

The IMMERSE Project: Identifying and measuring socio-educational indicators of integration for migrant and refugee children in Europe. Dr Shirley Martin, Dr Deirdre Horgan and Dr Jacqui O’Riordan.

Abstract

Schools are critically important sites of structural integration for migrant children and their families and educational environments provides migrant children with an important context for social inclusion, peer group encounters and new cultural and language acquisition. The Horizon 2020 IMMERSE project developed a dashboard of key indicators representing barriers and facilitators of socio-educational integration in schools for migrant and refugee children and collected data on these indicators in six European countries (with UCC as the Irish partner). In addition to including children and young people as research participants, they were actively involved in the research through the formation of a Children and Young People’s Research Advisory Group led by the UCC Team.

Project results highlight significant cross-national variations in the support systems and challenges faced by migrant children in Europe. While certain indicators of integration, such as language competence and happiness levels, exhibit promising results, challenges persist in areas such as belonging, intercultural ties, friendship diversity and educational achievement gaps. The data also highlights the intersections in migrant children’s lives and identities as differences emerge related to gender, age and migrant generation. The results and the IMMERSE Dashboard of Indicators are a useful tool to identify areas for intervention at national and European levels and present opportunities for cross-country comparison and learning.