaching challenges (implementation of consequences, addressing the needs of students with learning difficulties).

Teachers in all countries of the consortium feel that, from a global perspective, they need support and it seems to be a consensus among school principals to enter the profession and perform their professional duties and this constitutes the main challenge of their profession²⁷.

²⁶ The majority of them holds a master’s degree (54%) or a second bachelor’s degree (5%).

²⁷ Manso, J., and R. Garrido. 2021. “Los que empiezan: el reto pendiente de acompañar a docentes noveles [Those who start: the challenge of supporting novice teachers], *Profesorado*, 25(2): 145-163. DOI: 10.30827/profesorado.v25i2.18441. and Martín Cuadrado, A.M., A. Estrada, and M.J. Corral. 2021. “El acompañamiento pedagógico de los docentes principiantes en centros de difícil desempeño a través de la mentoría [supporting novice teachers in low-achieving schools through mentoring]”. *ETHIKA+*, 3: 147-165. DOI: 10.5354/2452-6037.2021.61040. Manso, J., and R. Garrido. 2021. “Los que empiezan: el reto pendiente de acompañar a docentes noveles [Those who start: the challenge of supporting novice teachers], *Profesorado*, 25(2): 145-163. DOI: 10.30827/profesorado.v25i2.18441.



In the last decades in Italy, new rules established as a minimum requirement a bachelor's degree (initially, access to primary schools had been possible even for those with pedagogical high school degrees).

The overwhelming majority of the beginning teachers, in Greece, turn to more experienced teachers for support (70%), to other beginning teachers (65.1%), to their school principal (47.7%), and far less to the educational advisor (11.6%). This support took mostly the form of friendly professional advice (84.9%) and far less the form of observing lessons of other colleagues (17.4%). It is also characteristic that in many cases the beginning teachers reported various out of school sources of emotional or professional support such as internet search (73.3%), the pursuit of relevant bibliography (51.2%), advice from friends (48.8%) or attending in-service training courses (45.3%)²⁸. Irrespectively from their definition of "induction", most teachers across all target groups strongly believe in the value of Induction programmes mainly as a tool for reinforcing job competencies, but also for motivating beginning teachers at the start of their careers.²⁹

The national Slovenia report states that about 60% of teachers agree that initial training prepared them well when it comes to the question of professional knowledge whereas only 20% disagree with that. On the level of being well equipped with didactical approaches and purely pedagogical skills of content delivery, the number of disagrees (40%) is already larger than those who agree (30%). The largest gap in the system seems to be the bureaucratic periphery of educational professions. Only 10% of teachers feel that they were well prepared for that by their initial studies, whereas nearly 70% disagree.

It was highlighted by Croatian teachers that support, implies also a great responsibility for the quality and outcomes of work. Croatian teachers claim that they were well prepared by their initial studies for subject knowledge, and also pedagogical and didactic skills. But that they are not sufficiently prepared for emotional/psychological and social dimensions of school work. The majority of German teachers thought that they were not adequately prepared regarding most of the professional aspects, but especially regarding the bureaucratic and administrative aspects of the profession³⁰.

- ▶ Slovenian teachers³¹ listed the following challenges related to some gaps felt in initial training programmes.
- ▶ Teaching children with special needs, different learning styles, and challenges understanding their psychological make in general.
- ▶ Self-reflection, emotion management, and mental health hygiene issues were also brought up in large volumes.
- ▶ Soft skills needed to manage a classroom, act in conflict situations and work in different dynamics with colleagues, parents, and students.
- ▶ Newer teaching approaches and methods.

²⁸ LOOP National Greek Report, p. 38.

²⁹ LOOP National Greek Report, p. 14.

³⁰ LOOP National Report Germany, p. 66.

³¹ LOOP National Slovenian Report.



B. TEACHING PRACTICE OPPORTUNITIES DURING INITIAL TEACHER TRAINING

In the initial teacher training context, the supervised practical training period, understood as a central element in teacher training and as a privileged space to overcome the lack of articulation between theory and practice, is a training process guided by an investigative approach and a way of recognising the importance of teaching practice. However, this supervised practice does not find consensus on its purpose in different studies. The vision of education and vocational training underlying it, the training strategies to be used, professional skills to be developed and ways of assessing them, roles to be played by the different parties, the relationship established between the practice, and other components of the training curriculum or its duration. Findings echo other international results describing an ongoing challenge between theory and practice.

German teachers are satisfied by the way that in practice opportunities are included in the initial training programmes. Pre-service teachers – the practicum, in Spanish terms – continue to be the central key issue in debates regarding initial teacher training³².

The same for Croatian teachers (beginning and experienced, even school principals), who claim that further teachers need to have more direct teaching practice in schools during their initial teacher training. Exceptions are primary level teachers (from grade 1 to 4) who consider that have enough practice, but also think it would not hurt to increase that.

In Slovenia, initial teacher education study programmes have to include subject-specific and pedagogical knowledge, as well as at least 15 ECTS of pedagogical practice in school. However, the prevailing opinion is that it is not enough practically oriented. Not being rooted in practice might be perhaps one of the biggest takeaways of the entire research conducted through the survey, as well as interviews in LOOP research, related to teachers' initial training. When given the opportunity, respondents express that they only have gained professional knowledge when they started their hands-on experience, which coincided with the beginning of their careers, because, before, nearly they didn't have had almost any practical opportunities.

In Greece, most of the Education Faculties in the Universities offer their students the chance to obtain a certificate of pedagogical and teaching proficiency, as an integral part of their regular studies, which is followed by the successful completion of a group of courses corresponding to about 40-60 ECTS. The relevant courses fall under the following three categories: a) Pedagogy and Education, b) Teaching and Learning, and c) Didactics and Teaching Practicum³³.

The number of research works carried out about the first teaching experiences of teachers is small. Despite this, it is possible to confirm, taking into consideration the work done in the consortium

³² Donaire, C. 2020. Relación entre el prácticum y los procesos de inducción docente. Un estudio comparado entre Alemania, Chile, España y Finlandia [Pre-service teaching and induction. A comparative study in Germany, Chile, Spain and Finland]. In *La Docencia en la Enseñanza Superior* [Teaching in Higher Education.], edited by R. Roig-Vila, 1375-1388. Escudero Muñoz, J. M., M. Campillo Díaz, M., and J. Sáez Carreras. 2019. "El Máster de Formación Inicial del Profesorado de Educación Secundaria: revisión, balances y propuestas de mejora [The new MA for teaching in secondary schools: a review]", *Profesorado*, 23(3): 165-188.

³³ LOOP National Greek Report, p. 32.



countries, that difficulties experienced in the transition from student to teacher manifest themselves in several dimensions, with small differences between National contexts. In research carried out, five domains (stated below) of competencies try to express the necessary competencies for a teacher to operationalize his/her work:

- ▶ The didactical/scientific-pedagogical domain includes teaching and classroom management skills, dealing with lack of motivation, learning rhythms differentiation, curriculum management, relationship with students, and assessment. Greek, Croatian, Italian, and Slovenian participants' teachers mentioned that they are not well equipped with didactical approaches and purely pedagogical skills for delivering content.
- ▶ Bureaucratic/administrative domain related to legislation knowledge, normative regulations, school procedures, including other diversity of tasks like class management administrative procedures, was mentioned as one of the domains that teachers feel, in Germany, Italy, and Portugal, that is the largest gap in the initial training system.
- ▶ The emotional domain includes competencies such as self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence skills, and management of personal and professional dimensions, which if undeveloped, leads to isolation and anxiety. This domain was the one pointed out as strongly relevant in research, by Germany, Greek, Croatian, Italian, Portuguese, Slovenian, and Spanish participants. This could be because school contexts are nowadays more complex and demanding (culturally or linguistically diversity, inclusion, ICT) and that can be an indication that teachers aren't prepared, during their initial training, to cope with the socio-emotional challenges met in real school environments.
- ▶ The social domain includes professional identity and identification, relationships with colleagues and guardians, with a clear unawareness of the rules of conduct. Spanish and Portuguese teachers need more knowledge and skills about emotional and social/cultural competencies, to smooth the communication with students or their parents, which has become challenging, in the past years
- ▶ The subject domain is related to scientific knowledge acquired in initial training and it is somehow alarming that the beginning teachers said that feel less prepared in terms of knowing in-depth the content of the subjects they teach³⁴.

C. TEACHERS SUPPORT AT THE BEGINNING OF THE CAREER

Teaching practice enables the construction and consolidation of a set of skills, attitudes, and above all practical knowledge, essential for the teaching profession. In this sense, the analysis of first professional experiences lived, becomes the fundamental starting point for providing more effective help and recognizing that teachers' knowledge is acquired mainly through practice (Carter, 1990) since it is specialized, organized, and tacit.

In general terms, most school principals and beginning teachers believe that they did not receive enough support in the initial years of their careers, confirming that they have no access to a formal Induction programme and the only support they received was provided informally by other

³⁴ LOOP Greek National Report, pp. 14-15.



experienced teachers. However, this acknowledgement, noticed by interviewees as a challenge, is also related to fact that teachers have reduced time and space to get familiar, and for collaborative work.

A student to become a qualified teacher in Slovenia must pass an examination. For teachers to be eligible for a professional examination, they need to fulfil certain requirements. A formal Induction programme is not one of them. They need to have appropriate formal education concerning their professional subject matter, including pedagogical education (either holding a degree of a pedagogical nature or completing an additional supplementary non-degree study programme). In addition, they must reach a predefined quota of work hours of experience. Beginning teachers, in Slovenia, would like to be able to perform various tasks together with an experienced teacher, as a mentor, under his/her guidance, with his/her feedback and availability for help “on the go”.

According to Spanish interviews, “parallel teacher” – teacher/s who is/are teaching at the same grade level – is a key resource for beginning teachers. This support is informal and completely deregulated but it is commonly mentioned by beginning and experienced teachers.

In the study of Kokkaliari (2017), was shown that in general there does not seem to exist any structured procedure for the induction of beginning teachers. Thus, when beginning teachers come to a school for the first time their experience often resembles a “lost-at-sea” or “sink-or-swim” situation (Ingersoll and Strong, 2011). To address these increased challenges, their only resources are informal advice from more experienced and trustful colleagues and external sources that they identify on their own or with the help of their social environment³⁵.

There seems to be a consensus among school principals and experienced teachers that beginning teachers (usually substitute teachers) need to be supported when first placed in a school³⁶. This support should take the form of a school-based Induction programme addressing their needs, with a clear definition of how are the providers of such programmes.

Teachers are supported by educational organizations in collaboration with higher education institutions and Ministries of science. Croatian Ministry of Education and Science empowers various institutions, such as Education and Teacher Training Agency, Agency for Vocational Education and Training, and Adult Education to organise and implement training to support teachers. In addition to these institutions, continuing professional development programmes can also be organised and implemented by higher education institutions and by bodies from the civil sector, with the proper approval of the Ministry.

Teachers in Croatia, Germany, and Italy are supported by their peers but unofficially and accordingly to their personal capacity and formally just by their official mentor.

D. TEACHERS AND INDUCTION PROGRAMMES

Nowadays, for the transition from initial training to the job market, Portuguese teachers have to carry out a Probationary period for one school year to verify their ability to adapt to the required professional

³⁵ LOOP Greek National Report, p. 38.

³⁶ LOOP National Greek Report, p. 18.



performance profile. The mandatory Probationary period is not an induction practice and can take place during the first year of teaching duties and before entering the career. The teacher is guided and supported in didactic, pedagogical, and scientific terms by a teacher of the 4th grade or higher, whenever possible, from the same recruitment group, who was awarded a grade equal to or higher than Good in the last performance evaluation. The non-teaching component during this period is allocated to attending training sessions and attending classes given by other teachers or carrying out group work as indicated by supervising and supporting the teacher.

Regardless of the organization that should, by regulation, provide access, follow up and monitor the progress of the operationalization of the Induction programme, in Portugal, this responsibility is in charge of the Ministry of Education, delegated to the Public School Association Centres. In other countries of Consortium, responsibility is allocated also, to the organisms that provide continuous training, since this typology of programmes is implemented after the initial training. In this attribution it is not defined the role of universities, however, they are often called upon to participate³⁷.

Teachers in Slovenia enter the profession in two ways: through Induction programmes or by applying for open recruitment job positions advertised by schools. The induction system is not compulsory and schools might – on vacancies – hire beginning teachers (with finished adequate initial teacher education) who have yet to take the state professional examination to be fully qualified.

Formal Induction programmes are the path into the teaching profession for approximately 10% of young Slovenian professionals. Programmes known as “First Employment” and “Learning to be a teacher” have stricter requirements for mentoring and supporting teachers. Schools are motivated to enter these programmes as the teacher trainee positions are financed by the ministry for the entire traineeship period (of 10 months for teachers and 5 months for kindergarten assistants). On other hand, only 30% of teachers state that schools, where they began their careers, had specific Induction programmes.

The competencies of beginning teachers for work in education are examined at the teaching professional examination, taken by the Ministry, at the end of the Induction period, or after gaining the prescribed work experience. Applicants must have relevant educational qualifications and relevant experiences in educational work, and they have to carry out certain activities which have to be submitted before making an application for teaching professional examination (successfully assessed teaching presentations graded by mentors and school principals). After passing the professional examination, teachers acquire a full professional qualification to pursue the profession independently. During the Induction programme, teachers familiarise themselves with different contents so they can

³⁷ Manso, J., and J. Moya (Coord.). 2019. *Profesión y profesionalidad docente* [The teaching profession in Spain]. Madrid: REDE and ANELE.
Manso, J., and R. Garrido. 2021. “Los que empiezan: el reto pendiente de acompañar a docentes noveles [Those who start: the challenge of supporting novice teachers], *Profesorado*, 25(2): 145-163. DOI: 10.30827/profesorado.v25i2.18441.
Programa per a la millora de la formació docent (MIF). 2018. *Accions Estratègiques* [Strategic actions]. Barcelona: MIF.
Martínez, M., and A. Marín. 2018. De la formación inicial a la profesión docente: la inducción a la docencia [From initial teacher education to teaching: induction and preparation]. In *Els reptes de l'educació a Catalunya* [Education Challenges in Catalonia], edited by J. Riera, 491-536. Barcelona: Fundació Jaume Bofill.



work independently and prepare for the teaching certification examination. The Induction programme is prepared by the mentor who has to comply with certain requirements ensuring their expertise in cooperation with the beginning teacher.

The vast majority of the Greek participants in the research reported, that they did not have the chance to attend a formal Induction programme during the initial years of their teaching careers³⁸. According to the Greek legislation, a newly appointed teacher in both Primary and Secondary Education serves two years as a trainee. During these years, trainee teacher has to complete a mandatory training of 100hrs, which corresponds to the existing formal “Induction programme” for beginning teachers and is a prerequisite for completing the probationary period. However, since 2012-13 there has been a halt in the appointment of new permanent teachers due to the financial crisis resulting in the discontinuation of these programmes³⁹.

According to recent governmental declarations in Greece, the Induction programme will be reinitiated within the forthcoming school year to train 11.500 beginning teachers, the first to be appointed to permanent posts after almost ten years. A New Induction programme will be provided by the Institute of Education Policy (IEP) and it will be operationalised through distance learning mode, with a total duration of 96hrs (24hrs synchronous and 72hrs asynchronous mode).

The formal Induction programme (as defined by the Croatian Ministry of Science and Education) begins with the first year of practice of working in schools. Both, primary education teachers and masters of education have to undergo the same process. First-year of working in a school, a trainee teacher receives a mentor to guide him through working in schools, but also as a preparation for the professional state exam which trainees have to pass after one year to be able to receive their teaching licenses.

The state exam has three parts:

- ▶ Essay writing/literacy testing;
- ▶ Preparation and holding of a lesson in front of the commission;
- ▶ Examination of knowledge of the Constitution and laws and regulations on the education system in the Republic of Croatia.

The Induction programmes have a formative/evaluative and decision-making nature for career entry and they take place in collaboration with the university as part of the final study requirements.

In Italy, teachers to become permanent teachers, have to pass a probatory period of one year, under the guidance of a tutor.

Induction programmes, in Germany, are mandatory as they are part of teacher training completion. Teacher training in Germany is divided into two stages: a course of higher education including periods of practical training and practical training in a school setting (induction). Teacher training courses are

³⁸ LOOP Greek National Report, p. 14.

³⁹ LOOP Greek National Report, p. 36.



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offered at universities, Technische Hochschulen/Technische Universitäten, Pädagogische Hochschulen (colleges of education), and colleges of art and music. Practical teacher training in the form of a Vorbereitungsdienst (preparatory service) takes place in teacher training institutes (Studienseminare) or comparable institutions and training schools. Training of teachers at all types of schools is regulated by Land legislation. The relevant statutory provisions include laws (R110–119) and regulations for teacher training, Studienordnungen (study regulations) for teacher training courses, and Prüfungsordnungen (examination regulations) for the Erste Staatsprüfung (First State Examination) or Bachelor's and Master's examinations. Ausbildungsordnungen (training regulations) for Vorbereitungsdienst (preparatory service) and examination regulations for the (Second) State Examination.

E. INDUCTION PROGRAMMES ACCESSIBILITY, STRUCTURE, DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES

Induction exists in Portugal and Spain but it is only occasionally implemented in school environments⁴⁰.

Portuguese Ministry of Education, in 2009-2010, in an experimental approach for a small group of teachers, introduced an induction system, which was already previewed in the teaching career statute, known as Probationary year. The action aimed to shift perspectives of the probatory year, giving it a more pedagogical and formative character, concerned with promoting excellence among teachers – both beginning and experienced – at the start of their careers, but changes were not implemented and all remained the same.

To access work as a professional to teach, Slovenian teachers have to pass a natural and organic stepping stone, in the form of an exam, and it is also necessary that teachers must have a certified number of hours of training (practice), it would also be logical to include the completion of a formal Induction programme.

It is interesting to note that the most recent and relevant survey of Slovenian teachers (TALIS 2018), shines some light on the implementation of these programmes in practice. It stressed that 48% of teachers (compared to the OECD's 58%) reported that they were not included in any kind of formal or informal induction practices at their current schools. About 80% of teachers participating in the survey have joined in some form of an Induction programme (informal) when they started their professional careers. An even higher, 90% had help from more experienced mentors or colleagues in the course of their first years on the job. Since there are only 10% of teachers currently undergo Induction programmes.

Induction programmes, in Slovenia, include the familiarization with the actual subject-specific teaching processes and with various methods and forms of teaching. Beginning teachers deepen knowledge and improve skills in subject-specific didactics, by designing lesson plans, and by executing them while

⁴⁰ Martín Cuadrado, A.M., A. Estrada, and M.J. Corral. 2021. "El acompañamiento pedagógico de los docentes principiantes en centros de difícil desempeño a través de la mentoría [supporting novice teachers in low-achieving schools through mentoring]". ETHIKA+, 3: 147-165. DOI: 10.5354/2452-6037.2021.61040.



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observing mentor's lessons and other teachers. They cooperate with classroom management and leadership of the school, organising parent meetings and consultations. In addition, they gain knowledge and skills outside their pre-school institution or school, particularly in areas that will be included in teaching professional examination.

According to Greek legislation, a newly appointed teacher serves two years as a trainee. During these years, the trainee teacher has to complete a mandatory training of 100hrs which is considered a formal Induction programme and a prerequisite for the completion of the probationary period. However, since 2012-13 there has been a halt in the appointment of new permanent teachers, due to the financial crisis, which has resulted in the discontinuation of this Induction programme. Since then, the need for new teaching staff, to replace retired teachers, has been covered by substitute teachers who are appointed to schools without attending any formal Induction programme⁴¹. The programme consists of general pedagogy modules, aiming at providing teachers with a common theoretical background, and more praxis-oriented modules dedicated to novel teaching practices such as case studies of teaching scenarios, flipped classroom techniques, inquiry-based learning, cooperative problem solving, and project-based learning techniques within a learning community framework⁴².

Induction programmes have a formal structure in Croatia, Italy, and Germany, but in Croatia and Italy, they are equal in the whole territory, while in Germany the programme varies in the different federal states. Teachers, in these countries, have access to Induction programmes before they start their careers, as part of an intermediate step between their initial studies and the beginning of their professional careers. In Croatia, one of the aims of the Induction programme is the familiarization with the curriculum and programmes.

F. ROLE OF SCHOOL PRINCIPALS IN THE INTEGRATION OF BEGINNING TEACHERS

School principals seek to improve the integration of beginning teachers at schools, in Germany, Italy, and Croatia. School principals who participated in the survey and interviews sought to improve the integration of beginning teachers in their schools, but it was not possible to claim that everyone does that.

When explicitly addressed, most, if not all, Spanish school principals claim that they seek to support beginning teachers but confessed that there aren't enough resources or time to address it properly. However, it is worth noting, the Spanish paradox regarding teachers reporting "being well prepared" and the recognition that beginning teachers need more support. At stake here is the definition of these "supports", or the kind of support they identify as critical, which, again, usually revolves around issues of classroom management⁴³.

⁴¹ LOOP Greek National Report, p. 36.

⁴² LOOP National Greek Report, p. 36

⁴³ Manso, J., and R. Garrido. 2021. "Los que empiezan: el reto pendiente de acompañar a docentes noveles [Those who start: the challenge of supporting novice teachers], *Profesorado*, 25(2): 145-163. DOI: 10.30827/profesorado.v25i2.18441.



Induction programmes at the early stages of teachers' careers, allow teachers to develop their professional skills and develop fruitful links within the school environment. Even so, school-based induction is rare: only 20% of school principals reported having formal teacher induction activities at their school, and only 6% reported that beginning teachers can access induction. An important conclusion is that about 90% of participating school principals see a benefit of having an induction/mentoring capacity building at their school for their teachers. The main benefit is the increase in the level of professionalism and direct school work. A close second perceived benefit is the more cooperative and connected professional environment where teachers are more used to cooperating and working together.

Some schools represented by Slovenian school principals participating in the survey have implemented specific programmes. Most of the programmes, at least partly, coincide with two major national teacher Induction programmes⁴⁴. The national programmes being not too well defined and leaving much up to specific schools lead to different modes of implementation. The school principal has the responsibility to appoint a mentor for trainees, for 10 months. The mentor is at least formally appointed for a beginning teacher since it is required to obtain a positive evaluation to be able to approach the professional examination. A common denominator seems to be the involvement of the teaching collective and the assignment of specific mentoring roles to specific teachers. In most instances, one teacher is designated as a mentor but there are instances where several teachers are involved and they have certain specific obligations in regards to beginning teachers.

6.2.1. MAIN FINDINGS OF INDUCTION PROGRAMMES

"There is no quality education, no educational reform, no pedagogical innovation, without adequate teacher training" (Nóvoa, 1992)⁴⁵.

The technological evolution and the complexity of today's society, as well as its political and organisational dynamics, make initial training insufficient to ensure good performance throughout professional life. Similarly, teachers' roles in schools are now very different, it is necessary to permanently monitor social, economic, and scientific changes, so it is urgent **to articulate actions between the places of professional learning (schools) and higher education institutions, ensure collaboration between supervisors, cooperating teachers and the link between practical knowledge and skills acquired in the context of academic training.**

Articulation between theory and practice (or its absence) in the context of initial teacher training is one of the most recurrent concerns in the literature and research in this field. According to several authors, this concern is due to several reasons, among which the professional socialisation of teachers, which is related to integration processes in the complex universe of teaching and learning, stands out. Cumulatively, some problems have been identified **regarding the conditions for having pedagogical**

⁴⁴ Described in more detail in section 1 of the LOOP Slovenian National Report.

⁴⁵ Nóvoa, A. (1992). Presentation Note. In A. Nóvoa (Coord.), *Teachers and their Training* (pp. 9-12). Lisbon: Publications Don Quixote.



practices, namely for the development of the intervention and the development of pedagogical practice at the end of the teacher training programme.

Thus, in addition to possessing, in a concerted and balanced way, ethical, moral, intellectual, and scientific qualities, teachers should also **possess personal, interpersonal, and affective competencies, so that, in a society in permanent social transformation, can adequately intervene in the social dynamics of the school community.** Due to frequent changes in educational policies, teachers are also responsible for **bureaucratic and administrative procedures, updating curricula, and preparing students for global challenges.** Support for beginning teachers during their first years of work is of great importance for education reform.

This dimension is essential, so it is very important to **rethink supervised teaching practice in schools, knowing that initial training cannot be completed without the effective integration of future teachers in a given reality.**

Teachers in all countries of the consortium feel that, from a global perspective, they **need support** and it seems to be a consensus among school principals to enter the profession and perform their professional duties, which is a major challenge of their profession⁴⁶.

Ergo, quality measurement is seen as an essential element to improving teaching and learning, the process is not easy, and necessary restructuring of teacher training programmes becomes much more difficult. The reality is that initial training courses present a great diversity in their content and form, which inevitably leads to different training profiles, who could not be prepared to assume some professional tasks, and for this, they need support in different domains. **It is important to extend learning, ensuring support to interventions, with a clear focus on the proximity between contexts (initial training entities - schools), a framework of quality trainers, open staff, and a set of relevant actions for the performance of their duties.** Induction programmes are therefore necessary, not only to fill the gaps in initial teacher education and the mismatch between theory and practice but should be conceived as a way of accessing the teaching profession.

Teachers should have support in updating their professional skills, coping emotionally with pressures of the school environment, and the relationships between all actors involved, communicating and cooperating with colleagues and schools principals, and ultimately dealing with the administrative and professional legal aspects, and if possible to have support in didactic/scientific-pedagogical domain.

An effective Induction programme available to all should seek, at all stages of their teaching career, to observe their peers, be observed by them, and participate in learning communities that promote

⁴⁶ Manso, J., and R. Garrido. 2021. "Los que empiezan: el reto pendiente de acompañar a docentes noveles [Those who start: the challenge of supporting novice teachers], *Profesorado*, 25(2): 145-163. DOI: 10.30827/profesorado.v25i2.18441. and Martín Cuadrado, A.M., A. Estrada, and M.J. Corral. 2021. "El acompañamiento pedagógico de los docentes principiantes en centros de difícil desempeño a través de la mentoría [supporting novice teachers in low-achieving schools through mentoring]". *ETHIKA+*, 3: 147-165. DOI: 10.5354/2452-6037.2021.61040.

Manso, J., and R. Garrido. 2021. "Los que empiezan: el reto pendiente de acompañar a docentes noveles [Those who start: the challenge of supporting novice teachers], *Profesorado*, 25(2): 145-163. DOI: 10.30827/profesorado.v25i2.18441.



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joint reflection and learning and address the quality of teaching and professional development as a collective and not just an individual responsibility.

Teacher Induction programmes should therefore be understood as a systematic, planned, and prolonged process of professional development, of collaborative and formative nature, involving a network of teachers and experts from different sectors and focused on school context, promotion of student learning, and development of the education system.

To ensure the success of these programmes, **the role of the teacher implementing the Induction programme and the role of the school principal should also be considered, planned, and structured.**

6.3. DIMENSION 3: MENTORS' CAPACITY PROGRAMMES

For the participants in LOOP research, the concept of mentoring and what this type of practice implicates at the school level varies by country. Mentoring for school principals and beginning teachers from DE, GR, ES (excepted experienced teachers), IT, PT (except experienced teachers), and SI is “most often defined as a professional relationship in which an experienced person (mentor) assists another (mentee) in developing specific skills and knowledge that will enhance less-experienced person’s professional and personal growth”. However, experienced teachers from PT and ES intend that mentoring is “a deliberate pairing of a more skilled or experienced person with a lesser skilled or experienced one, with an agreed-upon goal of having less experienced person grow and develop specific competencies.”. All three groups’ participants from HR had chosen that “Mentorship is a relationship between two colleagues, in which one colleague supports the skills and knowledge development of another, guiding that individual based on his or her own experiences and understanding of best practices”.

So, when experienced teachers were faced with the question regarding their capability of mentoring beginning teachers during Induction programmes, the majority of them stated, that they would need to receive training to do it. Thus, all participants agree that it would be important to create a Mentors’ capacity programme, allowing experienced teachers to support new colleagues but for that to be effective, the mentor should balance this new task with being a teacher, not dedicating his/her full-time to mentoring. Also, they are willing to learn more, in practice, how can they deliver this role, what strategies they can use, and what activities to develop to support their colleagues in their role as a mentor.

Continuous training is a demonstration that the transfer of knowledge is not automatic, it is acquired through exercise and reflective practice, in situations that enable the mobilization, transposition, and combination of knowledge, creating new strategies and methodological resources. For this reason, continuous training is one of the mechanisms used to support teachers in the acquisition of new skills throughout their career, encompassing support systems for inducting beginning teachers, collaborative professional learning, and training of school principals.



The Mentors' capacity programme is intended to be designed for a group of experienced teachers, professionally committed and recognized by their peers as responsible and competent professionals.

The training is aimed at exploring and deepening the mentors' pre-existing skills, emphasizing the permanent nature of professional learning, and instigating their personal and collective involvement in the entire process. At the same time, mentoring and the supervision processes associated with it constituted a new challenge for teachers, so training should be assumed as a response to new situations, from a problem-solving perspective, establishing relationships between professional development, supervision, and the act of teaching.

So, the dimension, **Mentors' capacity programmes**, was characterised by the following parameters:

- A. Mentors' competencies and needs.
- B. Teacher training programmes.
- C. Mentors' capacity programmes.
- D. Accreditation Mentors training programmes.

A. MENTORS' COMPETENCIES AND NEEDS

There was a consensus in all target groups, from all countries in LOOP research to not consider mentoring as a full-time duty. For experienced teachers, teaching activities should be combined in a balanced mode with mentors' activities, since contact with students allows mentors to maintain motivation for the exercise of their duties, as well as allowing them to feel fulfilled and updated, as they are constantly challenged to seek new practices so that they can respond to the daily challenges.

Nevertheless, to combine other activities with teaching, experienced teachers need incentives/support to become mentors, in addition to inherent intrinsic motivation that comes from the opportunity to support a teacher at the beginning of his/her career, they also refer that it is important to ensure that the mentor has the possibility to:

- diversify the teaching career, mentioned by ES, IT, EL, and PT;
- progress more rapidly in the career, through a positive valorisation of these functions in the performance evaluation, mentioned by DE, SI, and PT;
- decrease the total working time per week by DE, ES, GR, PT, SI, and EL;
- ensure official recognition, through formal certification of their skills, by ES;
- enjoy greater flexibility of the schedule, by ES;
- have a salary compensation, mentioned by ES, PT, and SI;
- to see the nature of their responsibilities redefined and valued by law, through the allocation of time allocated to mentoring, in the teaching and non-teaching activities, mentioned by PT;
- to be part of a community of practice, as suggested by IT.

Participants in the LOOP research revealed that teachers must possess certain competencies to carry out their duties successfully and overcome any challenges that may arise. Thus, the teacher must be prepared to:

- deal with the generational gap and the lack of motivation of their beginning teachers;



- adjust and respond to different contexts, realities, and pedagogical challenges;
- permanently seek training to be able to respond to challenges of a constantly changing society;
- adjust to the needs of their mentees, schools, and educational contexts (community in general).

In this sense, the teacher must present a certain profile, determined by a set of skills that should be developed through a training programme, allowing experienced teachers to support beginning teachers, such as:

- the domain of didactical-pedagogical strategies and practices (DE, EL, ES, GR, PT, SI);
- knowledge about teaching subject that provides mentoring (DE, GR, PT, SI);
- professional experience in teaching and learning fields (DE, ES, GR, SI);
- willingness to invest the necessary time to support mentees (DE, ES, IT, SI);
- high interest in being a mentor and supporting mentees (DE, EL, IT, SI);
- have well developed interpersonal skills (EL, IT, and PT) such as:
 - Ability to actively listen and communicate effectively (DE, EL, ES, SI);
 - Ability to share experience and expertise (EL, ES, GR, IT);
 - Ability to provide constructive feedback (DE, EL, IT, PT).

B. TEACHER TRAINING PROGRAMMES

Training policy in the Portuguese context answers to the general needs of the educational system and guarantees greater equity to teachers, providing access to up-to-date scientific and pedagogical knowledge related to national curriculum programmes and guidelines.

Training offers predominates on a pedagogical practice base, but it is visible the investment in ethical and deontological related training and information and communication technologies, inclusion, in line with the educational agenda in force regulated by the Ministry of Education. In this process, the fundamental role of the training entities stands out, particularly the training centres of school associations, polytechnic institutions, universities, pedagogical and professional associations, and teachers' unions in the process of implementing national and local educational policies, aiming at the personal and professional development of teachers and educators, inscribed in a context of permanent education⁴⁷.

In Greece, currently, there is a lack of compulsory continuous teachers' training courses. There are, though, some courses provided at a national scale, on an *ad hoc* basis, but usually the access to these courses, even in the case of the most massive ones, are guaranteed only for a few thousand teachers. These courses are short (below 100hrs) and usually are designed to address teachers' needs, according to the priorities of current national education policy⁴⁸.

⁴⁷ Continuing Education Report, 2018-2019. Directorate of Human Resources Management and Training Services Management, Evaluation and Training Team.

⁴⁸ LOOP National Greek Report, p. 34.



Specifically, the only opportunities for in-service training of teachers (INSET) are some *ad hoc* training seminars organized by educational advisors for the teaching staff of schools they supervise⁴⁹. According to Papadopoulou & Bagakis (2015), this situation has led to a gradual withdrawal of the central state from the field of INSET, leaving a vacuum. This void has been gradually covered by multiple other stakeholders (the universities being the most important one), resulting in an increasing fragmentation of the relevant efforts. On that basis, teacher training will likely “turn to private sector training providers, shrinking participation of the public sector, making the system function on a competitive basis” (Karalis & Vergidis, 2003, p. 408)⁵⁰.

Therefore, there is a distinct fragmentation and decentralisation of the providers involved, resulting in a gradual shift from centrally controlled learning programmes to more independent and autonomous ones⁵¹.

In Spain, teachers' continuous training is focused on digital competencies, diversity and equity, methodologies and other cross-cutting skills and personal competencies, but does not offer any clear, coherent pathway to progress and diversify teachers' careers – apart from promoting to become a school principal or work for regional authorities. So, there are many opportunities available for Spanish teachers to enrol in training programmes, although their participation varies. For example, while 72% of teachers participate in courses and workshops, the proportion of teachers participating in training based on peer learning and coaching falls to 19%, which is lower than the OECD average (44%) and one of the lowest proportions across TALIS participants⁵².

The Slovenia National Education Institute and the Agency for Education and Ministry of Science and Education in Croatia provide various forms of support for teachers and schools (aimed at the development of professional competencies): Seminars, study groups, mentor networks; Consultation, project work; Thematic conferences; Symposiums and professional conferences; and, Multiplication training and Professional publications.

After obtaining full qualifications, a Slovenian teacher might progress along his career path and receive specific grades for his proficiency. There are three titles that a teacher might earn that are connected with years of carrying out his profession, the evaluations of his superior, credit points for teachers' continuous training, and credit points for additional professional activities (among them, one can find also mentoring beginning teachers). The Ministry of Education organises and finances teachers' continuous training to develop education staff, and schools, as well as the development of the system as a whole, thereby improving its quality and efficiency. Schools plan teachers' continuous training, for education staff in an annual work plan. Providers of these programmes are higher education institutions that have developed and implemented the programmes following the rules of higher education.

⁴⁹ LOOP National Greek Report, p. 36.

⁵⁰ LOOP National Greek Report, p. 36.

⁵¹ LOOP National Greek Report, p. 36.

⁵² OECD (2019b) TALIS 2018 Results (Volume I): Teachers and school leaders as lifelong learners.



There are some teachers' continuous training concentrating on mentoring or coaching that is usually offered in the catalogue. The career progression of teachers is segmented into three ranks, connected with appropriate professional titles. The first title that a teacher obtains on this path is the title of a mentor. A teacher holding this title can be appointed as a supervisor to a beginning teacher (on his path to professional examination), but this has no real significance for the mentor. Mentoring a beginning teacher only brings to mentor a small number of points that can help on her/his career progression path.

The Agency's advisors in Croatia provide support to educators within their subject area, interdisciplinary, and network of school principals of country professional councils and educational workers as mentors are a great potential of the existing system. Their professional competencies, including those of mentors, are systematically developed through teachers' continuous training. Each consultant is an expert in the subject area and he/she is responsible for organizing teachers' continuous training for approximately 800 to 1,200 teachers of the subject. For each target group, mentors included, teachers' continuous training is organized depending on the subject they teach, but also interdisciplinary, and upon completion of the professional training.

Teachers' continuous training in Italy isn't sufficient to support teachers and foster better professional skills.

Share of practical training in schools in higher education courses has been substantially increased in recent years, in Germany. For study courses at universities, in all federal states' institutions (e.g., centres for teacher training) have been established to coordinate teacher training between the faculties and guarantee an adequate relationship to teaching practice.

C. MENTORS' CAPACITY PROGRAMMES

There are no formal mentoring practices in Portugal, Spain, and Greece. Only recently, i.e., July 2021, the Greek government passed a new law (law no. 4823/21) which reintroduces the role of mentor in the Greek system.

In Spain, new education law passed in 2021, LOMLOE, and its promise to introduce, within a year, a specific proposal to transform ITE, CPD, and the entrance into the teaching career has opened a historic window of opportunity to finally respond to the isolation of beginning teachers in Spain. These new laws have been received with enthusiasm and caution, given the abovementioned difficulties to translate educational laws into concrete programmes and practices and the dual system of governance in place. In short, the new law explicitly addresses many of the recommendations and proposals made during the last years (e.g., REDE, 2019), which include:

- ▶ Improvement of the access and selection to ITE;
- ▶ Increasing the quality delivery of ITE programmes;
- ▶ Deepen the grounded practice nature of ITE programmes and the innovation of preservice experience more generally;



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- ▶ Alignment of teachers' programmes and the development of a truly holistic ITP system;
- ▶ Creation of feedback loops among education authorities and the support for more interagency collaboration;
- ▶ Implementation of a residency model strongly inspired by the medical residency model, which will become the central induction resource for beginning teachers entering the profession.

In Slovenia, the Mentors' capacity programme exists but is not yet implemented.

From surveys, interviews, and focus groups most Croatian teachers claim that they had big support from their colleagues. To become a mentor in Croatia, a teacher has to gather a set of credit points. The points must be collected over five years and come from their related work on additional activities, which also involve the participation of students, such as participation in national and international competitions, participation in professional and scientific conferences related to methodology, didactics, methods of working with children, publishing papers related to teaching and teaching methods.

Likewise, it is stated in international reports⁵³ and Spanish interviews that collaboration is not a feature of the existing teacher training.

Collaborative work is encouraged in Germany but it is not formally defined as a support measure.

In Germany, the Mentors' capacity programme is usually provided in courses taken alongside full-time employment. The duration of those training is up to 115 hours per course. However, participation in these courses is not compulsory and one can become a mentor without attending such a course. The mentorship process, in Germany and Italy, is accessible to all interested teachers.

In Greece, is highly individual, and depends not only on the mentor, but equally on the mentee, and the practices greatly vary from person to person. To improve this process of integration, and improve Mentors' capacity programmes, firstly, on a structural level, an effort has to be made to secure proper conditions so that a mentor can adequately dedicate his/her time to his mentee. Thus, the role of mentors should be restructured in a way that will secure a positive and constructive relationship between them and mentees.

It is also important to highlight the target groups inquired that is necessary to structure a formal Mentors' capacity programme for mentors.

D. ACCREDITATION MENTORS' CAPACITY PROGRAMMES

There are no accredited courses for mentors in any of the LOOP consortium countries.

In Croatia, for teachers to become mentors, advancement is based on the assessment of the teacher's performance in three areas: work with students in teaching, extracurricular activities, and professional development. Assess the quality of work of a teacher is made by the school principal and the advisor

⁵³ Education at a Glance 2021, Paris, OECD Publishing



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of the Education and Teacher Training Agency – comprehensive assessment is made according to two criteria: achievements in all areas prescribed by the law, and years of teaching – and the final decision on promotion is made by the Ministry.

A legal frame is set up for teachers to become mentors, and through this frame, guidelines are set which teachers have to follow – “a teacher can progress to a level of mentor-teacher if he/she meets certain conditions”, which are:

- ▶ passing the professional exam;
- ▶ at least five years of work in a school institution performing the duties of a teacher;
- ▶ teacher training programmes lasting at least 100 hours in the last five years.

In addition to the general conditions referred to above, an educational worker who advances to the title of a mentor must also meet the following conditions of excellence:

- ▶ adoption of learning outcomes by inspecting the professional-pedagogical work;
- ▶ at least 20 points were collected from a minimum of three categories, among which the mandatory category is "Improving the work of the school".

6.3.1. MAIN FINDINGS OF MENTORS' CAPACITY PROGRAMMES

The competencies that a mentor should possess to overcome the challenges of being a mentor, enabling and supporting full integration of beginning teachers in the culture of a school, imply the acquisition of knowledge and mastery of a set of skills necessary for a full performance of his/her role. On other hand, it is important to state that mentoring relationship is based on collaborative action.

In this respect, it is important to highlight that collaborative work is part of numerous and rich expressions of pedagogical and investigative discourse.

The risk of only discursive use and a shared belief in the goodness of the principle underlying the concept of collaborative work is evident. The first indicator of this risk is the ease of generating a generalised agreement. Quiet agreement leads to the superimposition of collaboration as a benevolent attitude and principle over collaboration as a working matrix. Therefore, it is important to make **the principles underpinning collaboration realistically known and operationalized through the promotion of teacher training programmes.**

The continuous training system as a training of professional teachers aiming at their personal and professional improvement is conceptually opposed to the initial training, and is, therefore, teachers' continuous training is intended to improve those who already have basic knowledge and know-how to embrace the job, [being] certified or not certified, [...] prepare for specific positions and tasks in the education system (specialized training) or be more general⁵⁴.

This characterization highlights that it **is important that teachers' continuous training moves away from an egocentric purpose for which it is often sought, related to career progression,** and moves

⁵⁴ Recommendation n.º 4/2013, published in Diário da República in Portugal n.º 95, 2nd Series, of May 17.



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towards a more disinterested intent, close to administration and management structures (top and intermediate) and educational community.

It is, thus, essential for the involvement of everyone **in defining an institutional training plan, that includes not only its target but also identifies partnerships and a strategic vision**, based on the recognized needs, according to national and international panorama and arising from the reflection and identification of needs, and should be accessible to all teachers, so it must include the number of needs. At the same time, teachers should be encouraged and supported to be part of teachers' continuous training.

The training of mentors does not exist in the different countries of the consortium. As the mentors' skills come from theoretical knowledge and from their goodwill and desire of helping colleagues at the beginning of their careers, is urgent for a certified training course, offered as a continuous education programme, to train experienced teachers to become a Mentor.

So, Mentors' Capacity programmes should be adopted as priority actions in the education system to produce much-needed changes and as a way to increase support to teachers, implement true collaborative practices, transform the teaching career, since they can improve teachers' professional performance, and their well-being, with less working time per week, schedule flexibility, salary compensation, inclusion in a network of mentors and success, by progressing faster in the career. Further, introducing this option in a teaching career can be a motivational factor to retain valuable professionals in the system, and avoid their earlier retirement or drop-out, due to lack of options.



7. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the conclusions set out above for each of the three dimensions that constitute the scope of this Policy Brief, it is considered pertinent that policymakers assess the relevance of implementing the following recommendations.

7.1. TEACHERS' CAREER

Revision of teaching careers, to value them and to increase their attractiveness for teachers at different stages of their professional career, ensuring:

- ▶ The stability of the teaching career, changing the rules for the placement of teachers, in particular, so that there is less geographical mobility;
- ▶ The definition of a single career path or one divided into progression steps;
- ▶ Progression based on objective criteria for evaluating merit and training performance;
- ▶ The attribution of pedagogical coordination, guidance, and supervision responsibilities to teachers with adequate qualifications/experience;
- ▶ The inclusion of time for collaborative and peer work;
- ▶ The valorisation of pedagogical functions of special importance, including that of mentor, with benefits at the level of career progression;
- ▶ Effective support for teachers at the start of their careers, by applying:
 - ▶ A structured Induction programme streamlined by experienced peers and school principals;
 - ▶ A reduced timetable for mentors and less experienced teachers;
 - ▶ Flexible working hours for mentors, so that they can combine their teaching and mentoring activities.

7.2. INDUCTION PROGRAMMES

Enhancing supervision practices, namely through the implementation of induction at different stages of the teaching career, extending the initial training of teachers, and giving continuity to their professional development, through the following actions:

- ▶ Strengthening cooperation between higher education institutions and schools, to ensure a balanced combination of theory and practice and adjusting training as much as possible to reality;
- ▶ Promotion of a culture of research on and in training, to better understand what is done (or not) and why, analysing the epistemological foundations, the objectives of training, and the implications



of the action itself, in spaces of co-training and reflection on training models, processes and practices;

- ▶ Improvement of induction practices, helping not only beginning teachers to face the challenges of the first years of teaching but also teachers in mobility and/or temporary contract;
- ▶ Focus on the formative perspective of Induction programmes, pedagogical supervision, concerned with promoting excellence among teachers;
- ▶ Support for Induction programmes on mentoring, run by experienced teachers from the same school or subject group, trained to act as mentors and able to adopt a collaborative and constructive attitude;
- ▶ Creation of new and motivating career opportunities for experienced teachers, becoming mentors to their peers, and contributing to the improvement of education systems.

7.3. MENTORS' CAPACITY PROGRAMMES

- ▶ Constitution of teams of teacher-mentors, defining a profile that includes not only the domain of strategies and practices at a didactic-pedagogical level and experience in teaching but also the willingness to support other teachers in developing their professional skills;
- ▶ Recognition of relevance of the mentor's role, through their certification and professional valorisation of that status;
- ▶ Creation of a training programme for mentors, oriented towards the planning and implementation of actions that effectively support the immersion of teachers in the profession, ensuring the development of certain skills, such as:
 - ▶ Ability to provide concrete and constructive feedback;
 - ▶ Openness to establish a relationship of proximity and trust;
 - ▶ Willingness to share experiences, and knowledge and adapt and respond to challenges.
- ▶ Elaboration of a system to evaluate the impact of the Mentors' capacity programme on the integration of teachers into teaching and the role played by different stakeholders.



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