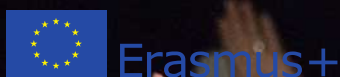


ENGLISH

# *sing me in*

collective singing in the integration process of young migrants



## Working in a school environment

Free handbook

[www.SingMeIn.eu](http://www.SingMeIn.eu)

## Publisher

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SULASOL



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Erasmus+

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## **Welcome to “Sing Me In”!**

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Dear reader,

Thank you for taking the time to read this handbook. We really hope it will prove helpful for you and motivate you to set up new musical projects! This handbook is part of a series of four developed in the frame of a European project running from 2016 to 2018. In this introduction, we will shortly present what this project is about, and how it can be useful for you.

### **What is the project “Sing Me In: Collective singing in the integration process of young migrants” about?**

Some young people are confronted with a higher risk of exclusion due to their socio-economic origin, because of the neighbourhood they live in, their migration background, etc. The “Sing Me In” project aims at providing children’s and youth choir leaders and music teachers, or anybody interested, with pedagogical approaches and tools that allow collective singing activities to play a positive role in the integration process of young people at risk of exclusion.

A number of youth organisations involved in collective singing expressed their need and the need of their own members for structured tools to address the issues at hand: youth organisations globally share the same challenges and are only partially aware of solutions developed in other European countries. The partners of the project decided to address these needs at the European level, to ensure that the whole sector and as many young people as possible can benefit from it in Europe.

Eleven musical organisations from ten countries, involved in youth work, joined forces and used their extensive networks to collect good practices in their respective professional and geographical areas. Based on that rich input from the field, and with the support of experts and practitioners, they decided to collectively develop innovative pedagogical contents.



The main outputs of the project are three handbooks and a dedicated repertoire guide, targeting children's and youth choir conductors and teachers: repertoire tips, pitfalls to avoid, examples of good practices, communication strategies, funding tips, guidelines for singer' preparation, etc. The handbooks are available in 11 languages to allow for efficient dissemination and to guarantee a maximum impact across the community of youth workers in Europe and beyond.

To ensure efficient dissemination, we organised a cycle of international and national multiplier events that are part of training events and conferences gathering our target groups across Europe. These events are an opportunity to reach out to active practitioners who will in turn use and spread the methods further.

Based on anthropological findings, the human voice was likely amongst the first instruments used by humans to produce music together, and it helped members of a group to develop their skills, share emotions, organise common life. Collective singing provided a sense of belonging. The "Sing Me In" project thus relies on a millennium-old tradition to look into the future: It offers innovative and effective tools to help young people meet without prejudices, acquire skills and enter a productive and balanced relationship with the community.

### **Why would collective singing be useful for integration?**

Collective singing is a social act: it is about singing together. And singing together can create a strong, emotional and happy connection, even between people with very different ways of life. Based on this shared emotional experience, involving beauty, effort and fun, a new relation can start and grow. Singing in itself is of course only a tool to equalise the status of the participants: while singing, we are first and foremost singers, cooperating to create a shared musical result. It enables a new relation based on equality (we are all singers here) that can be used to overcome perceived differences and enter into a phase of dialogue and understanding. However, this tool is not unique! Collective singing is only one integration/inclusion tool amongst many other wonderful tools (other musical activities, sport, education, work experience, community work, etc.), and can be articulated with many other activities sharing the same aims.

Let us quote Anne Haugland Balsnes<sup>1</sup> here:

*"The singing voice is a part of the body, and closely linked to breathing. Therefore, singing relaxes and exercise muscles, bones and lung capacity, and contributes to a general state of physical well-being. Furthermore, choir singing brings joy and excitability in addition to a general state of mental well-being. Singing in a choir is described as a 'kick', like 'falling in love' or a 'long lasting high'. Experiences such as these are meaningful for health and quality of life.*

*One of the most important things in terms of integration in a new country, is language competence. In a choir one can learn a new language in a friendly and easy environment, by communication at choir practices and through song lyrics. You do not have to speak the native language fluently to be accepted as a full choir member. A choir contributes to social networking, which is also critical for integration.*

*Choir singing is the simplest way of making music, since the instrument – the singing voice – is part of the body. You only need a group of people, a place to be and a conductor, to make a choir. Still, it is not given that the many advantages mentioned above will be achieved. It is crucial that both the social and the musical part of the choir is permeated by hospitality."*

The project title uses the wording "collective singing in the integration process of young migrants". While we discuss each of these terms below, they in themselves clearly indicate that our primary aim is to support processes and projects that help people overcome differences. Consequently, over time, they eventually discover ways to connect on an individual level, creating new bonds, and a sense of belonging to a same group. Young migrants, just arrived or rooted in families with strong migration background, are a part of our European societies. They learn, work, play, talk and move with the rest of their generation, the adults of tomorrow. The way they relate to their environment, and the way it interacts with them, partially defines how our societies will work in the coming years. Although you most likely downloaded this handbook from the internet, we believe that digital networking and virtual

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<sup>1</sup> Anne Haugland Balsnes studied the KIA Multicultural Gospel Choir (The KIA Choir, <http://kianorge.no/gospelkor/>) in Kristiansand, Norway, during Spring 2012. The choir is part of KIA – which stands for "Kristent interkulturelt arbeid", or "Christian Intercultural Work". The study was based on participant observation and interviews, and focused on members with backgrounds as refugees.

communities are not an answer to the challenges ahead. We need contact, exchange, dialogue and cooperation in real life.

Collective singing is a very flexible art form, merely defined by a method (singing together), and thus can adapt and adopt new musical and cultural contents. This spirit of togetherness, of peaceful encounter, is at the heart of the European ideal (as embodied by many initiatives, over and beyond the European Union institutions).

### **For whom is this project?**

- **Final targets:** The project aims to benefit young people
  - living in different European countries and beyond
  - from the culture of the host country and from other cultural backgrounds (migrants and refugees)
  - singers and not-yet-singers
- **Direct targets:** The Handbooks are written to serve
  - professionals in the youth field: conductors of children's and youth choirs, social workers
  - (music) teachers who want to work with children/young people from different cultural backgrounds
- **Multipliers:** To spread the tools developed, we rely on a broad network of
  - organisations which reach out to professionals in the youth field
  - organisations which can present examples of good practices and/or disseminate the results of the project including the handbooks and repertoire guide.

### **Our contribution: Four handbooks to download**

The result of our work is three handbooks and a repertoire guide that may be freely downloaded from the website [www.SingMeln.eu](http://www.SingMeln.eu)

- "Sing Me In: Singing with groups of young refugees"
- "Sing Me In: Including young people with migrant backgrounds in existing choirs"
- "Sing Me In: Working in a school environment"
- "Sing Me In: Repertoire guide"

Each of the three handbooks is available in 11 languages: Arabic, Catalan, Dutch, English, Estonian, Finnish, French, German, Norwegian, Spanish and Turkish. If you are interested in contributing to a translation in your own language, please do not hesitate to contact us! If you want to find out if other translations have been provided in the meantime, please check the website [www.SingMeln.eu](http://www.SingMeln.eu).

### **What results do we expect?**

We hope

- To see our handbooks contributing to more integration projects being launched.
- to see regular choirs welcoming more diverse participants.
- to see pupils and classes benefiting from singing activities (better academic results and classroom dynamics).
- to see all participants and organisers rewarded with fun and joy, shared laughter and music.

To achieve this, we need your help! If you like these handbooks, share them with your peers and friends. And if you don't like them, please let us know what we could improve!

### **Some explanations on terminology choices**

The English title of the project is "Sing Me In: Collective singing in the integration process of young migrants". Let's clarify these terms:

[...] collective singing [...]

Although most of this project's partners are involved in "choral" singing, we believe that any form of "collective singing" can be beneficial. The traditional choral setup – a conductor, scores and singers singing different voices – is not the only relevant format for this project. Our approach thus covers any shared singing activity, a cappella or with

instruments, unisono or multi-part singing, as well as any type of repertoire or style. Here, the core asset is the very intimate and connecting experience of mixing voices.

#### [...] integration process [...]

We were aware from the beginning that i, the term “integration” may be considered as “old-fashioned” or “wrong” or “politically incorrect”, in some countries, cultures or languages. Our aim is not to decide if migrants should be “integrated” or “included” (or any other term). Our aim is to provide ideas and tools that can be adapted to incredibly diverse contexts, where people from different backgrounds have to coexist peacefully in a geographical, political, economical and cultural space; in which collective singing can be a tool for people to meet and exchange. In short, simply make life better for all parties involved.

Be aware, it’s a two way street: the host culture needs to integrate just like the migrants’ cultures. In our diverse world, everyone needs to integrate.

#### [...] young [...]

The project focuses on young migrants. By “young”, we globally understand people in their formative years, including children (starting with kindergarten age), until the age where they enter adult life. Where we have a specific age-range in mind, this is indicated. Of course, this is an extremely variable notion, depending on the country, the culture, as well as socio-economic situations<sup>2</sup>. You will also notice that we sometimes refer to activities and practices that mix generations, as a tool for integration, or even that we try to learn something from experiences that were developed for adults but from which we can extract useful information to share. Vice-versa many of the tips and tricks mentioned in the handbooks can also be applied when working with adults in a similar context.

#### [...] migrants [...]

According to the UNESCO, the term “migrant” can be understood as: “any person who lives temporarily or permanently in a country where he or she was not born, and has acquired some significant social ties to this country”. This definition includes refugees and asylum seekers.

Our project, however, has a broader scope, potentially including young persons with a migrant background (first, second or even third generation), who may be in need of further integration (or inclusion) into the host culture. We are fully aware of the fact that there are young migrants who are already integrated and will not need support. Furthermore, many of the tips and tricks collected can also be applied to working with young non-migrants who do not have access to culture and are socially or otherwise disadvantaged.

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<sup>2</sup> When no indication is given, we use the following age ranges: Children= 0 to 12, Youth/young people = 13 to 30, teenagers=13 to 18, young adults=18 to 30





Clément Vidal

## **Singing as a participation tool at school**

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Singing together is an activity that is essentially about sharing: we share joy, togetherness and fun when we sing. Therefore, singing is also a perfect tool to create cohesion, cooperation and enjoyment in the classroom and in schools. This is, of course, valuable for all pupils and teachers, but it is especially important when we talk about young people with a migration background. As explained in the presentation of the “Sing Me In” project above, collective singing can be most valuable as part of the welcoming process in their new country, in their new city and, in this particular case, in their new school.

In many cases, collective singing in schools is, in itself, a new territory for some children, regardless of their origin. There are many ways in which children get acquainted with music and singing: they listen to pop music at home, learn violin in a music school or enjoy music by watching TV shows. But not all children have a chance to actively practice a musical activity. Schools are therefore an important place for children to experience the joy of singing and making music together.

There is no magic solution, no perfect formula that can be applied in each and every school context. You will have to make your own journey with your pupils. Just like when preparing a visit in a city you do not know, you might need a little book to help you get oriented and enjoy the adventure. This handbook aims at pointing to the different questions, you possibly will have to address, when you want to sing in the classroom and at your school, to the decisions you will have to make along your own path towards a successful singing experience. It relies on practical tips and questions gathered along an extensive search for successful and not-so-successful experiences all across Europe. So this handbook is not a user-manual; it won't tell you what to do or what to sing in what order. Our hope is that it will help you avoid the trial-and-error phases, saving your time and energy for what really matters: making the children sing together and have fun!

## **This guide is for you if...**

### **You are a school teacher**

Nobody knows your class better than you! You can see which kids are in need of support, which ones can work independently. You know how the mood of the group evolves, when they are concentrated, excited to learn, tired in the winter. You see that groups of friends are formed and that alliances between children shift. And you may have some pupils with a migration background, some who have just landed, some who speak several languages, at home, with friends and at school. You are investing your skills and energy to make sure they all have a chance to develop their best talents. With this handbook, we offer some tools for you to try singing as a tool in this process. Even if you can't sing. Even if you don't know music. Let us sing you in.

### **You are involved in after-school activities**

Schools are often not only used for school activities. School buildings regularly host volunteers, parents, other organisations to teach and take care of groups of children after school. Singing and musical games are ideal tools. Get inspired by this guide.

### **You are a music teacher**

We don't need to convince you of the importance of music in school. Or in life. But we will try to provide you with some tips and tricks, hints at useful repertoire and methods, maybe some new ways to help children share their diverse cultures with their friends and with you.

### **You are a choir conductor or a musician**

Do you often make music or sing with children, in a classroom or as an after-school activity<sup>3</sup>? Or would you like to do so? This guide may help you work with children who sometimes have no experience in singing, or do not fancy singing to start with. It may help you to find convincing arguments to set up this activity, or to establish a base for working with teachers and school administrations.

### **You are a school administrator**

You, or your pedagogical team would like to set up some activities that increase the participation of all children, and that address challenges related to language acquisition. You would like to intensify the cultural dimension of your school project, while enhancing the learning abilities of all children. Maybe a couple of new pupils from other countries have recently joined your school and you are trying to find ways to help them feel welcome in their new country. Get together with your teachers, and discuss this handbook: it might help you find pleasant, realistic and efficient ideas for your school.

### **You are a parent**

You are a parent involved in the school community, and you want to initiate (or contribute to) an activity for collective singing so that the integration and participation of children with a migration background can be stimulated. This document can be a good starting point to discuss with the school administration, the teachers and musical providers.

### **You are involved in socio-cultural work**

You are developing, participating in or running inclusion or integration projects, and you would like to use collective singing as a tool in the frame of your project with a school. It can be a central part of the project, or just an additional tool to deal with specific social issues. We hope this handbook offers useful hints and puts you on the right track to cooperate with relevant partners.

### **You are a pupil or a student**

You are a young and motivated pupil or a student who likes to sing. You want to boost the singing activities in your school, by singing on the playground or starting a school choir. Your school loves to work with peer education and supports you in your idea. This document offers you valuable suggestions.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> You might also want to check the handbook "Sing Me In: Including young people with migrant background in existing choirs" available as free download on [www.SingMeIn.eu](http://www.SingMeIn.eu)

<sup>4</sup> Idem 1.

## Why should you use collective singing as an integration tool in school?

### **Collective singing is a powerful tool for integration**

As explained above, collective singing is by definition a social act: it is about singing together. Singing together can create a strong, emotional and happy connection between people from very different ways of life. Based on this shared emotional experience, involving beauty, effort and fun, a new relation can start and grow. During a singing activity, we are first and foremost singers, cooperating to create a shared musical result. It enables a new relation, based on equality, that can be used to overcome perceived differences and enter a phase of dialogue and understanding.

### **Singing has proven positive effects on the socialisation and learning process of pupils**

Collective singing has positive effects on pupils, at different levels. Children who learn how to sing together, also learn how to work together, listen to each other and solve problems as a group. Singing also stimulates the imagination and sharpens the senses. For pupils with a migration background, it is also a playful and powerful tool for language acquisition, allowing the natural memorisation of syntactic forms and vocabulary. And last but not least, participating in collective singing boosts children's self-esteem and sense of belonging.

There is a very rich scientific literature on the benefits of collective singing in the educational process. Professor Graham F. Welch from the Institute of Education at the University of London nicely summarised the benefits of collective singing for children in five categories (Welch, 2015).

Benefits	Examples
Physical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respiratory and cardiac functions.</li> <li>• The development of fine and gross motor control in the vocal system.</li> <li>• Neurological functioning.</li> </ul>
Psychological	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intra-personal communication and the development of individual identity, both in music and through music.</li> <li>• Singing is a cathartic activity: Singing provides an outlet for our feelings.</li> <li>• Interpersonal communication: Healthy singing enables us to maximise our potential to communicate with others.</li> </ul>
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An enhanced sense of social inclusion.</li> </ul>
Musical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The realisation of our musical potential: Singing activity fosters our intellectual engagement with music.</li> <li>• The creation of an individual musical repertoire, whether as a listener or performer or both</li> </ul>
Educational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increasing knowledge, understanding and skills about the world around us, both in music and through music.</li> <li>• Singing will likely make you more competent in your own language, including an improvement in reading skills.</li> <li>• Reading lyrics and reading music are processed in the same neurocortical regions for symbol decoding.</li> </ul>

## **Your school is a perfect place to use collective singing**

A school is a quite specific social setting: it brings young people together with the explicit aim of preparing them to be members of the community. We believe that this setting<sup>5</sup> has specific advantages in regards to collective singing and integration:

- There is no need to recruit participants: pupils are requested to be there, and the activities are decided by the school (teachers, administration, etc.).
- It offers a pre-existing mix of origins and cultures. The pupils bring in a diverse array of nationalities, languages, socio-economic situations and cultural habits.
- The legitimacy of schools is pre-established: teachers are trusted sources of knowledge and progress for children.

But there are, of course, also specific challenges:

- Means and skills: the school may not be able to afford professional musicians and the teachers may think they lack the skills needed.
- Pupils have to attend; they have not chosen to participate in collective singing. The experience has to be convincing to gain appreciation from your pupils.
- Time for activities that seem to be outside of the official curriculum may be limited. The pressure to fulfill the official programme may give collective singing a low priority status.

In this little book, we try to offer some possible solutions to these challenges. If you already have a singing activity in your school, our handbook "Sing Me In: Including young people with migrant background in existing children's and youth choirs" may be useful as well.

## **You can do it!**

It doesn't take much to set up a collective singing activity in your classroom or in your school. The only requirement is the motivation of the person in charge. You don't need special skills, you don't need to dedicate an enormous amount of time to singing (5-10 minutes per day are enough), and you don't have to plan a concert for 2000 people at your local opera house. But since you're reading this handbook, you're already there! Let us guide you along a few aspects that can help you decide what is the best option for your situation.

### Use existing tools to make the pupils sing

In most cases, school teachers can run singing activities that will benefit the pupils, the class dynamics and the learning abilities, even if they believe that they can't sing themselves. Let's look at it this way: the aim is to have children singing together, exchanging cultural content and creating new bonds, so the singing abilities of the teacher are only a small part of the equation. The teacher's role is not to lead a world-class performance, but to use pedagogical skills to make children sing.

Many tools and methods allow singing in the classroom to be organised even without pre-existing skills. We have listed a few of them in the resources section on the website [www.SingMeln.eu](http://www.SingMeln.eu). One example: group cohesion and learning abilities can be enhanced by using the Voces8 method and dedicating a few minutes classroom time to singing every day. Readily available sing-along CDs or online videos also offer proper musical guidance, without having to use scores. Some resources are specifically dedicated to intercultural work and working with children from different cultural origins and, may therefore be particularly useful in this context.

### 5 minutes a day can take you a long way

The benefits of singing in the classroom can already be felt after a minimum of time has been invested. Just introduce a few minutes of singing every day: at the beginning of the day, or to accompany and ritualise specific classroom activities, like cleaning up, before maths or before a class discussion with the pupils. Singing is energising, helps the mind focus, fosters correct breathing and relaxation.

Of course, setting aside more time for singing will multiply its effectiveness, which will allow you to work out a varied repertoire and a better link with integration and participation processes or intercultural elaboration. But if this is your first experience with collective singing, and if you cannot find or afford trained musicians or other

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<sup>5</sup> We are dealing here mostly with singing activities during the official school time, although some ideas will apply to after school activities. You can also refer to the handbook "Sing Me In: Including young people with migrant background in existing choirs"

support, just go for simple, and focus on the quality of the relation with the pupils. Next year, you'll be ready to go a step further!

Singing together is a learning tool for pupils and adults alike

A collective singing activity, especially developed to foster integration and participation, has a different status than a conventional pedagogical situation, where teachers provide pupils with content and methods. If the teacher claims no expertise, but provides a clear and organised framework, the activity can become a shared learning process, where music, ideas and stories are exchanged and experimented. The role of the teacher here is that of a facilitator, challenging the pupils to share and discover each other's abilities, knowledge and culture.





## **OK, let's do it!**

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Now, since you're still reading this handbook, we assume you are convinced about the importance and usefulness of collective singing for your pupils. You are convinced, but are you ready? Let's do it!

### **Define your own activity**

#### **Understand the expectations of the group**

Before you start, it is important that you and your pupils develop a common goal. Make sure you avoid a global misunderstanding about singing. Although music is universal, your approach to music needs to be inclusive. What is music, singing, collective singing for the pupils? What does it mean to them? Are there differences and similarities between cultures? For some, music may be a competition of individuals on TV. Others may have musicians in their family, or have seen live music in concerts. Some may already be singing or playing an instrument, etc.

How can you achieve this understanding? Try to size up your pupils: What music do they listen to? Do they have experience in music making? What other factors may come into play? Based on this, you can choose the best approach for them, either directed towards active singing or active listening. An active group discussion about music might be an option with somewhat older children. For example, by showing them pictures of various types of musicians, different group settings, and asking them how they relate to what they see. The aim here is to foster a collective activity, so that the group discovers that all musical activities need the cooperation of several individuals (singers, musicians, composers, audiences, technicians, organisers, producers, engineers, etc.).

Be aware that not all pupils may want to sing in the beginning. Some may just be a bit shy, others may want to stand out. They can be included in the group in other ways, for example, by playing a simple percussion instrument. In this way, you create a safe environment in which everybody feels included.

### **Plan ahead, but be flexible**

What are your aims? What are the stages of your activity? What are the changes and evolutions you are expecting from the project?

Your activity, like any project involving others, will likely evolve a bit differently from what you planned. Formalising it for yourself, and keeping in mind your final aims, can help you adapt to any changes that may present themselves. Know where you want to go, but be ready to take shortcuts, or use a different path! That means that you need to prepare a lot of different activities and prepare a variety of didactic tools before you start singing with the children. Keep the activities simple, but be very dynamic, so that the children are busy learning and exploring all the time.

### **Specific challenges to be considered for pupils with migration backgrounds**

Regardless of their background, all children and young people are essentially the same. They all have the same abilities and potential, even if some of them might carry other skills, habits and views of the world. In most cases, any differences will be transparent to the collective singing activities. But sometimes, specific issues may arise, like in all pedagogical processes.

Below, we have listed a few examples of possible challenges, and indications on how to overcome them. This is not a limited or exhaustive list. As a group leader, you will have to be sensitive to subtle signs and indications. Try to clarify and find solutions that work for the group.

#### Challenges related to communicating with the group

<p>Make sure your instructions are clear.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speak slowly and clearly.</li> <li>• Emphasise important words.</li> <li>• Use simple phrases, avoid complex ones or passive constructions.</li> <li>• Avoid metaphors, unless you've taught them to the children beforehand.</li> <li>• Use transparent words, words that sound familiar in other languages.</li> <li>• Use synonyms.</li> <li>• Use examples.</li> <li>• Be as concrete as possible, link what you say to what they can see.</li> <li>• Use pictures, objects, gestures, sounds and music: Show, don't tell.</li> </ul>
<p>Encourage exchange within the group.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open up to the children, make eye contact, smile, greet them in their own language.</li> <li>• Don't speak too long, leave time for questions.</li> <li>• Encourage dialogue.</li> <li>• Let children make mistakes, but make sure that you, as a teacher, use correct and full phrases.</li> <li>• Don't repeat the mistake, but use the right word in your answer.</li> </ul>

Challenges related to musical cultures

<p>Be aware: Some cultures use other scales and temperaments (Turkey, Arab countries, India, Indonesia) or rhythms. Be aware of the fact that it might be difficult for children to sing in different tonal systems and keys, or to shift from reciting to singing and even to using head voice.</p> <p>Languages accentuate different consonants and vowels, and this may impact singing.</p>	<p>Differences should not be a handicap. Why don't you try to sing a simple song in another language, from another musical culture, so that everybody can experience the challenge in a playful way.</p> <p>Appoint native speakers among your pupils as experts.</p>
<p>Make children familiar with collective singing. In some cultures there are hardly any live music performances, neither in organised contexts, nor in private homes. Voices are not used for singing.</p>	<p>Attending a concert during school time would be perfect. But you can also dedicate a few minutes to watch videos of collective singing: it provides an idea of what this art form is about.</p>
<p>Be aware: Some cultures are reluctant to involve the body in group activities (body percussion, touching each other, personal space). Others are more prone to involve dancing and direct contact. Pupils may have internalised these ideas.</p>	<p>Discuss it with the pupils and their caretakers. Make sure you always emphasize body percussion is about music making.</p>

Challenges related to well-being

<p>Many refugee children suffer from the consequences of chronic stress.</p>	<p>Children should feel safe, so that they are able to focus on learning again. Take the following aspects into consideration when you are dealing with refugee children. Try to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase a sense of safety</li> <li>• Stimulate relationships</li> <li>• Manage emotions</li> <li>• Manage behaviour</li> <li>• Involve parents</li> <li>• Find help for the children and yourself</li> </ul> <p>Music activities can increase the sense of safety and belonging of refugee children and enhance their resilience.</p> <p>Do you want to learn more? This free online course can help: <a href="https://www.augeo.nl/en/theme/refugee-children/free-online-course/">https://www.augeo.nl/en/theme/refugee-children/free-online-course/</a> (available in English, German and Dutch).</p>
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Blocked body: People who have encountered trauma often exhibit disrupted breathing and physical stress. Strong emotions might get triggered by music.

Music can evoke the entire range of human emotions. When you work with children who may have migration trauma, try working on attitudes such as respect, listening to each other, encouragement and appreciation instead of trying to deal with possible trauma..

Dealing with conflict-induced trauma is over and beyond the scope of this guide, and likely beyond the power of collective singing itself. If you detect behaviours that seem to point to such situations, such as extreme introversion or extroversion, apathy or aggressivity, lack of social bonding, etc., music may be a tool in a strategy that can only be developed with the help of psychologists or specialised pedagogues.

### Challenges related to cultural or religious norms

Some pupils may think that their culture or religion prohibits some aspects of the collective singing activities: mixed gender, harmonised voices, public performance, non-religious repertoire, etc.

Some pupils may ask themselves if they are allowed to fully participate.

Research the question. Get the basic facts on the relation between specific cultures and singing. Ask the pupils to find examples of famous songs and singers in their cultures of origins, or ask their families.

Discuss the issue directly with the pupils to understand where the real problem lies: is it singing in a group, are public concerts possible, is it a specific song, is it the time of the rehearsal, is it something else? Address this problem, not the one you assume it may be.

If need be, talk with colleagues, preferably those with the same background as the children's parents. There should be open discussion with the school's administration. They often know more about the background of the children and know how to assess them.

Of course, a dialogue with parents or caretakers is a key to solving these issues.

Finally, you can talk with a local religious authority. Pupils are often overzealous, to be on the safe side, whereas most cultures and religions are very open to letting youngsters sing and learn.

Showing respect for cultural/religious norms is a way for some pupils to define their identity in a group. It can be contagious in both ways: if one child starts singing, others will follow. If one child stops, others maybe feel obliged to stop too. If you know the leader in the group, give him a positive role in the process. You can also let that child conduct the group for a song or let her/him do a solo.

### **To perform or not to perform? That is the question.**

Working on musical content is exciting and inspiring for pupils. Sharing the results of the efforts can be a bonus! A public performance may be organised, but should not be an obligation. Both options have advantages. Remember that all parents are proud of their children, whether they perform or not. And the process is always more important than the result.

<p><u>Project with a performance</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The performance provides high motivation, a clear aim, timeline and outcome.</li> <li>• The pupils can be proud to show their accomplishments.</li> <li>• It shares the integration project with the school and the local community.</li> <li>• A performance involves the local community, including families with migration background.</li> <li>• A performance is a promotion tool for the school and the project (local media, politicians, sponsors, etc.).</li> </ul>	<p><u>Project without a performance</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Energy and time is invested in and focused on the work with the pupils.</li> <li>• There's no stress related to a deadline, to exposure to the other pupils, colleagues, parents and community.</li> <li>• The focus is on participation and integration.</li> <li>• Silly songs can be used to help with the socialisation of pupils. Children love to change the lyrics of songs.</li> <li>• It is easier for children to participate because their performance will not be seen in public and no pictures or videos will be taken and/or posted.</li> <li>• It can be a first step, leading to a concert the following year or semester, once the teacher feels more comfortable and has acquired some experience.</li> </ul>
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You can also plan a more private performance for a select group of parents, other pupils, etc.

### **Create a favourable context**

You may have a wonderful project design, brilliant ideas and the perfect repertoire, but in order to actually set up the activity, you will have to adapt to your local context: Are you authorised to undertake your project? Can you use a room in the school? Who can help you set-up a concert? How will the local community be involved and benefit from the singing activity? Can you finance costs related to the activity?

It may be wise to take the local context into consideration and be prepared to make it as favourable as possible by involving the whole school and other parts of the local community. You will need to talk to many people and this part of the preparation will take some time. But if it allows you to gather helping hands and local energies, you may also save a lot of time later in the process. And if it multiplies the impact of your effort in terms of integration, each minute invested may be doubly rewarded.

Take a look at your own project from the perspective of those you have to convince and involve. Every project can be described from different angles and has several possibilities for positive impact. Integration, participation and inclusion are generally in line with music making and pedagogical goals.

### **Invest resources**

Collective singing projects can take many forms, but they don't have to be expensive or complicated. You already have access to many ingredients for a positive singing session, such as:

You need:	You already have:
A space to gather and sing	Access to classrooms, or another shared space.
Time	10 minutes a day, which suffices. Collective singing does not have to be time consuming. It can be integrated in class rituals or related to the curriculum.
Musical skills	This guide to help you further. We believe that every teacher can lead a singing activity in the classroom. Even without previous experience or training in singing, even if the teacher believes s/he can't sing, singing activities are possible.



You need:	You already have:
Songs to sing	Access to our “Sing Me In: Repertoire Guide”, as a free download on <a href="http://www.singmein.eu">www.singmein.eu</a>
Musical accompaniment	Either an available CD player, speakers to connect to a smartphone, or similar options. Maybe there are some instruments in the school, maybe even a piano somewhere?
An occasion to perform [optional]	Other classes or groups of parents for whom you can sign. Alternately, you can sing within the frame of a school event. Once again, singing is a flexible activity that does not have to involve complicated or expensive logistics.

### **Involve the pupils**

Your activity is intended for the entire class or group of pupils, not just for those with a migrant background. The aim is likely to cultivate a positive collective feeling of belonging and to provide the children with a chance to be proud of their differences, like language, hobbies or music style. These differences create opportunities to interact with peers in and outside school and in subgroups.

A collective singing activity or project helps to forget about differences for a little while and gathers the group around a shared goal. As Anne Haugland Balsnes<sup>6</sup> writes: “In a choir everyone contributes to creating a collective sound. You learn new songs and develop skills. Choir singing gives experience of mastery, which furthermore contributes to increased self-confidence and the sense of being someone of importance and a resource for others”. Both the group and each individual pupil will benefit. The project’s title and the way you present it to the pupils make a big difference here.

### **Involve your school’s administration**

In most situations, you can’t do anything in a school without, at least, the approval of the school administration. Even more so, if it implies extra hours, use of classrooms outside of school hours, financial support, etc. The school’s administration has to be involved at the relevant level. Every school and each national educational system has different priorities. If your school has a pedagogical project or concept, read it carefully to see how your project fits in, and how you can articulate your arguments with it. You can for example highlight that:

- integration projects benefit the whole school, not only pupils with a migrant background.
- collective singing has positive impact on the learning abilities and results of pupils.
- collective singing improves the cooperation between teachers and between classes.
- collective singing covers many areas of the official curriculum.
- collective singing has a low to moderate cost.
- collective singing may bring positive coverage from the local press.

Don’t forget to invite the administration to rehearsals. Share the joy and exposure with them. For example, organise an interview if you have press coverage.

### **Involve the school community**

The aim of your project is to make sure that pupils find their place in the classroom. In the school, you may want to consider talking to the parent representatives, the other teachers, as well as the maintenance personnel, since they may be of great help if you have to set up a small event.

### **Involve parents and families**

Parents and relatives (or caretakers) can be a wonderful asset for your singing activity, especially in an intercultural context. Some projects even start singing with the parents so they can experience the power of collective singing. Have you ever asked your pupils who sings at home? Or who has musicians in their family? Or if parents can bring in

<sup>6</sup> Anne Haugland Balsnes (b. 1969) is a professor of music and director of research at University of Agder and Ansgar University College at Kristiansand, Norway. She is also a practicing conductor and singer.

ideas of simple songs they used to sing as a child? With the additional help of the internet, you might find useful resources linked to these songs (like videos, or even scores and text).

If you notice that parents are reluctant about singing and music making, why don't you introduce a singing activity for the parents? Show them what you do with the children and which songs you sing with the children. This will help them to understand that singing and music making can be great fun. And it may also help enhance the language skills of the parents with a migrant background.

### **Involve the local community**

The aim of your project is to make sure that the pupils find their place in the greater community as well. In that case, you may find it useful to contact: existing local (children's) choirs, local cultural associations, neighbourhood community centre's, the library and any local organisations related to the cultures of origins of the young migrants. Let them know about what you are doing and find ways to collaborate with each other.

### **Involve professionals**

Everybody can sing. Everybody can make pupils sing. This is true and proven. However, if you don't dare set up a singing activity by yourself, you can always ask for help from professionals. There are many people who dedicate their life to perfecting musical and pedagogical skills: choir conductors, music teachers, instrumentalists, as well as music therapists and other experts on music.

Then, there is a whole range of people trained and experienced in social integration matters. In a lot of cases your project will gain tremendously by relying on qualified professional help. These professionals might even be able to dedicate some of their own resources to help you further. The key to success is to clarify the expectations and methods on both sides. You can use this handbook to share and discuss your idea and project, and from there develop a shared project with clear aims.

If you have the financial resources to hire a choir conductor or a music pedagogue, consider contacting your national or local choral organisation or the local music school. Local choirs or schools running singing activities might also provide you with other useful contacts. When discussing with a potential helper, you need to be as clear as possible on what your aims are in terms of integration, community building and coherence with your pedagogical programme. Providing your contact with a copy of this handbook may prove a good starting point for the discussion, to avoid misunderstanding and bring about a fruitful cooperation.

Of course, if you want to hire a professional, this will have a cost. It is not possible to provide a price estimation in this pan-European handbook. Your best option would be to ask your national or local choral organisations for an idea of the standard fee for a choir conductor in your area. However, keep in mind that you might not only have to pay the actual working time, but also preparation time, travel costs, taxes and social security.

### **Find and involve ambassadors**

The best ambassadors for singing are the children themselves. You can also use the support of famous local or national figures to promote and boost your activity.

### **Involve the media**

For outsiders to any project, success is often measured in terms of media coverage. If you can trigger the interest of a local newspaper or radio station, the project might get support from the administration, local authorities or sponsors more easily.

In the specific case of projects involving pupils, recognition and publication of their work can also bring a real feeling of achievement and pride to the participants. Be sure to ask for explicit authorisation from the parents or legal guardians before sharing images of the pupils in the media.

## **Find and decide what to sing**

Download the “Sing Me In: Repertoire Guide”!

A free guide to help you find relevant repertoire, musical games and activities to set-up your project.

[www.singmein.eu](http://www.singmein.eu)

You now have the motivation and the support you need, wonderful. But one question remains in your mind: what shall we sing? And how? Choosing the songs to sing and musical games to play may be easier than you think. In this section you will find some general ideas and inspiration.

But to help you go even further, we have also developed a “Sing Me In: Repertoire Guide”, which you can download from our project website. It contains a curated list of songs and exercises that you can explore and use. They cover many cultural areas and are organised by age range. There are also links to video recordings, so that you can set up activities without having to read scores. Check it out! The organisation Musicians Without Borders also offers an online guide that is motivating and very practical:

<https://www.musicianswithoutborders.org/manual/>

Just remember that the process is the main aim. The musical result is second, although quality is a motivation factor for kids too. Play it safe: go step by step and start with easy things to gain confidence in your ability and build the trust of your young singers. One aspect of singing with children is helping them find their own voice, the voice they speak with and the voice they sing with. This can be scary, so singing should be a fun and attractive activity.

### **Singing by heart - repeat and imitate**

Music is sound, so the most natural way to share music is by listening and imitating. There are many different ways to let children learn songs just by ear. Here are some suggestions:

#### Imitate sounds

Imitating a sound in the right pitch can be quite difficult. It becomes a group activity when you pass the sound to another person in the group, who passes it on, and so forth.

Breathing is an important element in producing sound. A proper sound is produced by taking a deep breath using the diaphragm. Since children have a higher singing voice than adults, it's important to choose high pitch sounds as well.

#### Know the song yourself

Make sure that you, as the teacher, know the song well enough. It does not mean that you have to have perfect pitch or rhythm. However, make sure you know the structure of the song. Practice it with a sound file or a video. Inform yourself about the correct pronunciation of the text. And listen carefully.

Once you start teaching the song, you can just sing the song and let the children repeat it. That's easy, but not always the most fun or effective way, whereas listening first without singing will probably smoothen things out.

#### Listen to the song

You can sing it yourself or use a recording. A recording will often sound better. However, when children listen to the voice of their teacher, they have a bigger incentive. Pupils will listen carefully and may be surprised to hear that you sing too. And if they see you do it, they'll be more likely to join in.

#### Ask questions about the song

For example:

- How often do the children hear a certain word?
- Which instruments do they recognize?
- Which language is the song in?
- What emotion do they hear or feel?

- Can they invent movements that fit with it?
- Would (body)percussion fit the song?
- Do the children have music instruments at home that would fit the music? Can they bring them?

Help them understand the structure.

- Does the song have a refrain or verses?
- Do you hear passages that are similar?
- Is there a clear formal structure?

For teachers who read scores, or those who can't but have a good ear, it might be a nice idea to make a graphic score for the different phrases in the song. Let children guess which part of the graphic score fits each phrase. You can print or draw the graphic score on different pages and let the children put them in the right order.

All of these exercises are just a few examples to show that listening to music is the first step and therefore, very important. Depending on the song and your own background as a teacher, you can invent musical games without actually singing, thus allowing the children to get acquainted with the music in a seemingly passive way.

After having done some listening exercises, teaching the song will go much easier once you start singing.

And now you can:

- Sing and have the children repeat.
- Start singing and let children finish off the phrase in a group.
- Start singing, walk around and let just one person finish off the phrase.

### **Icebreakers**

Icebreaker activities are great for introducing individuals in a group to each other for the first time and for setting the tone. In class situations, they are ideal tools in the beginning of the year or when new children have joined the class. It's always fun to use them and by adding a musical link and singing, the children will sing without fear.

Easy icebreakers can be found on the internet, Partners for Youth Empowerment (<http://pyeglobal.org/workshop-activities-icebreakers/>), for instance, collect workshop activities.

### Warm up

Start with a physical warming up: shake your body, clap your hands, make all kinds of noises. Singing is not a static activity, so don't have the children sit down, rather let them move about in different ways.

### Share names

This is an easy example to work with. Try calling out children's names in combination with actions or rhythms, e.g. a basic pattern that can be used with a number of variations. The repetition paired with body movement or personal detail is a sure technique for remembering names.

- The leader (person #1) says his or her name.
- The group repeats it.
- The person to the leader's left (person #2) then says his or her name.
- The group repeats it then goes back to the beginning of the circle repeating person #1's name, then person #2's name.
- Then it passes on to the next person to the left (person #3).
- Person #3 says his or her name; the group repeats.
- The group then goes back to the beginning of the circle repeating all the names of person #1, #2, #3 and then it passes on to #4. The pattern continues on around the circle.

The following icebreaker highlights group diversity in many ways:

- Play or sing a song. It can be one you would like to teach later. And ask the children to move around.
- Stop the music and let the children form pairs.
- The teacher asks a question, such as 'What's your favourite food?' (or 'Are you an early bird or a nighthawk?', 'What's your hobby?..')
- The children answer the question with their partner.
- Play the music again and have the children move again.

- Stop the music.
- The children choose a new partner.
- The teacher asks another question.
- Repeat for 4 or 5 times with a different question each time.

Here are some alternatives:

- Slap, clap, snap, snap: Begin a rhythm of slapping knees, clapping hands, snap right hand, snap left hand. Continue with a four-beat rhythm of slap, clap, snap, snap. The leader begins by saying his name during the snap, snap part of the rhythm. The group repeats the name. Person #2, says their name, and this continues around the circle to the left. You can either let everyone just say their name one after another or you can always add the last name to the list of other names, which are repeated .
- Name and action: The leader says his name while making a gesture, the group repeats, etc.
- Names and adjectives: Have each person say their name preceded by an adjective starting with the same first letter as their name, e.g. laughing Lucy.

#### Activities that show we belong to different groups

Everyone is different. Every individual belongs to different subgroups, depending on the definition of the subgroup. The country you come from or your cultural background are just a couple of the characteristics that define one's personality. Some exercises can help the group understand that everyone can be different.

You can, for example, use grouping activities: ask the pupils to position themselves in the room according to different criteria, either in groups or on a line, in case you want numbered results, like "How many brothers and sisters do you have?'

Here are some examples:

- How many languages do you speak?
- How many languages do you understand?
- Do you have long or short hair?
- Do you prefer pizza or French fries?
- Which language do you speak at home?
- What is your favourite food?
- Who has a cat at home?
- Who can play an instrument?
- How many brothers and sisters do you have?
- Etc.

### **Musical games**

#### Clapping

Rhythm, dance and body percussion are very important and stimulating tools when working with children. Use them as much as you can. Easy clapping games help children to focus and develop their concentration. Start with clapping a rhythm and having the children clap it too. First the goal is to clap the same rhythm. But as you work on it, the goal should move to actually clapping together, really all together. Everyone should watch the others to make sure there's only one sound being produced. A great exercise to work on as a group. You can also do this with cups or percussion instruments. You start with a short pattern but elaborate it the longer you work on it. Video examples of this are provided in the "Sing Me In: Repertoire Guide" as well as on the [www.SingMeIn.eu](http://www.SingMeIn.eu) website.

#### Circle songs

In circle songs, a sound, a melody or a rhythm is passed on from one person to the next in a circle. Another variation of this is to pass a coin around while singing and one participant, whose in the middle, must find the coin.

A video example of this is in the "Sing Me In: Repertoire Guide" and on the [www.SingMeIn.eu](http://www.SingMeIn.eu) website.



### **Sounds and nonsense texts**

There are many songs that do not use specific language, but rather play with sounds. Thus, any language differences disappear and the challenge and fun are shared equally. Please bear in mind that some children don't dare to improvise while they are singing. It might be easier for them to use rhythms and movements.

There's a video example where sticks are used to dance together to demonstrate this in the "Sing Me In: Repertoire Guide" and on our website: [www.SingMeIn.eu](http://www.SingMeIn.eu)

### **Simple songs**

Singing can be used alongside routine activities, like starting the school day, cleaning up the room, grabbing jackets and bags, etc.

Just use simple songs that you like, search for children's songs from your country, or use the "Sing Me In: Repertoire Guide" on the website: [www.SingMeIn.eu](http://www.SingMeIn.eu)



## **Grab a pen! Start your project!**

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Each activity is unique. It's time for you to sit down and start thinking in detail about your own project. We have drafted some questions for you in the form of a checklist. This is only a starting point, take whatever is useful for you!

### **Checklist**

#### **Exploration phase**

- Do you know your pupils?
  - What are the existing musical skills of the pupils?
  - What music do they claim to like?
  - What music do they actually listen to? (genres, cultural areas, etc.)
  - What are the expectations of the pupils?
  - What are the languages spoken or read in the group?
- Which local cultural institutions may have resources for cultural, educational and social activities?
- What intercultural experiences, resource persons or institutions can you think of in your area?

#### **Definition phase**

- What are the aims of your project?
  - What are the aims for you personally?
  - What are the aims for the pupils?
  - What are the aims in terms of integration, pedagogy or intercultural relations?

- Do you want to communicate about these aims? The way you communicate to the children, the parents and audiences about the project may differ from the internal aim, i.e. an integration project may be received in a different way than a musical project.
- What is the format of the project?
  - What is the time frame? How long, how often, when, etc.
  - What do you want to sing, what musical games do you want to try out and share?
  - What's the name of your activity? Do you have a title in mind? Do you want input for the name from the participants?
  - Who will be running the sessions? Do you know where to find your session leader?
  - How does the project relate to the rest of the class/school activities. Is singing integrated into the whole curriculum?
- What resources do you need?
  - What external resources do you need? Repertoire, instruments, space, time?
  - List the time investment: time for preparation, time for execution and time to report to your school community. Make sure you create an efficient activity with realistic time estimations.
  - How much money do you need? What's your budget? Consider the cost of buying scores, CDs, hiring a professional or organising a small concert.
  - Think about what funding sources you can tap into: school funds, parent contributions, fundraising events, local authorities, sponsors or partnerships with other institutions.
  - What type of venue do you need? Keep in mind that you need a good room that doesn't reverberate too much and that is somewhat sheltered from outside noise. Avoid too many sensory stimuli.
- What support do you need?
  - Can you get support from the school's administration and from other teachers? Think about singing with the other teachers and showing them what you are doing with the children.
  - Can you get the support of local/regional authorities?
  - How will you inform and/or involve the parents?

### **Execution phase**

- Is the project running the way you expected?
- Can you identify what needs to be adjusted?
- Can you get feedback from the pupils and identify any issues?
- Are the pupils at ease in the project?

### **Evaluation phase**

- Has the project run the way you expected?
- Can you see an evolution in the pupils in terms of:
  - Social behaviour and social skills?
  - Learning skills?
  - Language skills?
  - Musical skills?
  - Happiness?
  - Sense of belonging?
  - Participation?

- How have the relations between the school community and young migrants evolved? Or between the young migrants and :
  - Other teachers?
  - Parents?
  - Local community?

## **Resources and references**

### **Resources**

#### Sing Me In: Repertoire Guide

Please check out the repertoire guide that we have developed as a companion guide to this handbook. It can be downloaded or consulted online on our [www.SingMeIn.eu](http://www.SingMeIn.eu) website.

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