



iDecide: An innovative toolkit for inclusive decision-making policies

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Section 1: Presentation

Inclusion, integration and addressing the needs of marginalised groups, are key priorities for many European countries. CARDET, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Culture from Cyprus and partners from 5 EU countries participated in the project iDecide, under the ERASMUS+ KA3 Support for Policy Reform program of the European Commission. The project developed an **innovative toolkit, a mobile app, and an induction course to support evidence-based policy making that can lead to the reduction of disparities in learning outcomes and marginalization, by supporting school leaders, school staff, and policymakers to engage in shared and inclusive decision making.**

In an ideal world, every school decision should take into account 4 key elements as displayed in table 1 in order to ensure learning for all pupils and to reduce learning disparities for marginalized groups.



Table 1: All decisions are for all pupils (4 key elements)

Decision making in practice seems to **fail to be inclusive**, due to a variety of reasons, such as the fast-paced school life, the principal's lack of time/knowledge/training, the leadership style of the management team etc. The decisions may not take into account the needs/interests/special characteristics and identities of all pupils. **The iDecide project was born out this need.**

By implementing the toolkit and collecting rich data, users can better understand the complexities of how decisions at school level influence marginalised groups. The project has also developed concrete recommendations for policy and practice on how to engage in shared decision making, giving voice to all stakeholders.

Main Goals and objectives:

- To develop an innovative toolkit and an induction course - (face-to-face & on-line) for school leaders and school staff, based on effective principles and processes to promote shared decision making regarding the development, implementation, evaluation and improvement of inclusive policies.
- Support evidence-based policy-making which can lead to the reduction of disparities in learning outcomes and marginalisation in schools.
- Support the EU in reducing disparities in learning outcomes affecting learners from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Strengthen cooperation & exchange of information and good practices between different areas of Europe



It is very important to consider the multiple possible consequences of decision making. Take a look at some examples on your right.



Before taking any decision you should consider that...

- There are children who feel anxious in front of an audience;
- There are children who are more confident and more capable in talking in front of an audience;
- Who have lower self-esteem;
- Who have dyslexia and/or reading problems;
- Who feel uncomfortable because of some of their characteristics
- Who have articulation problem;
- Who may not agree or they feel uncomfortable with their given role;
- Who may not be able to concentrate for a long time.



The iDecide is a practice that **empowers all stakeholders** (especially teachers who are called to make various inclusive decisions all the time) **to decide on policies and practices that impact their lives**. The policymakers are expected to learn and experience the multiple perspectives surrounding a controversial issue and transfer their skills about considering the effects of their decisions on disadvantaged groups on their consideration of other controversial issues in the future. The innovation of this project lies also in the mobile application software that is expected to be developed and circulated across Europe with the end of this project.

The iDecide toolkit takes into account the diversity characteristics of a classroom or a school community (see table 2).

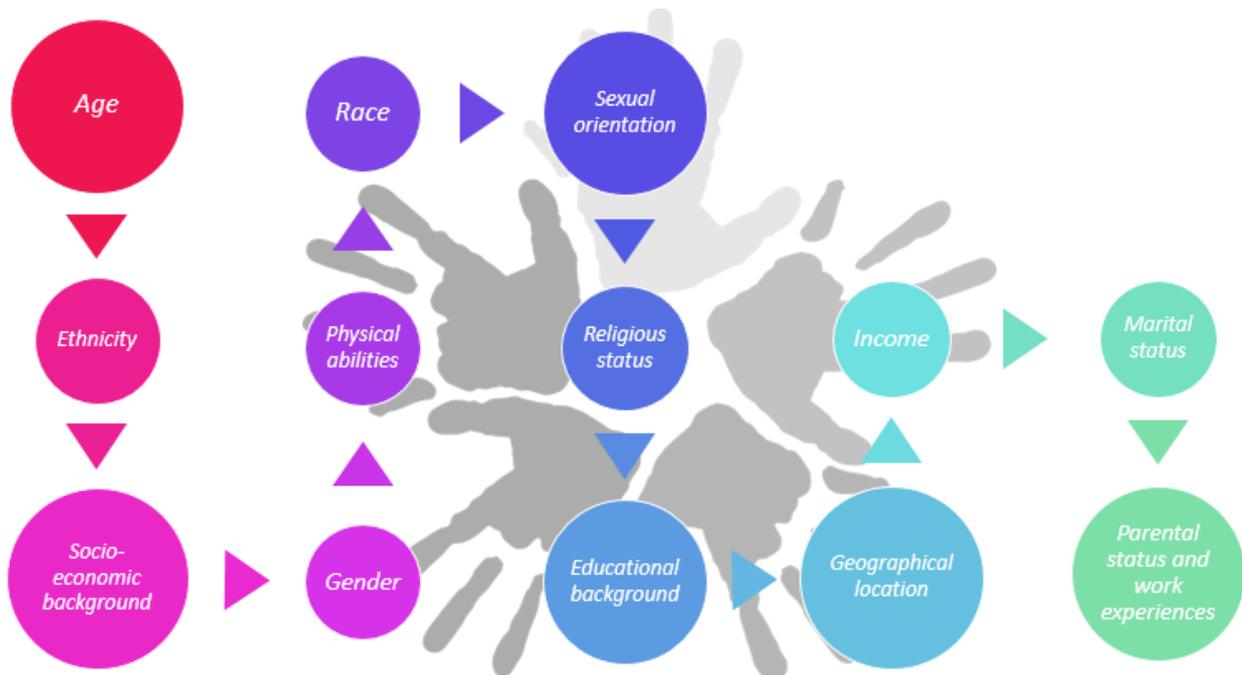


Table 2. Diversity characteristics

The innovation of the iDecide toolkit lies to the fact that through its platform reaches all the relevant stakeholders. Teachers and policy makers have the biggest role in using the toolkit, while students can also use it to comment and vote. Parents can also participate in the vote procedure and therefore influence the decision to be taken.

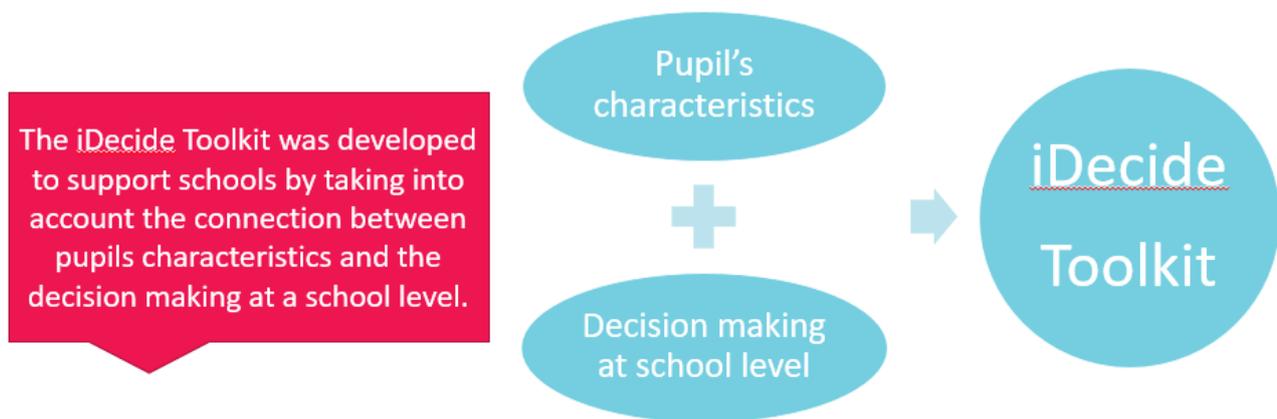
This project was driven by a strong social justice, equality perspective in response to the emerging empirical evidence which suggests that health inequalities, among other inequalities, result from social inequalities. Thus, a particular strength of the rationale of the project lies in its focus upon the causes of social and health inequalities in European societies which emphasise the important role of

minimizing learning and teaching disparities. By focusing on the role and practices of schools in health promotion with pupils from socioeconomically disadvantaged communities, the project also provides new evidence and knowledge about reducing educational inequalities in Europe.

The iDecide toolkit, APP and Induction Course

1) The toolkit

The iDecide toolkit has been designed to provide the school leaders and school staff with the necessary information to promote shared decision making regarding the development, implementation, evaluation and improvement of inclusive policies. One of its functions is to empower school leaders and educators in common everyday decision-making processes, in order to secure more inclusive environments for pupils. **It provides teachers and school leaders with practical tips and supportive literature about the characteristics of pupils in the process of decision making.** The implementation of the toolkit focuses on 23 certain categories of decision (eg. administration, collaboration with outsourcing of services, educational infrastructure, and stakeholders), which in turn, influence marginalized school populations. While developing the toolkit, 13 broad categories of marginalized populations have been identified and, based on them, concrete recommendations have been developed to enable the school staff to give voice to all stakeholders.



The iDecide toolkit offers recommendations on the following marginalized populations:
Pupils belonging to religious minorities: Armenians, Maronites, Latins, Catholic Christians, Sunni Muslims, Shiite Muslims, Jews, Pomaks, Turkish ethnic origin, Protestants, Buddhists, Hindu, Celtic and Iberian tribes (Portugal), Neo-paganists, Irreligion, Greek / Eastern Orthodox Christians, Rastaferians, Sikh.

Roma pupils and travelling community

Pupils with types of SEN/Disability

Intellectual Disabilities: Cognitive Functioning (Memory, learning rate, attention, generalisation and maintenance, motivation), Adaptive Behaviour (self-care and daily living skills), Down Syndrome, Social Development, Behavioural excesses and challenging behaviour.

Learning Disabilities: Dyslexia, Reading problems (misspelling sounds), Written Language Deficits, Math Underachievement, Social Skills Deficits, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Low Ratings of Self-Efficacy.

Autism Spectrum Disorders: Autistic Disorder (Autism), Pervasive Developmental Disorder Not Otherwise Specified (PDD-NOS)

Communication and Language Disorders: Communication disorders, Language disorders, Speech disorders

Sensory disabilities: Students who suffer from Hearing impairment, Visual impairment

Physical disabilities: Congenital malformation of the bones and joints, Scoliosis, Kyphosis, somatic dysfunction, spinal cord injury, muscular dystrophy, rheumatoid polyarthritis, comorbidity, paralysis, Cerebral Palsy

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT): Asexual (a person who generally does not feel sexual attraction or desire to any group of people), Bisexual, Gay, Lesbian, Transgender.

Students from deprived backgrounds: Monoparental families, Living in poverty, Large Families, Living in poverty, Remote areas.

Migrants, refugees, asylum seekers students: Refugees-asylum seekers and Unaccompanied Minors, Migrant students, Generic tips for Migrants, Asylum Seekers and Refugees

Students with health issues: Students suffering from Asthma, Obesity, Diabetes, Anaemia, Epilepsy, Short-sightedness (myopia) (or under sensory), HIV, Cancer

Students with mental health difficulties: Addiction, Anxiety, Depression, Eating disorders, Schizophrenia, Self-harm, Stress, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, Bipolar Disorder



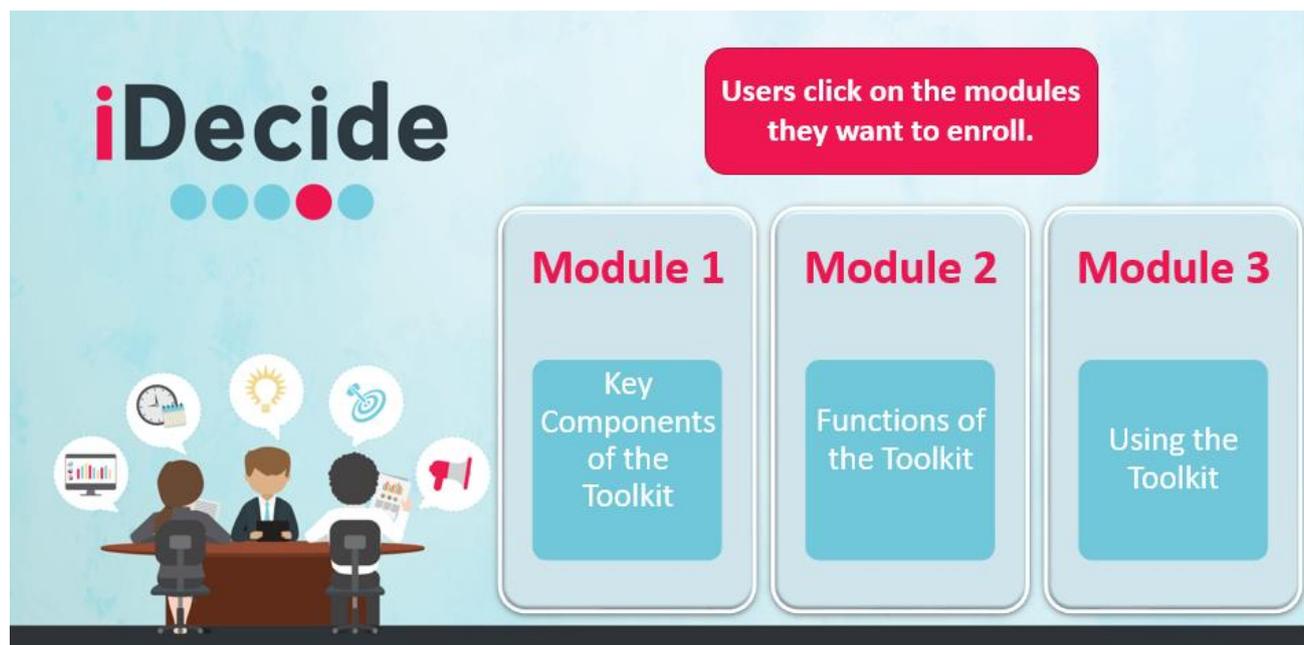
Also it provides practical tips about characteristics of pupils in the process of decision making such as practical tips for teachers, practical tips for school leaders, supportive literature and EU reports.

2) The iDecide induction course

The Induction Course consists of 3 Modules, namely:

1. Key Components of the iDecide Toolkit
2. Exploring the main functions of the iDecide toolkit
3. Using the toolkit

All modules aim at introducing the toolparticipants to the toolkit and providing them with the opportunity of becoming more familiar with its aims and principles, as well as experimenting with its use.



Implementation of the iDecide toolkit

The iDecide Toolkit provides marginalised groups with a greater voice in policy decisions.



Toolkit function I: Gives voice to pupils

The iDecide Toolkit provides practical tips about characteristics of pupils in the process of decision making.



Toolkit function II: Practical tips

For the purpose of the iDecide toolkit two types of accounts were developed:

1) Student account

2) Teacher/school account

Schools have also the possibility to register through the online platform. This allows them to insert their data through an Excel template and submit their data online. What is more, the toolkit has a parents section, in which no “Log in” is required. Parents have the option of contacting the school for a subject to be discussed or vote. Hence, the school is provided with Login details for their students and teachers (school account). This option allows the students to participate in forums (comment) and Vote in polls.

Similarly to students, school teachers also receive Log in details. This allows them to Download the toolkit, view and edit the school’s data.

In addition, teachers can use the feature to “make a decision”. This means that through the platform teachers choose the decision they want to make and the corresponding classes. What is more they can make recommendations towards the school. Another important tool for the teachers is that they can interact with students through forum discussions (teachers can post new forums for students to comment on), polls for students and polls for parents.

The innovation of this project lies on 3 pillars:

- **Shared Decision Making.** Giving voice to students, teachers and parents to decide on policies and decisions taking place at the school level with aim to reduce disparities in learning outcomes
- **Web Apps and online tools.** The use of mobile technologies and web tools to empower active participation of students and teachers in decision making and at the same time to collect rich evidence on the pilot implementation. At the same time, innovative tools are used to give voice to all students and teachers on policies and practices that impact them every day.
- **Interdisciplinary & Transnational.** The interdisciplinary, whole-school approach that demonstrates cross-policy integration in tackling disparities in learning outcomes with comparisons in 5 countries. With this approach, it is expected that policymakers are enabled to take into consideration the potential effects that their decisions have on the school and life experiences of disadvantaged groups in their specific and broader social context. Often, so far, the consequences on disadvantaged groups in each context are not considered when making policy decisions related to controversial issues specific in each context. Part of this problem is the under-representation of disadvantaged groups among the high-level policymakers’ groups in European states. In addition, the toolkit constitutes a complete guide on how to include all the marginalised populations in the school processes and on how to promote education for all. The toolkit and induction course for teachers contain very useful guidelines on inclusive education and on how to think of every category in order to proceed with shared-decision making within the school. Moreover, the toolkit and induction course are currently running on an automated mode, allowing the schools to register by themselves

successfully and be able to use the toolkit without any support from the iDecide team. The web platform provides easy access to school staff to prepare the policy or announcement to be posted for feedback. The platform allows storing data about each school, including school/organisation reality, infrastructure, school program, data concerning pupils/staff under fewer opportunities categories, staff numbers, timetables, subjects etc.

Section 2: Resources

If anyone is interested to apply this good practice, he/she can download the free online toolkit as a [printable version](#) or use the interactive [online form](#).

Once the toolkit is downloaded, the 6 steps of implementing the toolkit are:

1. School leaders and staff need to make a decision on topic X (see example [here](#)).
2. They use the toolkit to help them guide the project. In the toolkit there will be check lists, lists of guiding questions, examples, and practical tips.
3. Then, a draft decision is prepared and shared with interested stakeholders (teachers, students, parents, etc.). Users are able to select a category of decision to be taken (eg. administration, collaboration with outsourcing of services, educational infrastructure, and stakeholders). After selection of category, the user is guided to relative themes to consider. The tool provides information linked with data given by user during registration (could highlight issues to be considered e.g. staff or pupil with wheelchair, climate data (extreme heat), available spaces/stores or infrastructure in school (linked with the everyday school program). The tool provides prompts and provide questions to be considered before decision. It acts as a scaffold to school leaders and staff.
4. Stakeholders provide input via face-to-face, or online or mobile web app. They can comment, debate, approve or disapprove. Depending on the timeframe for a decision, multiple iterations of feedback and consultations can take place.
5. The final decision is the implemented.
6. Such inclusive decision making has the potential to improve teaching and learning (thus covering Priority 1).

For this it is important to have a computer, internet access and printer for the activities each user wishes to try.

Section 3: Duration

The Induction course has a duration of 9 hours in total (it is consisted of 3 different modules of 3 hours each).

As far as the toolkit is concerned, it depends on the activity and account types (teacher, student) selected and the type of decision. Normally it takes up to 3-4 minutes for each decision tips to appear

and for the teacher to go through the material presented. This section will vary greatly from user to user, as specific recommendations appear according to each national context.

Section 4: Expected results

The most important outputs of this good practice are the **toolkit** and **Induction Course**.

Through the active implementation of this good practice it is expected that:

- Teachers will gain a clear view on the characteristics of their pupils, something that is important when making a decision.
- Pupils will have a voice

In addition:

- Promotion of the collective decisions regarding development, implementation, evaluation
- Improvement of the inclusion policies
- Reduction of inequalities
- Change of policy

Section 5: Evaluation

How can we adapt this good practice to our context?

Considering that genuine improvements in education come from innovative policies and practices, which are built on a solid evidence base of in-depth knowledge and experience, giving them systemic and sustainable characteristics, this project acknowledges a certain risk. Although evidence or data are often displayed summative to provide the status of students or schools in relation to a certain standard or expectation, to ultimately change ineffective practices and improve student achievement, particularly for learners from disadvantaged backgrounds, data must be used by principals and teachers in practices that promote data-based decision making by all school employees. This does not always happen. **This good practice can be used to facilitate staff members and school leaders who will have regular, dedicated time to review, analyze, discuss and reflect upon the data collected.** For an effective school improvement to be achieved, principals must establish a culture for using data, provide resources and protocols for data to be collected and used successfully, and guide teachers to use data formatively to inform and modify instruction.