



Migrant student's integration and education in Slovenia

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INTRODUCTION

- Education and school, as a field of educational and socialisation activities, play a key role in the integration of migrant children into new environment.
- It is in the educational process that the migrant students acquire knowledge and skills, and develop ties they need for integration into the new social environment.
- It is important to emphasize that countries' policies on the integration of migrant children into the education system influence significantly their school performance and continuing integration into the society.
- Importance of responsibility of those working at the highest state level as well as on the level of the entire society.



- The Slovenian education system cannot yet be regarded as multicultural. In recent years, one has laid foundations for the development of such education, in particular since 2007 when one adopted the Strategy for the integration of migrant children, basic school and upper secondary students into the education system of the Republic of Slovenia.

- Notwithstanding the above, the Slovenian education system demonstrated solidarity and proved to be inclusive and successful at sheltering people who fled war in the former Yugoslavia.
- In September and October 1992, there were 17. 000 total temporary refugee children from Bosnia and Herzegovina in Slovenia. The Government organised education in basic schools pursuant to the Bosnian and Herzegovinian curriculum. During the following years, the number of refugee children decreased so their gradual integration into Slovenian basic schools began in the 1995/1996 school year. Even then, there were common guidelines for Slovenian teachers to support and facilitate the integration of temporary refugees in Slovenian schools.

EQUAL CONDITIONS FOR ALL

- In the past decade, Slovenia has made significant progress in including migrants into the education system.
- The integration of children and young people falls under the fulfilment of obligations set forth by the Slovenian Constitution and laws regulating the field of education as well as by international declarations and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.
- According to increasing number of migrant children Slovenian educational system was given an opportunity and recognised this opportunity to jointly learn about tolerance, acceptance, intercultural understanding and mutual respect.

LEGAL BACKGROUND FOR INTEGRATION OF MIGRANT CHILDREN INTO THE EDUCATION SYSTEM AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION

- As specified by educational law: **children of foreign citizens residing in the Republic of Slovenia** are entitled to integration into the basic or upper secondary schools **under the same conditions** as children of Slovenian citizens.
- Citizens of other EU member states, **Slovenian nationals without Slovenian citizenship and refugees can pursue education under the same conditions as Slovenian citizens**, while such rights of other foreign citizens are based on the principle of reciprocity (on the basis of international treaties the minister responsible for education allocates the number of vacancies for such upper secondary students).
- The Kindergarten Act does not refer to children of foreign citizens particularly, however, it states explicitly that **pre-school education is based on the principle of equal opportunities** for both children and parents with due consideration of diversity among children and their right of choice and right to be different.

- As mentioned before, there were specific regulations, strategies and initiatives, which we can consider as initial foundations of multi-cultural education in Slovenia, designed by end of the first decade of the 21st century.
- As laid down by the Strategy, the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport issued nine ESF co-financed calls for proposals in the last decade connecting to migrant topic.

SYSTEMIC FRAMEWORK FOR EDUCATION OF MIGRANT CHILDREN

Pre-school education

- As specified by the Slovenian Guidelines for integration of migrant children kindergartens shall apply the principle of “inclusive approach to exercising the rights of migrant children to education, namely to provide for their effective integration, to build a multicultural society.” The instructions and ideas for kindergartens make adjustments for learning Slovenian language. Some **learning materials for Slovenian as a second/foreign language in kindergarten were already developed.** Materials are applicable to different target groups (migrants, Roma students, Slovenians living around the world) and thereby contribute to the development of the field as a whole.

Basic schools (single structure primary and lower secondary education)

- The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport has been **funding Slovenian language learning support lessons at basic schools with migrant children** attending school in Slovenia, namely **first year of their integration**. Applicable law provides statutory basis for state funding of Slovenian language learning as well as **lessons of mother tongue to migrant students** included in full time basic and upper secondary education.
- **The Slovenian language learning support lessons have been available to migrant students the first year of attending school in Slovenia since late nineties** of the previous century.

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➤ In September 2019, the Rules amending the Basic school programme implementation norms Rules.

➤ **Key changes:**

- migrant students are entitled to significant number of additional hours/lessons of Slovenian, even in cases of small number of migrant students involved (up to 4 students -120 hours, 5 - 8 students -160 hours, 9 -17 students-180 hours) - emphasis on language empowerment in the first year of school.
- if students enrol in the Slovenian school system in the second semester, they receive smaller number of additional hours in the first year (35 hours), but continue with additional hours/lessons of Slovenian in the next school year.
- additional hours of Slovenian are also provided for students whose mother tongue is Slovenian but have been previously educated abroad.
- schools that enrol higher numbers of those students have the option to systemize an education staff post.

Adjustment to assessment in basic schools

- In 2008, a provision was included in the **Rules on knowledge assessment and grading and pupils' progression in basic schools** warranting the **possibility for an adapted assessment of migrant students**.
- **Taking the national assessment of knowledge in basic school** grades six and nine is voluntary for migrant students whose mother tongue is not Slovenian and if it is their first year of attending basic school in the Republic of Slovenia (as a rule, national assessment of knowledge in the sixth and ninth grade is compulsory for all students).

Upper secondary schools

- Amendments to the General Upper Secondary School and the Vocational Education Act, which was accepted in the 2018/2019 school year, improve the conditions for successful integration of students whose mother tongue is not Slovenian or have not completed primary education in the Republic of Slovenia.
- Students receive a much larger number of Slovenian lessons in the first year of their enrollment in secondary education in Slovenia, with an intensive Slovene language course delivered by the school in a concise form in the first half of the school year and additional hours during the school year. The course is offered in a range of 120 to 160 hours, depending on the formation of groups and the number of students in groups.

- At the enrollment of the student, the school assesses student's knowledge of Slovenian language by taking a test which demonstrates proficiency at A2 level of the Common European Linguistic Framework. After completing the Slovenian language course student repeats the test. For students who are not successful at the course, the school provides additional hours.
- For students who have not successfully passed the knowledge test, participation in the course and additional hours is compulsory. Students who have attended the course may not be assessed in the first year of education in the subject Slovenian language.

EFFECTIVE INITIATIVES, STRATEGIES AND REGULATIONS TO IMPROVE THE INTEGRATION OF MIGRANT CHILDREN

- Alongside financing the learning of Slovenian by migrant students, Slovenia **braces and makes provisions for lessons in mother tongue and culture.** At several basic schools (2017), there have been lessons in Albanian, Bosnian, Finnish, Croatian, Macedonian, German, Dutch, Serbian, Russian and Ukrainian available to migrant students.
- **Recommendations were developed and a dedicated website** was set up for school management, teachers, parents and interested public.
- **The education programme Instruction of Literacy in Slovenian for Adult Speakers** of Other Languages (including add - on for minors – asylum seekers), aged 15–18 was adopted to facilitate inclusion in the programme of basic school for adults.
- **Learning and teaching materials** were developed for learning Slovenian as a second language.

- **Call for proposals was issued:** “Improving social and civic competencies of education staff (2016–2021)”: empower education staff for a successful integration of children, basic school and upper secondary students and higher education students migrants, as well as children of the culture of majority, namely in the scope of professional development programmes.
- **Assessment for persons with international protection with no proof of educational qualification :**
 - In July 2018, the Rules on the assessment for persons under international protection with no proof of educational qualification was published. The rules specify the content, organisation and criteria of assessment of knowledge that individuals with no proof of educational qualification need to enter upper secondary education, upper secondary vocational and technical, as well as general education.

- The assessment is held at regional divisions of the **National Education Institute Slovenia**. The purpose of the assessment is to gain information about the general knowledge of the candidate and enable professional evaluation on the candidate's ability to continue the upper secondary education. The **National Examinations Centre** is responsible for awarding certificates of assessment to those candidates with international protection who are unable to prove their formal education with documents and wish to enrol into Year 1 programmes of higher vocational education and academic courses.
- The Consultative group for addressing the issues of integration of migrants and asylum seekers' children into the Slovenian education system was set up in 2016.
- The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport has been participating actively in the process of placing **unaccompanied minors** in residence halls for upper secondary students, in cooperation with the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities.

- Two documents were adopted, namely the Forms and content of professional work with **unaccompanied minors** in residence halls for upper secondary students and the Protocol and rules of procedure for the residence of **unaccompanied minors** in residence halls for upper secondary students.
- **Decree** on the implementation of the statutory representation of unaccompanied minors and the method of ensuring adequate accommodation, care and treatment of unaccompanied minors outside the Asylum Centre or a branch thereof was published on 2017.
- In July 2019 the **Strategy in the field of migration was accepted by the Government**. The Government handed the coordination of the preparation of the strategy on the Ministry of Interior; coordination group includes representatives from all of the ministries.

INTEGRATION OF CHILDREN ASYLUM SEEKERS AND CHILDREN UNDER INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION INTO THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport advocates **the two-stage inclusion model**:

PREP course and FOLLOW-UP course

Prior to integration into mainstream classes one organises the Prep course of total 20 hours. Upon its completion, children start mainstream classes whereby they are entitled to Slovenian language learning support. One recommends a concise form of instruction. (Follow-up).

Children are invited to attend the 20-hour **PREP course** on enrolment in school.

Upon completion of the Prep course students start attending the **FOLLOW-UP course**, which provides them with additional language and social support, since the course includes activities offered by both the school and the local environment.

CHALLENGES AHEAD...

- **a rather large consensus that learning of the official language** of the host country is significant for successful participation of migrants in the education process;
- **defining strategies** in the educational process in the light of assuring equal educational opportunities for all;
- it is essential **to intensify the teacher practical training** in teaching strategies tailored for different students (empowering teachers- social and emotional support);
- **raising awareness of multicultural education**, which should become one of pedagogic and didactic principles and regular part of education;

- **assessment of migrant students;**
- **dimension of unaccompanied minors, their accommodation and integration.**

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION



- ✦ School year: 2018/19:
 - 3264 students in basic schools were entitled to additional hours of Slovenian language 1.76% migrant students (16 -**ASYLUM SEEKERS**, 73 - **UNDER INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION**). **38 UNCOMPANIED MINORS IN basic school for adults**).
 - 624 migrant students in upper secondary schools - 0,85%.
 - The number of foreign citizens increased and reached 6.9% in 2019.