

PLA MONTPELLIER

10-12 MAY 2026

Supporting acquisition of the language of schooling while maintaining existing languages and cultures



Report prepared by Sabina Autor (Pedagoški inštitut/Educational Research Institute), Despina Syrri and Ljubiša Vrenčev (SYMBIOSIS) in association with Risbo, Netherlands, **June 2026**

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1. Executive Summary

1.1 Peer Learning Activity Montpellier – Program

Monday, 11 May 2026

When	What	Where
Sunday 10 th May	Arrival of participants. Presentation of the programme, goodies, games about migration and education in France/ Occitania/ Montpellier	Salle 007-Médecins à St Charles 2
09:00 – 10:00	Welcome, Introductory round, followed by an overview of the program and local context. flyers about SIRIUS France. Website SIRIUS France	
10:30 – 12:00	Entre & Avec, association	
12:00 – 13:30	Lunch, Broc Café	City centre
14:30 – 17:30	Ecole Arago, class of Florence Guiraud, newly arrived students working with books funded by SIRIUS.	École Primaire Arago, Sète
19:00 – 22:00	Harbour migration visit and diner	Sète

Tuesday, 12 May 2026

When	What	Where
09:00 – 11:00	Meeting with Nathalie Pepiot (mission gitane)	UMPV
11:30 – 12:30	Exhibition ATRIUM, CARTE project (association Entre&Avec).	UMPV
12:30 – 13:30	Lunch, Buffet ATRIUM	UMPV
14:00 – 15:30	Musée des moulages	UMPV
15:30 – 16:30	Closing Session	
Departures		

1.2 Conclusion and recommendations

The sixth Peer Learning Activity took place on May, 11 and 12, 2026 and was hosted by the University of Montpellier Paul-Valéry (Nathalie Auger and Perrine Ravenel). The PLA attended Despina Syrri and Ljubiša Vrenčev (SYMBIOSIS), Sabina Autor, Pedagogical Institute and Klara Skubic Ermenc (Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana) as peers, Tom Tudjman (Risbo) as coordinator, Valentina Galli (Sirius network) and Arja Krauchenberg (EPA) as Sirius network partners.



The visit showed that the Montpellier approach is built around education with intercultural and multicultural elements and close cooperation between academic research and practice, and the concept of “learning territories”, in which learning is supported not only at school but also through families, associations, libraries, museums, public spaces and community activities.

Three practices stood out: (1) the work of Entre & Avec in a priority neighbourhood, combining French language learning, arts, multilingual visibility and civic participation; (2) the school-community cooperation around École Primaire Arago in Sète, where formal learning is linked to the Educational Success Programme, libraries, cultural outings and parent support; and (3) the academic mission on the schooling of Roma/Gypsy students, which highlights mediation, anti-discrimination work, and plurilingual pedagogies that build on Catalan, Occitan and Spanish as resources for learning French.

The main lessons are that migrant-inclusive education cannot rely on a school-only model; that pupils’ home languages should be treated as assets rather than obstacles; that teacher support on multilingual, intercultural and safeguarding issues remains essential; and that practical local coordination between schools and community actors is a decisive success factor.

The report recommends building stronger local “learning territories”; combining targeted support such as UPE2A/CASNAV pathways with ordinary classroom inclusion; strengthening family-school cooperation; investing in teacher training on plurilingual and intercultural pedagogy; improving safeguarding approaches for refugee and asylum-seeking learners; and translating broad policy principles into concrete local tools such as teacher toolkits, parent guides and referral pathways.



2. Introduction

2.1 SIRIUS Project and Peer Learning Activities

Within the ERASMUS-EDU-2022-NET call, the action SIRIUS 3.0 – Policy Network on Migrant Education aims to promote cooperation between different stakeholders, support inclusive policy development and implementation at different governance levels, and facilitate the inclusion of migrant children in and through education.

Objectives: Inclusive, evidence-based policymaking and collaboration are fed by (1) analysing and co-creating knowledge on the main challenges and policy approaches for inclusive education; (2) Identifying, sharing and promoting good policy practice and stimulating innovation and mainstreaming in policy development, experimentation and implementation; (3) Disseminating results more widely and in policy-friendly formats.

Activities and expected results: To achieve the above-stated objectives, SIRIUS 3.0 includes the following activities:

1. **SIRIUS Watch**, monitoring the most significant changes in policy, implementation and knowledge to ensure inclusive education environments.
2. **Spaces for Change**, which entails tailored support and training for each network member on how to catalyse change in their own environment.
3. **Peer learning activities** that promote transnational learning between various types of stakeholders.
4. **Dissemination**, focusing on numerous audiences, including policy-makers

Peer Learning Activities (PLAs) are SIRIUS' means to consolidate good practice and promote knowledge transfer within the network. PLAs are being organised in such a way as to present good practice from diverse perspectives of practitioners, policy makers and researchers. The visits shall ensure that the visiting teams have access to the implementing practitioners and to the beneficiaries of the practice, including on-site visits to schools, interviews with teachers, students, school leaders. The visiting teams are composed of mixed teams made up of practitioners, policy makers and researchers. Throughout the timeline of the program, eight PLAs will be organized. This report recounts the experience of the Sirius project in various organisations and institutions in Montpellier, France, from 10 to 12 May 2026.

OBJECTIVES OF PLAs

1. **Inform Host Countries and Stimulate Innovation:**
Share insights with host countries to improve practices and foster innovation.
2. **Recommendations to Visiting Countries:**
Provide visiting countries with actionable recommendations for transferring successful practices to their educational systems.
3. **Knowledge Enhancement within SIRIUS:**
Strengthen the SIRIUS network by increasing knowledge on effective practices, fostering collaboration, and understanding the reasons behind success.



4. Peer Knowledge Enhancement:

Afford peers the opportunity to deepen their knowledge on specific topics and gain insights into practical implementation in the visiting country. Understand your own context better, becoming aware of new possibilities or steps to take, and situating your work in a broader context.

5. Inform Replicability:

Deep understanding of the hosting organization's context is crucial for assessing the replicability of their approaches in different environments.

6. Dissemination of Findings:

Share Peer Learning Visit findings through the SIRIUS 3.0 annual policy conference, National and Regional workshops, and other dissemination channels. Provide descriptions of good practices to schools and practitioners across the EU.

2.2 Methodology of Peer Learning Activities

The Peer Learning Visits are implemented using the established SIRIUS Peer Review methodology. This methodology was originally applied in SIRIUS reviews during the EC-funded period 2012–2014 and was further refined during the EAC/S28/2016 Framework Partnership Agreement (SIRIUS 2.0) and in various Erasmus+ projects carried out by partners. **The Peer Learning Activities (PLAs) serve as SIRIUS' key mechanism for consolidating good practice and promoting knowledge transfer within the network.**

The PLAs are organised so that good practice is presented from diverse perspectives, including those of practitioners, policymakers and researchers. The visits ensure that the visiting teams have access to implementing practitioners and to the beneficiaries of the practice, with on-site visits to schools and interviews with teachers, students and school leaders. The visiting teams (peer reviewers) consist of mixed groups of practitioners, policymakers and researchers. By bringing together multiple stakeholders, the PLAs create an informal yet rich environment where practitioners, researchers and policymakers can exchange insights.

The objective of the PLAs is twofold. On the one hand, they inform host countries on how they might further improve their practices and provide recommendations to visiting countries on how to transfer these practices into their own educational systems. Through this process, the Peer Learning Visits increase collective knowledge within SIRIUS on what works and why, thereby strengthening the network. On the other hand, peers expand their understanding of the visiting country's approaches to specific topics and gain strategies for applying this knowledge in their local contexts.

Teams will be composed with two peers from each partner, alongside with two persons from two network organisations from the consortium. Leading to six peers in total and two coordinators, making it a working peer group of eight professionals (see annex 1 for information on the participants).



3. Description of peer learning activity

3.1 Context

The theme of PLA in Montpellier was Supporting acquisition of the language of schooling while maintaining existing language(s) and culture(s) and was centred around multilingualism and plurilingualism in education, both in the context of students from migrant backgrounds and in the case of minority communities (Roma, “Gypsy”, “Gitan”, “Sinti” and “Manouche”).

Multilingualism, plurilingual pedagogy, and translanguaging practices are at the heart of the research conducted by Nathalie Auger and her team. She is a full professor at University of Montpellier Paul-Valéry. The scope of the activities closely integrates academic research with the development of various pedagogical and civil society practices. The multi-layered nature of their work and the weaving of a network of diverse actors is reflected in the successful collaboration between the university, civil society organizations, and schools.

Education and Migration in Montpellier as a Cultural Melting Pot. Montpellier's reputation as a cultural melting pot is deeply tied to its history as home to Europe's first medical faculty, where Arab scholars originally shared healing techniques with the West. Furthermore, a unique alliance allowed the cathedral and the medical school to collaborate on performing anatomy autopsies on unclaimed bodies under the shadow of the church. In 2022 were approximately 140,000 migrants living in the Hérault department. Around 12,000 migrant children lived in Montpellier in 2020. Neighborhoods with high migrant populations in Montpellier are (La Paillade and Cévennes, Petit Bard pergola, Pas du Loup Val de Croze, and Lemasson Figuerolles, Près). To keep up with an increasing demand, the local department expanded its capacity by creating 420 new spots in 2025. The largest groups came from three specific countries:

- Morocco: 32,762 people.
- Spain: 13,858 people.
- Algeria: 13,547 people.

Newly Arrived Allophone students are included in UPE2A special pedagogical unit. The acronym UPE2A stands for « Unité pédagogique pour élèves allophones arrivants ». This translates to Pedagogical Unit for Newly Arrived Allophone Students, which is a specialized program designed to help non-French speaking students integrate into the school system. According to official June 2025 reports reviewing the 2023-2024 school year, 63% of newly arrived students in elementary schools are actively enrolled in UPE2A units¹.

Key Practice 1: Entre & Avec association & Opening ceremony (vernissage) of the CARTE project exhibition at the University Montpellier Paul Valéry

The Civil society organization Entre & Avec association (website <https://entreetavec.fr/activites/>) located in the Montpellier neighbourhood, with the residents, who are predominantly socially vulnerable, with a migrant background, etc. Until recently, the neighbourhood was not connected to public transport. Residents of the neighbourhood also face poor access to essential services (grocery stores, healthcare, public lighting, etc.).

¹ Informations are provided by Perrine Ravenel



Entre & Avec is a cultural and educational association, which “promotes linguistic hospitality” by organizing language and cultural workshops. Their activities are transformational because they are based on collaboration, emancipatory learning, creativity and take place in the heart of the neighbourhood.

Naraina de Melo Martins Kuyumian, PhD in Linguistics, Research Associate, and one of the founders of Entre & Avec and Donalieu-an Tran Mugnier, Popular Education Facilitator and General Coordinator, introduced to us some of the most important activities they are currently carrying out. In addition to the French language classes, which are attended primarily by women with migrant background, they have also developed a project CARTES "Cartographies Artistiques et Résonances Territoriales pour l'Éducation Langagière" (Artistic Cartographies and Territorial Resonances for Language Education) Aims of the project is exploration of interactions between art, language and space for learning the French language in a priority district of Montpellier. (LHUMAIN members taking part in the project: Nathalie Auger (project leader), Nara de Melo (co-leader), Entre et Avec association, UR LAGAM Le Laboratoire de Géographie et d'Aménagement de Montpellier (cartography). <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/c8df06dcef2f4cdc81b2143d6ab02669>. Within the activities, which were presented was the revitalization of the neighborhood's central square, aimed at exploring possible and desirable uses for the shared public space.

Most of the activities of Entre & Avec association are based on the active involvement of the program participants, their empowerment, and self-organization. Through their work are interwoven the dimensions of language exploring and learning, art, self-organization and empowerment and the creation of public spaces. Opening of the CARTE project exhibition, which takes place at the Paul Valéry University in Montpellier in the presence of rector's speech and collaborates of the project nicely rounded their work. In short, it serves as a good example of close and successful collaboration on the local level (university, researchers and professors, civil society organization and the local residents).

It is inspiring that Entre & Avec have based the theoretical foundation or starting point of their activities on the work of sociologist Marcel Mauss, The Gift as Nara de Melo pointed out in the presentation. What makes this approach refreshing is that they have closely intertwined their work in the field of migrant inclusion not only with the arts but also with the humanities. Civil society organizations, in fact, more commonly rely on more utilitarian justifications or do not even base their activities on a theoretical foundation. Which is not necessarily a negative thing, but approaches that incorporate and take the base in the art and humanities allow much more diverse approaches and the developing of new practices both of higher quality. Because arts and humanities are not necessarily bound by the principle of immediate utility regarding outcomes.



Picture 1. CARTE project exhibition at the University Montpellier Paul Valéry

Key Practice 2: École Primaire Arago, Sète

The visit to the primary school (École Primaire Arago) in the neighboring town Sète consisted of two parts. First, attending Florence Guiraud's class that combined 4th and 5th graders with allophone students. And secondly, a discussion with the teachers, the school counsellor, and the parents (of newly arrived students who attended the observed class).

During the class, students discussed the book *Malala's Magic Pencil* written by Pakistani activist and winner of the Nobel price (2013). The book translation was funded by Sirius. The theme of the book is education, with special focus on girls' education. The newly arrived students create posters and presented in language of schooling (French) in their home countries to their classmates. The lesson provided an example of joint activity of newly arrived students and their classmates, and practice how to combine reading comprehension in the language of instruction with intercultural content and materials.

For those of us who don't speak French, it was an interesting experience, as we had a hard time following the lesson and found ourselves in a situation similar to that of newly arrived students who don't know the language of instruction.

After the class, followed the discussion with teachers, headteacher, the representative of the Programme de Réussite Éducative, pedagogical adviser for the school district and parents (of newly arrived students).

Nathalie Auger opened the meeting by emphasizing that for inclusion of students with migrant background is very important that school environments are connected to the other environments (family, leisure time) that students enter. So, they with Florence Guiraud rely on the concept of learning territory, which combine formal and informal learning. The idea is involving of

all the actors (association workers, teachers, parents, libraries, cultural and sports organizations) and creating learning territories in different places.

The discussion highlighted the importance of a comprehensive approach that integrates all aspects of a student's life: school, leisure time, and extracurricular activities in the process of inclusion and acquiring the language of school and environment. Such an approach requires close cooperation among teachers, parents, civic organizations, and others. The visit also revealed limitations: migrant parent representation remains informal; specialised teachers have limited time across multiple schools; national guidance on multilingual and multicultural teaching is uneven; and safeguarding concerns need careful handling when refugee or asylum-seeking children talk about difficult journeys or legally sensitive experiences.



Picture 2. École Primaire Arago, Sète



Key Practice 3: Presentation of Nathalie Pepiot: Academic Mission for schooling for children from Roma families.

Nathalie Pepiot is a coordinator of La mission académique de scolarisation des enfants de familles gitanes (<https://www.ac-montpellier.fr/la-mission-academique-de-scolarisation-des-enfants-de-familles-gitanes-127356>), which is a special mission on schooling of Roma/Gypsy students for the regional ministry of Education.

In France are different communities, which name themselves differently: “Roma”, “Gypsy”, “Gitan”, “Sinti” and “Manouche” In the discussion was stressed that It is importance of respecting how communities identify themselves locally, rather than imposing terminology from European institutions (Roma).

An educational and intercultural challenge of these communities is shaped by history, social conditions, cultural representations, and mutual mistrust. Key issues include a variety of situations, but clear trends are seen: 1. A school population distributed unevenly across sectors 2. High levels of absenteeism, particularly in secondary education, for a variety of reasons 3. Perceptions of the school by families and of families by the school 4. Fragile relationships with families and the need for mediation 5. Significant academic failure, frequent significant academic delays.

School attendance for all students could be improved with inclusive support schemes, with educational partnership (School-families, mediation visits to families, liaison teachers / parent, school mediators, neighbourhood mediators), creating partnerships (Roma cultural associations, social and educational mediation associations, social and educational partners within local authorities), Cultural activities and promoting the bilingualism or multilingualism of Catalan-speaking and Spanish-speaking students, and their oral and discursive skills, used as resources for learning².

Language and multilingualism are extremely important dimensions of successful inclusion. Building activities on students’ languages, their variations, and their oral, written and, more broadly, cultural practices to broaden their overall skills helps them to develop academic skills in French that do not deny their experiences, family backgrounds, life stories and identities. There are several elements to strengthen multilingualism:

- Working on the oral-written connection
- Working on a continuum of Romance languages
- French belongs to an internal (Catalan, Occitan, Corsican, etc.) and external (Castilian, Italian, Romanian, etc.) continuum in terms of its systemic coherence and variations
- Observation of language columns: Occitan and Catalan help bridge the linguistic gap between French and Castilian
- Integrating pupils’ multilingual abilities into their work and their approach as learners
- Metalinguistic competence, transfer of skills
- Language in the service of subject-specific activities³

² Presentation of Nathalie Pepiot

³ idem



Picture 3. Working session University Montpellier Paul Vallery



4 Take aways, recommendations and conclusions

4.1 Key challenges

1. Inclusion of the residents of the city district, which is quite isolated and segregated, with poor access to public infrastructure and services. (see key practice 4.1)
2. Inclusion of women, who are particularly isolated due to culturally determined gender relations and excluded due to their lack of knowledge of the language of the environment (see key practice 4.1)
3. How to move beyond the usual support activities that divide participants into facilitators and providers on one side and users on the other. (see key practice 4.1)
4. How to successfully bridge the gaps between the levels of research, inclusion practices, and activism. (see key practice 4.1)
5. How to Include Intercultural content in reading comprehension. (see key practice 4.2)
6. How to strengthen newly arrived students with their classmates (see key practice 4.2)
7. Local innovation often depends on specialised teachers, researchers and motivated practitioners, while time, training and official guidance remain limited. This becomes especially important in multilingual classrooms and in sensitive areas such as safeguarding, child protection and refugee pupils' personal narratives. (see key practice 4.2)
8. A characteristic of the French context is that communities, which name themselves differently: "Roma", "Gypsy", "Gitan", "Sinti" Calé, Romanichals, Travellers and "Manouche". These names are in opposition to externally (EU) imposed term Roma for all communities (see key practice 4.3).
9. Students languages and cultural practices are still often seen as obstacle to develop academic skills not as the assets. (see key practice 4.3).

4.2 Key lessoned learned

1. A civil society organization plays a key and primary role in the integration and inclusion of residents with a migrant background. The success of the initiative is evident in the fact that the participants in the project are not merely users but also active collaborators. Example of learning and creative activities as emancipatory praxis. (see practice 4.1)
2. The local authorities should play a more active and supportive role in inclusion of migrants, regarding stable funding of civil organization, providing basic infrastructure, housing, ect. (see practice 4.1)
3. Importance and key role of arts and humanities in civil society activities (see practice 4.1)
4. Importance of intercultural and multilingual elements for successful including of students with migrant background in classes. (see key practice 4.2)
5. Importance of comprehensive approach for successful including of of students with migrant background, in terms of language and in general, and how the integration of all aspects of a student's life (school, leisure time, and extracurricular activities) plays an important role in this process (see key practice 4.2)
6. Respecting the way communities name themselves means following the principles of interculturalism and inclusion. (see key practice 4.3)

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7. Language and multilingualism are extremely important dimensions of successful inclusion. Building activities on students' languages, their variations, and their oral, written and, more broadly, cultural practices to broaden their overall skills helps them to develop academic skills in language of schooling that do not deny their experiences, family backgrounds, life stories and identities. (see key practice 4.3)

4.3 Recommendations

National / System-Level Recommendations

1. More ambitious implementation of policies by local authorities on inclusion of migrants, with more stable funding and support for civil society organizations in this field, as well as the provision of basic infrastructure that provides more dignified living conditions. (see key practice 4.1, Challenges 1.- 4.; Key lessons 1-2)
2. Supporting of arts and humanities as emancipatory element in civil society activities (see key practice 4.1, Challenges 1.- 4.; Key lessons 3)
3. Supporting of existing and of developing pedagogical and didactical approaches in classes, which base on or include multilingual, plurilingual and intercultural elements or dimensions.(see key practice 4.2, Challenges 5.- 6.; Key lessons 4.)
4. Supporting of comprehensive approaches that integrates all aspects of a student's life—school, leisure time, and extracurricular activities—in the process of inclusion and acquiring the language of school and environment. (see key practice 4.2, Challenges 5.- 6.; Key lessons 5.)
5. Importance of respecting how communities identify themselves locally, rather than imposing terminology from European institutions (Roma). (see key practice 4.3, Challenges 8.; Key lessons 6.)
6. Languages and plurilingual pedagogy are extremely important dimensions of successful inclusion. Building activities on students' languages, their variations, and their oral, written and, more broadly, cultural practices to broaden their overall skills helps them to develop academic skills in French that do not deny their experiences, family backgrounds, life stories and identities. (see key practice 4.3, Challenges 9.; Key lessons 7.)
7. Include safeguarding and “do no harm” guidance where pupils with migration, refugee or asylum experiences may talk about sensitive life histories in school.(see key practice 4.2, Challenges 7.; Key lessons 5.)

Transferable Recommendations

1. Supporting of arts and humanities as emancipatory element in civil society activities see National Recommendation 2)
2. Existing and developing pedagogical and didactical approaches in classes, which base on or include multilingual, plurilingual and intercultural elements or dimensions as a contemporary pedagogical standard. (see National Recommendation 3)
3. Comprehensive approaches that integrate all aspects of a student's life—school, leisure time, and extracurricular activities to support learning language of schooling or environment.(see National Recommendation 4)
4. Accepting the principle that languages and plurilingual pedagogy are base dimensions of successful inclusion (see National Recommendation 6).



4.4 Conclusions

The Montpellier PLA offers interesting examples of inclusion of students with migrant background and minority students in education and inspiring and emancipatory local practice. Its added value lies not only in individual techniques such as language biographies, multilingual books or comparative language work, but in the broader ecosystem that connects schools, universities, associations, cultural institutions and families.

The cases observed in Montpellier and Sète suggest that the language of schooling can be strengthened most effectively when schools do not attempt to erase other languages, and when support is organized across formal, non-formal and informal spaces. The approach also shows that arts, public space and reflective community work are not peripheral additions but can play a central role in educational participation.

At the same time, the PLA made visible the conditions required for sustainability: stronger teacher support, more stable inter-institutional cooperation, practical tools for implementation, and continued attention to inequality, stigma and discrimination. As a result, Montpellier should be seen not simply as a local success story but as a useful reference point for wider policy learning on multilingual and migrant-inclusive education.



ANNEX

Annex Common sharing: info about partners

1. Two peers from Educational Research Institute

The mission of the Educational Research Institute is to develop educational sciences and suitable scientific methodologies by encouraging interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary connection, as well as collaboration with other scientific institutions in Slovenia and abroad. Through the dissemination of scientific results, we also contribute to the development of educational practice.

2. Two peers from the Symbiosis (Greece)

Symbiosis-School of Political Studies in Greece, based in Thessaloniki, affiliated to the Council of Europe Network of Schools, offers quality training to policy makers, activists, experts and civil society representatives in Greece aiming to foster exchange of ideas and knowledge and to stimulate cooperation and dialogue among civil society, policy makers, experts and media.

3. One peer from SIRIUS Migrant Education Network.

“SIRIUS – Policy Network on Migrant Education” brings together key stakeholders in migration and education from around Europe, including policy makers, researchers, practitioners and representatives of migrant communities.

SIRIUS transfers knowledge and influences policy developments in order to help pupils from a migrant background achieve the same educational standards as their native peers.

4. One peer from the European Parent Association.

EPA gathers the parents' associations in Europe, which together represent more than 150 million parents. EPA works in partnership both to represent and give parents a powerful voice in the development of education policies and decisions at the European level. In the field of education, EPA aims to promote the active participation of parents and the recognition of their central role as the primary responsible for the education of their children.

5. One coordinator from Risbo (the Netherlands), a research organisation

Risbo is a research organisation from the Netherlands with knowledge of and interest in migrant education. Expertise in research methodologies and evaluation in the field of migrant education. Expectations include supporting data collection, analysis, and synthesising findings to contribute to peer learning outcomes.

6. One organiser and local hosts from University Montpellier Paul Valéry

UMPV is a public research university in Montpellier, France. It is one of the three successor universities of the University of Montpellier. The university specialises in arts, language and social sciences.