

# EDUCATIONAL COMMUNITY AND SCHOOL SYSTEMS: POLAND

## Migrant children and communities in a transforming Europe



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The project Migrant Children and Communities in a Transforming Europe (MiCreate) aims to stimulate inclusion of diverse groups of migrant children by adopting child-centered approach to migrant children integration on educational and policy level.

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

This paper was written in collaboration with research partners from Stowarzyszenie Interkulturalni PL.

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## 1. Introduction

According to the European educational policy adopted over two decades ago (FRSE 2003) each EU national education system shall be open and inclusive to language and cultural diversity, ensure equal opportunities for students and respond to their educational needs, especially the new group of pupils – children with migration background. Adoption of those principles required a multi task effort on behalf of the central government and the local authorities each time they have certain competences in reference to the organization of the educational process. In Poland, as it was disputed in the Reception Community Report there is a dualism of competences within the system. The educational law and its rules, as well as the content of the school curriculum had been reserved to the discretion of central government. Schools however, as educational institutions are run and financed by the local government from its own resources and direct subsidy they are receiving from the national government. This dual system has its implications, also those, concerning the presence of migrants' children in schools and their integration in the local communities.

It is also strictly connected with the structure of education and its ideological formation. In the Polish education system, the main document determining the content of teaching is the so-called curriculum base. In the context of this document provisions teaching materials (textbooks), examines and tests to check knowledge, external exams after primary and secondary school, or vocational exams are created. In the line of its content also internal school documents are formulated, like statutes, prevention and upbringing programs as well as school agenda for a given school year. This key document is supplemented each year with so-called primary directions of educational policy marked by the Ministry of Education, binding for a given school year. Determination of the most vital directions for education in a given school year should have been an annual form of updating the curriculum base, resulting from the analysis of important phenomena, processes and needs of the school-around environment.

It seems that for past several years in Poland, issues of global mobility and digital revolution became an important phenomenon and process affecting essentialities of the school communities. Global digitalization and extensive human mobility pose challenges for education and teachers, enforcing schools to adapt to the environment in which they operate. Education has though become a form of intercultural meeting, and for this reason it made so important to educate teachers, enact organizational transformations and set the autonomy of teaching process - in both students' and teachers' perspective. It became also important to support inclusion processes, understood both as activities integrating migrants into the school environment, and those directed to education of the host society. Education that is considered as living process done in a culturally non-uniform society had forced redefinition of educational and upbringing goals, taking into account an introduction of several new forms of work complying with cultural and linguistic diversity.

In Poland, the opportunity to include a wide range of intercultural issues in the curriculum base, followed by their implementation in "school life" had been generally wasted during the

2016 structural reform of the system of education. Despite, it had been widely justified by the emerging then intensive migration inflow, recorded simultaneously in Europe and Poland. The structural changes as designed, concerned primarily the school organization (modification from 6+3+3 system to 8 + 4 system). The ideological layer of the reform carried out during the rule of Law and Justice (and Anna Zalewska as a Head of the Ministry of Education) emphasized: "We want the native language and national culture to be a core value for students graduating from school - with all its historical heritage. In the new school, we will also put emphasis on foreign languages skills, proficiency in IT and communication technologies and mathematics as these are one of the most important competences" (MEN, 2016). This assumption took into account the digital revolution, but did not assess the need to build and shape intercultural competences in the school environment. Even positive changes, like introduction of the welcoming classes had been designed for utilitarian reasons only, because these amendments was justified by then expected reception of the seven thousands refugee dislocation quotas agreed between former Civic Platform government and EU Commission. As most of the asylum seekers reception centres are located far from public school creation of such structures seemed to be inevitable.

This complex explanation of the systemic principles shaping Polish education was necessary to better understand the results of our study and reasons why Poland lacks diversity or extensive integration activities in the school environment and changes in this matter goes very slow.

Another important issue connected with the structure of education and undermining the process of integration of migrants is low migration ratio in the schools. School are generally dominated by local Polish-born students. The model of Polish educational system on the primary level is constructed around district zones in the residential areas in which its inhabitants has priority in the school enrolment to the institution located in their neighbourhood. These are leading to the dispersal of the foreign born students among the different schools. Polish cities that are hosting large numbers of migrants did not face the problem of forming typical immigrant districts yet, nor did Krakow experienced that. There are no living areas typically inhabited by foreigners, however there are some districts where larger numbers of migrants settle. On the secondary stage of education each child has right to choose a school however grades and performance are essential factors in the enrolment. Lack of the offer typically aimed to foreigners' acceptance, except the private international schools, again replicate the pattern of students' dispersal between different secondary schools. As a result there are no schools in the Krakow area where foreigners are much visible group. A few such schools exist in Poland.

This meant for us a necessity of different approach to selection of schools to be part of the study. We needed to rely on different criteria than simple the number of foreigners present in the particular school, as these numbers are still very small and there are very few schools with number of foreign born students that exceeds 10% of the entire students' population. In fact, in the school year 2017/2018 there were totally 135 008 students learning in Krakow's schools and only 1,74 percent of them were foreign born. These numbers are constantly rising each following year but still do not exceed 3 percent of the schooling

population. In the 2018/2019 school year 3568 non-Polish citizens were enrolled to different types of schools in Krakow area (WE UMK, 2019). In fact in the whole country there were only 39 999 foreign born children enrolled to schools, which shows that presence of the migrant children in the system of education is still uncommon. Nevertheless, the dynamics of rise in numbers of minors' presence in Poland in recent years has proved that seasonal labour migration is slowly transforming to settlement migration. This dynamic occurred to be problematic for both central and local governments left them largely unprepared for the reception of the foreigners in local communities.

Again, it must be underlined that the mass migration is quite a new phenomenon in the Polish social reality at large, not to mention the education system itself. The first, detailed legal regulations referring to the support for the migrants' children in schools were adopted only in 2016. This means that the school community, understood as both school management and staff, teachers and students were not prepared to successfully integrate the foreign nationals that started to attend to schools. This is especially true regarding the language and cultural diversity. What is more important, there is a visible gap between legal provisions that require all children in the schooling age (7-18 y.o.) present on the territory of Poland to attend to schools and learn, the availability of teaching materials, trainings and other integrative tools and the school reality indicating that teachers are not satisfactory prepared to deal with the issue of multiculturalism, to communicate with the foreign born child, nor they feel the need to use integrative tools or perform any integrative actions.

For that structural, logistical and partly factual reasons our report probably will differ much from the reports of other MiCREATE partners, as it will prove less diversity in the Polish schools, no integrative tools or materials used despite their availability and general lack of multicultural atmosphere in local schools. It will show also that largely available and promoted recommendations referring to the teaching process in the multicultural environment are either ignored or unrecognized despite declarative need to gain such knowledge by teachers. The report will also show that although collaboration between schools and non-governmental organizations are taking place its positive results are undermined by structural problems in the schools itself, predominantly lack of communication between teachers and school management.

We will be though discussing main gaps in teacher's and other actors' knowledge, problems in perception of the migrant children presence in school and chaotic, random approach to the integration issues – often mistaken with assimilation. In our discussions with teachers we tried to understand their approach to integration, children rights and wellbeing to identify if any of the principles of child-centred education is implemented or adopted to schooling practices. General lack of street-present cultural diversity in Poland and at the same time Krakow's schools will also be important factor determining number of actions introduced or teachers approach to this problem.

The existing difference between reality and imaginations will be clearly derived from the fifteen interviews with school managers or people (teachers, pedagogues) responsible for intercultural relations with the foreign born students. Beside the six schools included in the

in depth study which are all located in the Krakow, we tried to speak with people from diverse educational environment. We interviewed principals or experts, whenever headmasters refused or told us they do not have sufficient knowledge to provide answers to questions we asked. They were working in different parts of the country, including people from large cities, but also from small towns and villages where migrant children reside or transit. In the fifteenth schools selection we have chosen a school in Warsaw, in Targówek district where nearly half of the children were refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants. We spoke there with teacher who look after foreigners but also who worked in nearby asylum seekers reception centre. This school was particularly important in selection as it have joined not only asylum seekers' children from reception centre but also children with different social backgrounds – from poor and rich neighbourhoods. We had also interviewed Polish language teacher in another school where asylum seekers were present – in Lublin. This school was the first one in the country that started to enrol refugee children. Altogether we chose three schools with the presence of asylum seekers' children to obtain better perspective on their school presence and attendance. We generally insisted on assuring vast diversity of types of schools selected for the study, its' environmental settings and social structure. Though, apart from public schools, we included also private ones where classes are small and the grater individualisation of teaching is observed.

Another important problem, very specific for Poland, that inhibits the integration process is lack of communication on the teacher-student-parent line. This had been underlined by almost all our interviewees who work with Ukrainian children. Many foreign born students, mainly from Ukraine and Belarus, present in Polish schools are left without proper custody. Sometimes their parents are physically absent in the country, but if not there is still a cultural difference that prevent Ukrainian parents from greater involvement in the life of the school. Respondents got also impression that style of bringing up children is much different in case of those post-soviet states.

Furthermore, some of the scientific agenda that supposed to be included in this report was absent in case of Poland and could not have been discussed. Diversity, especially religious one is one of those fields of study.

As a consequence, we needed to supplement those gaps by referring to other existing studies in order to present most reliable and complete description of the integration environment in Polish education. We have compiled this knowledge with the results of fifteen interviews with schools representatives, two focus groups conducted in each of six schools selected for the in depth studies, done with members of the school community (key stakeholders, including principals, counsellors, school psychologists, teachers, school custodians, external advisors), six in-depth interviews with some of the focus groups informants in each of aforementioned schools and analysis of the school's existing visual displays, curriculum and teaching materials. This last analysis will also show country specifics where large availability of such materials does not correspond with its use. The problem revealed to be more connected with the structure of education and the content of the curriculum rather than teacher's approach.



Poland, as a country that is experiencing the inflow of the migrants only recently has still a lot to do in the field of intercultural education. For this reason it differs much from the Western or ex-colonial powers, which not only has greater ethnical, cultural and religious diversity – at present rather absent in Poland, but also are fighting with post-colonial heritage and Eurocentrism – also not a case in Poland. This meant that quite different problems appeared in the field of intercultural education less focused on the social relations between children, teachers, parents and other stakeholders and more concentrated around the proper organization of the education and micromanaging the child in the classroom.

## **2. Methodological approach**

Schools selected to be part of the study had been nominated by the intercultural education expert who joined the MiCREATE research team. She has also 30 years of experience as teacher, including teaching Polish as foreign language. She was also working in intercultural environment in Germany, Portugal and had been cooperating with multiple institutions focused on educational development.

All those schools had been contacted and were visited by researchers who spoke there with principal and each time they were re-directed with expert or employee responsible for taking care for the foreign born children or intercultural education management. The interviews were conducted between April 2019 and January 2020. Six schools in the Krakow area had been selected to the in depth study. We decided to limit the research to one region due to country specifics. Migration in Poland, at least that one that involves presence of migrant children is concentrating in big cities and its suburbs. For that reason focusing on one region does not prevent us to extrapolate the results to other regions and big cities.

The research in the schools started in May 2019, however was undermined by the general strike of the teachers that started shortly before the final secondary school exams. Teachers' strike definitely jeopardized our effort to engage parents in the study and involve them in the focuses as such event needed to be organized in schools and by schools off the hours. As teachers generally were reluctant to perform any additional duties we could not organize any study with the participation of stakeholders who were not present in the institution on daily basis. The strike forced on us a decision to perform all focuses with the same group consisted of teachers and other school staff (mainly pedagogues and psychologists or educators).

### **2.1. School sample**

The schools selected to perform the study are mainly primary one. There were ten primary schools and five secondary schools represented in the study. This selection was dictated by pragmatism as primary schools are generally larger so naturally there is more foreign born children present there. As we mentioned in the introduction, in Poland, school enrollment is based on zoning rule. Usually children attend to school in the closest neighborhood of their



residence place. As there are no typical immigrant districts in Krakow foreign born children are dispersed between different schools. In 2018/2019 school year there were only two public primary schools in Krakow where more than 50 migrant children were attending. In the school year 2019/2020 there is only one such school. This one was selected for the study, the second one not due to lack of will to cooperate in the research. The data from the System of Educational Information (System Informacji Oświatowej) showed that in the school year of 2018/2019 there were 447 public and private kindergartens, primary schools, secondary schools including lyceums, technical and vocational schools within the city limits of Krakow. In those schools 3535 foreigners were enrolled for the school year. Their presence was however very much dislocated as in each of those educational institution at least one foreigner were enrolled. There was also no secondary school where number of foreigners exceeded 40 persons. The average number of foreigners present in Krakow public school is between 5 and 15. There are some non-public schools that host larger numbers of foreigners (60-110), but we did not include them in the study as most of them were established to enroll foreigners and sometimes lack local people. This situation forced us to use different criteria in school selection than number of the foreign children enrolled. We were basing on presence of intercultural policy, engagement in international projects such as Erasmus +, Comenius, MURAL or other relevant, having preparatory classes opened, or hiring teachers of Polish as foreign language or cultural assistants and mediators. We decided also to approach schools with average number of foreigners as it better represents the general situation in Poland in terms of intercultural education.

Three primary schools in the fifteenth school selection are ones that accept the asylum seeker's children who are living in nearby refugee reception centers. Two of them are located in the outskirt districts of big cities – Warsaw and Lublin. Warsaw school (S7) is located in Targówek Fabryczny, an industrial and commercial north-eastern area of the city of Warsaw – a capital of Poland. The school is located between two districts with very much different social background – less privileged in Targówek Fabryczny and rich, of villas Widno. Due to the zoning principle children from both districts attend to this school. Furthermore as the school is located near industrial and commercial areas that hire foreigners (with Procter & Gamble Polska Kompania Piwowarska (beer producer) and UPS Worldwide) and there is also a reception center for asylum seekers located one kilometer from school, it accepts a lot of foreign born children. According to our interviewee nearly half of the children going to the school are not Polish. There is nearly 120 of them attending to almost all classes. The school organized four preparatory classes, at each stage of education, gathering fifteen students at each such class.

The Lublin school (S8) was located in the precinct where refugee reception center was located for nearly twenty years. It was however closed in 2015. The school was located on the other side of the street so was naturally predestinated to accept asylum seekers' children. The Bronowice district where school is located in the eastern part of the city. It is typical outskirt neighborhood with dominance of block of flats and multi-family buildings. Most of the buildings were built before fall of former political system in 1989. According to city hall data approximately fifteen thousand people residing permanently in the district. The social structure included predominantly blue-collar workers that had been causing tensions over

the years, but also proved that well-designed efforts could bring success in integration. High criminal activity of both local people and Chechens or Georgians located in the reception center was affecting the existence of the reception center and the school life.

The third school where asylum seekers were attending was located in Grotniki (S9), a small summer leisure village located approximately thirty five kilometers north-west of Łódź – the third largest city in Poland, once a leader of industrial economy. Reception center is housed in old holiday resort approximately 2 kilometers from the school. This school in terms of social structure is a countryside school.

The study included also two private schools – one in the very inner center of Krakow (including primary school and high school), the second one in the western part of the city, mostly residential area with oldish tenement houses and nouveau riche residences on the river bank. The school in the city center (S10) is relatively small one and structurally divided to small classes with 10-12 students in each. This provides greater opportunity for the individualization of the education process. In another school (S11) it mix people living in the suburbs – mostly from middle class that inherited properties in the area, rich people who bought or built properties there and foreigners who are renting houses in relatively best location and being the contract workers for international corporations.

We have included also two small town's schools in the study that are located in Polish province – one primary and one secondary. First (S12) is located in Lubuskie Voivodship, approximately 70 kilometers from the German border and 50 kilometers from larger city (Zielona Góra). The school is large (seven hundred students) in relation to the number of town inhabitants (11.5 thousands) and in this particular school the presence of foreigners is fluctuating due to seasonal nature of migration and people taking jobs in agriculture. There are also Polish children returning to Poland from Western European countries. The second one (S13) is located in the mountain resort town on the south-east border of Poland. Mountains separate this town from Ukraine and Slovakia. Despite all year round tourists' presence the town is relatively small having less than ten thousands inhabitants. Migrant children in this school often are residing abroad and are returning Ukraine for weekends. The school provides accommodation for children. This is necessity in the region located in the mountains. It is part of the cross-border educational and integrative program between Poland, Ukraine and Slovakia.

Next school is located again in the major Polish city. It is a primary school (S14) located in the northern part of external central ring of Krakow. The social structure is mixed. District is dominated by blocks of flats, usually built before 1989, but there are presently numerous modern neighborhoods that are expanding. A housing area for military personnel and its families is also nearby. The school is very much engaged in intercultural education. The number of foreigners is however average as usually in Poland due to zoning principle. The diversity of foreigners is however greater as school is surrounded by international corporation offices (BTO and IT) and school enroll children of its employees.

The last educational entity is (S15) is located in the city center and is psychological and pedagogical counseling center for children with educational underperformance (Specjalistyczna Poradnia Psychologiczno-Pedagogiczna dla Dzieci z Niepowodzeniami Edukacyjnymi). We chose to include the interview with the director of this institution instead of another school as this institution is mediator between schools located in Krakow and foreign born children attending to those schools. She has the best knowledge in relation to the integration problems and troubles in functioning of the migrant children in different schools. Most of the teachers who are working with migrant children are consulted and trained in this institution. Furthermore between 2017 and 2019 this entity appointed the City's Consultant for Intercultural Issues. Most of the migrant children that have problems in schools or are facing underperformance due to differences in curriculum or the level of language proficiency are diagnosed in this institution and get the relevant, individual plan for the improvement. This institution is one of the most important part of educational system in the Krakow community enabling teachers to gain knowledge and implement to some extent intercultural policy in school they are teaching. Interview with that person was an invaluable supplement to the whole study.

The six schools selected for the in-depth study are all located in Krakow. There are three primary schools included, two secondary schools and one boarding school. The first primary school (S1) is located in the area of Krakow that dynamically transformed in past twenty years creating one of the largest new neighborhood that is still expanding. The new economic, IT and BPO cluster is located in this area as well as the Jagiellonian University with the new campus. This area is increasingly chosen by the Ukrainians as place of residence, but also by other workers of the aforementioned corporations. The school is an integrative one including also children with disabilities and special educational needs. It offers individually adjusted didactics, psychological and pedagogical support. It accept both foreign born children and Polish children returning to the country, hiring several teachers of Polish as foreign language and cultural assistants. This is the only school in Krakow where number of foreigners exceed 50 children. Most of them comes from Ukraine, but there are also Uruguayans, Italians, Brazilians, and Georgians. School offers extra curriculum activities covering foreign language and culture classes for Ukrainians and offers psychological support in Ukrainian. School cooperates with Ukrainian migrant's associations.

The second primary school (S2) is located in the eastern part of Krakow in the older district built-up mostly with blocks of flats erected before 1989. The social structure of this area is mixed but dominated by blue-collar workers. There are buildings inhabited by underprivileged within the area and there is a sport and social work center next to the school. The school accepts migrant children and Polish one who return from abroad. It hires the Polish as foreign language teachers and cultural assistants. Most of the children are Ukrainian but there are some UE citizens as well, mainly from Belgium and Italy.

Third primary school (S3) is located between the industrial district of Krakow and single-housed residential area with villas and family buildings dominating. This school has many years of experience in accepting and teaching migrant children and the number of such children is rising. The living area is increasingly chosen by foreigners as it is calm, has good

infrastructure for families, good communication with city center and low accommodation rates. The prices of properties are also lower than in other city districts. The school is engaged in the multiple international projects including MURAL<sup>1</sup> (Mutual Understanding, Respect and Learning), that was included in the WP2 report as a good integrative practice. School hire teachers of Polish as a foreign language.

The next two schools are secondary one. The first one (S4) is located very close to the city center in the area close to the Vistula river bank. This area has old residences mixed with new apartment buildings and modern villas. It has also tenement houses built in the beginning of twentieth century as well as buildings from PRL<sup>2</sup> era. This school was named by the Educational Department of the City Hall as Krakow’s multicultural school in 2016. The school received special methodic support from the city’s consultant for intercultural issues between February 2017 and August 2019. It hires intercultural assistant and opened first preparatory class in Krakow. The foreigners comes mostly from Ukraine but also from Venezuela, Brazil and Vietnam. The school is engaged in European Solidarity Corps Program hosting voluntary workers form all World countries. It organizes also professional practices for the beneficiaries CEMEA Centre-Val de Loire.

The second one (S5) is the secondary school (lyceum) located in the same area as S3 primary school. It is often chosen by migrant children who continue education after primary school or those who resides in the area. There is also greater diversity of foreigners here. Some are Vietnamese due to the proximity of “King Square” commercial area where Vietnamese people do businesses. The school was involved in two Comenius and two Erasmus + projects.

The last institution is a dormitory house (S6) for the children enrolled to different secondary schools in Krakow. It gathers both Polish and migrant children. Presently there are only Ukrainians there. It is part of the bigger network of the dormitory houses in Krakow. Most of children residing there are unaccompanied by parents who stayed abroad. In the 2017/2018 school year half of the children where migrants, presently they are one fifth of the community. The boarding school does not provide classes to children but provides twenty four seven care and upbringing. It was chosen for the study to show specifics of migrant children presence in Polish schools, often driven by lack of proper legal custody, especially for adolescent children. The dormitory is located on the outskirts of the city in mainly family and villa residential zone.

Table A. Schools and community characteristics.

School	Typology (public/charter/private)	School level (primary/secondary/both)	Location (City, small village, countryside...)	Number of total students	Migration rate	Languages	Religions
S1	Public	Primary school	City	936	6,7	Polish Ukrainian Hungarian Russian	Christian

<sup>1</sup> Mural is also a wall, artistic graffiti usually with a theme, ordered by the city to celebrate an event, person or provide symbols in the public sphere.

<sup>2</sup> PRL – Polish Peoples Republic, a political regime dependent politically to USSR and existing between 1946 -1989.

						Georgian Spanish Vietnamese	
S2	Public	Primary school	City	340	3,4	Polish Ukrainian	Christian
S3	Public	Primary school	City	460	2,8	Polish Russian Ukrainian	Christian
S4	Public	Secondary school	City	334	12,5	Polish Ukrainian Russian Spanish Portuguese Vietnamese English	Christian
S5	Public	Secondary school	City	505	1,6	Polish Ukrainian Vietnamese English Dutch	Christian
S6	Public	Dormitory house/boarding School	City	111	23,4	Polish Ukrainian Russian	Christian
S7	Public	Primary school	City	212	50	Polish Ukrainian Russian Chechen	Christian Muslim
S8	Public	Primary school	City	-----	2	Polish Ukrainian	Christian
S9	Public	Primary school	Village	120	15	Polish Russian Chechen	Christian Muslim
S10	Private	Primary school/secondary school <sup>3</sup>	City	88	8	Polish Ukrainian English Spanish Dutch	Christian
S11	Private	Primary school	City	Approx. 150	Approx. 3,33	Polish English French German Ukrainian	Christian
S12	Public	Primary school	Town	700	approx. from 1 to 4, depending on season	Polish Russian Ukrainian Kazakh Italian	Christian
S13	Public	Secondary boarding school	Town	250	1,5	Polish Ukrainian	Christian
S14	Public	Primary school	City	481	3,11	-----	
S15	Public	Special Psychological and Pedagogical Consultation Center for Students with Underperformance Problem	City	-----	-----	-----	-----

<sup>3</sup> data only refers to the lyceum (secondary school)

## 2.2. Participants

As a pattern, when our team approached the school we had general conversation with schools' principal who often directed us to teacher or other person who was responsible in particular school for a work with migrant children. These teachers were our main informants as they had greatest experience and knowledge about the migrant children or Polish pupils that were returning from abroad. Most of them are teaching Polish or Polish as a foreign language. After speaking with them we were guided with whom we shall yet speak in this school to get better picture. Most of the informants were teachers of different languages, sometimes they were teaching culture, history or social and civic education. We spoke also with other employees including cultural assistants, librarians, doorman, kitchen workers, secretaries, psychologists. Most of the interviewees have between twenty and thirty years of experience in education. Interviews were collected between September 2019 and January 2020.

Table B. Participants in focus groups and interviewees.

School name	Interviews (indicate role)	Focus group teachers (both focuses with the same group) (indicate role)
S1	School Representative (R1) Teacher 1 (T1) Polish and History Teacher 2 (T2) Polish Teacher 3 (T3) Employee 1 (E1) Pedagogue Employee 2 (E2) Cultural Assistant	Teacher 1 (T1) Teacher 2 (T2) Teacher 3 (T3) Teacher 4 (T4) Teacher 5 (T5) Teacher 6 (T6)
S2	School Representative (R1) Teacher 1 (T1) Polish Teacher 2 (T2) Teacher 3 (T3) Employee 1 (E1) Librarian	Teacher 1 (T1) Teacher 2 (T2) Teacher 3 (T3) Teacher 4 (T4) Teacher 5 (T5) Teacher 6 (T6) Teacher 7 (T7) Teacher 8 (T8)
S3	School Representative (R1) Teacher 1 (T1) English Teacher 2 (T2) Pedagogue Teacher 3 (T3) Polish Employee 1 (E1) Administrative Employee 2 (E2) Janitor	Teacher 1 (T1) Teacher 2 (T2) Teacher 3 (T3) Teacher 4 (T4) Teacher 5 (T5) Teacher 6 (T6) Teacher 7 (T7)
S4	School Representative (R1) Teacher 1 (T1) Teacher 2 (T2) Teacher 3 (T3) Employee 1 (E1) Administrative Employee 2 (E2) Kitchen staff	Teacher 1 (T1) Teacher 2 (T2) Teacher 3 (T3)
S5	School Representative (R1) Teacher 1 (T1) Culture Teacher 2 (T2) Polish Teacher 3 (T3) Geography Teacher 4 (T4) Polish Teacher 5 (T5) Pedagogue	Teacher 1 (T1) Teacher 2 (T2) Teacher 3 (T3) Teacher 4 (T4) Teacher 5 (T5) Teacher 6 (T6)
S6	School Representative (R1) Teacher 1 (T1) Educator Teacher 2 (T2) Educator	Teacher 1 (T1) Teacher 2 (T2) Teacher 3 (T3)

	Teacher 3 (T3) Educator Employee 1 (E1) Doorman Employee 2 (E2) Secretary	Teacher 4 (T4) Teacher 5 (T5) Teacher 6 (T6) Teacher 7 (T7)
S7	Polish/Polish as Foreign Language Teacher	-----
S8	Polish/Polish as Foreign Language Teacher/ Educator	-----
S9	Principal	-----
S10	Principal	-----
S11	Principal	-----
S12	Pedagogue/Vocational Trainer	-----
S13	Polish/Polish as Foreign Language Teacher	-----
S14	Principal	-----
S15	Director of the Institution	-----

Source: Own elaboration.

### 2.1. Analysis of the gap between availability of existing teaching materials and its' no usage.

The teaching materials used by teachers in schools covered by the research are typical teaching materials prepared for general education. Sometimes teachers are also using internet based materials but they are not adjusted to intercultural education. During the research and interviews we did not collect or discover any materials that would help in integration of the migrant children or provide relevant knowledge on different culture or diversity issues for local children. This evaluation is astonishing providing the great availability of such materials produced both by professional educational publishers and many non-governmental organizations. As it was also mentioned in the WP3 national report for many years such materials were prepared and published by ORE (The Centre of Education Development). It can be downloaded directly and free from their website. All materials include knowledge based descriptions and scenarios for the classes. The same is true for the NGOs' based materials. One, very good guide had been published by FRS Foundation yet in 2012 in a book describing the intercultural reality of Polish schools which had been born that time and discussing teachers experience of work in the intercultural environment (Kubin & Klorek, 2012). Many of such materials were prepared by local governments, the earliest in Warsaw and then in Gdańsk and Wrocław. Teaching materials include not only practical solutions or scenarios to be used during classes but also valuable materials about other cultures covering literature, music, history and art.

As we have mentioned one of the oldest guide for teachers was developed and published by ORE (Centre for Education Development) for which the Ministry of Education is the leading body under the name of "Interculturalism in a Polish school". The guide focuses on basic issues related to the presence of foreign students in a Polish school and limits the understanding of multiculturalism to this scope, without indicating e.g. :

- the need to shape intercultural competences among teachers or students, or
- the need to include integration activities, anti-discrimination education, or
- the need to underline in school intercultural content in the curriculum base and in lessons.



This guide introduces the reader to the range of topics related to the presence of a foreign student in a Polish school. It is marked both in the content of the guide and its structure. The issues of forms and scope of work with the host environment were not included in the publication.

Most of contemporary tools supporting teachers to work in a multicultural educational environment are mirroring the pattern of the guide "Interculturalism in a Polish school". They narrow down the understanding of interculturalism in Polish school to activities related to supporting language development of students with migration experience, without taking into account activities addressed to the entire school community, including relational integration activities.

Teachers can take advantage of the following support tools (mostly available for free online):

1. *Inny w polskiej szkole* [The Other in Polish School]. The package contains a glossary of school terminology, translated into 5 languages and glossaries for individual subjects, as well as translations of school documents, <http://www.uchodzczydoszkoly.pl/>;
2. *Ku wielokulturowej szkole w Polsce*. [Towards the multicultural school in Poland] Educational package with the Polish language teaching program as the second for the first, second and third stage of education. The publication contains information on the specifics of teaching Polish as a second language, including methods, forms of work and lesson plans. <http://www.wlaczpolske.pl/wielokulturowaszkola.pdf/>;
3. *Pakiet powitalny dla uczniów i rodziców*. [The welcoming package for pupils and their parents]. Created by the Office of Education of the City of Warsaw in the following languages: English, Chechen, Ukrainian, Vietnamese and Polish, <http://www.uchodzczydoszkoly.pl/>;
4. *Poradnik szkolny dla dzieci i rodziców*. [School guide for children and parents]. Published by the World at the Fingertips Foundation as part of the project Let's Meet - Lesznowola, a commune of many cultures. Guide translated into Vietnamese and Chinese. Contains information about the rules in a Polish school. <http://swiaty.org.pl/materialy-do-pobrania/>;
5. *Praca z uczniem cudzoziemskim*. [A work with foreign students]. A guide to good practices for principals, teachers, educators and psychologists, contains a proposal to test skills in Polish as a second language at levels A1 and A2.
6. *W polskiej szkole" (parts 1, 2 and 3)* [In Polish School]. A package containing materials developed as part of the Ministry of National Education projects "Supporting initiatives in a multicultural educational environment" implemented by the M. Rej Foundation for the Support of Polish Culture and Language in 2017-2019 and containing materials for teaching foreign children in classes I-III, examples of materials for teaching mathematics in classes IV-VIII, a teacher's guide explaining the JES-PL method and a program of teaching Polish as a foreign language in Polish school, <http://fundacjareja.eu/projekty/>.

Providing the existence and availability of such tools, at the same time our interviewers complained about lack of such materials in their work. They also expected that such materials

will be assessed, sourced and distributed by school management. This approach probably revealed the nature of the problem. After the change of government many teachers feared to use any external materials that had not been officially approved by the Regional Supervisory Educational Boards (Kuratoria Oświaty), Ministry of Education or at least school headmasters. Another possible explanation might be derived from the structural crisis of the system of education. Teachers are overwhelmed by obligations imposed on them and are having problems with keeping up with regular curriculum. This leaves no time for any innovative approach to the learning process.

The obligation to follow curriculum base has a decisive impact on the selection of content, and even teaching methods and techniques, as well as the content of school textbook. The curriculum base has the potential to influence the ways of understanding the surrounding world, and thus its social and cultural differences (Smoter & Smoter, 2017:49). An analysis of the learning objectives set out in this document for primary school shows that intercultural issues are not included in it or are implemented indirectly. Its introduction is dependent to the intercultural sensitivity of teachers who are guided to implement such goals as: introducing students to the world of values, including self-sacrifice, cooperation, solidarity, altruism, patriotism and respect for tradition. In their teaching practices they must include techniques:

- showing patterns of behaviour and building social relations conducive to the safe development of the student (first goal) or
- equipping students with such information and shaping skills that allow a more mature and orderly understanding of the world (eighth goal), or
- directing the student towards values (thirteenth goal).

Other goals more or less embed the student and activities serving their development in the context of culture and national identity.

The curriculum base assumes, for example, the need to support the development of individual and social characteristics (including the ability to respect the national tradition), e.g. "teamwork and social activity and: (...) active participation in the cultural life of the school, the local environment and country." However, it omits completely the issue of contacts with the "Otherness", including persons of different religions, members of ethnic or national minorities. Students in the Polish school are perceived - in the context of the curriculum base - as people functioning in a nationally and culturally homogeneous environment. It is a general term that obliges us to develop civic, patriotic and social attitudes of students in the course of education and upbringing, but it is not in any way complied in relation to the issue of multiculturalism or interculturalism. There are no detailed provisions in the document, taking into account social diversity in the school and the student's living environment.

On the other hand, school education assigned the task of strengthening the sense of national identity, attachment to national history and traditions. This task is not accompanied by the awareness that shaping such elements does not take place in the empty space. For that reason realization of what cultural diversity and interculturalism is are all more important the more

it is visible in the school and out-of-school reality of a child. The lack of a specific provisions referring to cultural diversity create a barrier for including this content both in textbooks and in activities directly undertaken by teachers in schools. Teachers who are not accompanied by daily reflection and reflection on the needs of their students may not feel obliged by the curriculum to discuss such issues.

At the level of specific and subject-related content and objectives, the following excerpt from the curriculum base deserves attention. It concerns regional education and the Kashubian language, and it contains the following objective: shaping openness to other Pomeranian, Polish and European cultures. Also, the curriculum base for specific subjects (primarily social and civic knowledge, history and biology) contains provisions on issues such as anti-discrimination education, i.e. counteracting discrimination through education, including the transfer of knowledge about stereotypes, prejudices, social inequalities and human rights, as well as knowledge about human psychosexual development. For that reason introduction of the intercultural issues in education must be derived from the creative interpretation of such curriculum obligations.

Available literature proves that creation, elaboration and use of intercultural materials depends on level of individual creativity and engagement of the teacher (Kubin & Klorek, 2012: 37, 48-50). In six schools selected for the in depth study such materials were not used during classes. We know however from other interviews that some of solutions were used in numerous of the fifteen schools selected for the study. We have not identified them personally and know them only from the description during the interview. Most of them are related to individual support for migrant child, including different forms of back up in Polish language learning. There are however some that integrates and provide knowledge to all children in the class, also involving child-centred approach. They are connected to the presentation of diverse culture with the involvement and creativity of the child.

As general such materials and tools are not supported by the Polish Ministry of Education. The Polish Ombudsman, after analyzing the degree of implementation of the principle of equal treatment and ensuring safety and conditions for proper development for all students, reported that it is necessary to take measures to prevent discrimination in the educational process in Polish educational institutions. The ombudsman, when intervening in the Ministry of Education, was referring to the disturbing actions of some social organizations urging parents to make statements about their refusal to participate in lessons, classes or events, which: "the program fully or partially refers to [...] issues of: sex education, contraception, prevention of pregnancy among minors and sexually transmitted diseases, puberty and adolescence, equality, tolerance, diversity, anti-discrimination and exclusion, anti-violence, LGBT, homophobia, gender identity, gender." (RPO, 2019). The ombudsman pointed out that - if this content is included in the curriculum base - exemption from compulsory classes has no legal basis. These issues must be included, for example, in detailed programs for civic and social knowledge, history and biology classes.

In addition to the curriculum base, the school also carries out care and upbringing responsibilities. The boundaries between particular areas of school work is blurred, hence it

is often impossible to determine the type of currently undertaken activity (education, upbringing or care). This is the case, for example, with international educational projects implemented under Erasmus +. Polish schools take part in this program, which gives them opportunities for activities related to intercultural education and integration. However, this participation was never described in the form of a summary report, and the results of projects implemented in schools are described only in the implementation reports, hardly available for researchers. All of the schools we examined participated at least once in Erasmus + project but our interviewers were not able to assess the impact of those projects on integration processes.

It is worth to mention that the content of internal documents regulating the life of the school is a separate and also not widely analyzed issue. The core of them include school statutes, preventive and educational plans or learning agendas. Its content shows to what extent the issues of multiculturalism and intercultural education are present in the life of the school. The nature of these documents, processes of its creation and internal school policies have not been the subject of any research so far.

Similarly, few studies concern the market of publishing school textbooks, which - after the introduction of the education system reform - have been rewritten. Those manuals are not only a didactic tools, but also represent a cultural texts reflecting social discourse. For this reason, their analysis seems justified. For children, they become a source of knowledge about the world seen through the eyes of adults - the authors of textbooks. In addition to the teaching content, defined by the curriculum base, they contain an axiological particle. The constructs used there are not only referring to school knowledge, but also create social communication schemes in which values and meanings are negotiated. The content of textbooks is determined by social identity, attitudes, culture and politics. Also by imagining what is valuable, desirable, acceptable (cultural, religious, moral norms, etc.). Like the curriculum, the textbook is a social construct of given times, reflecting the social discourse then. That is why it is so important to subject school textbooks to independent assessments and reviews, including the problem of equality. The Polish publishing market of school materials yet have no such traditions. Some independent reviews were made by NGOs which showed no antidiscrimination issues included, ethnocentrism, nationalism, religious discrimination, stereotypical portraying of the national and ethnic minorities (Czulent, 2015, Abramowicz, 2011).

As a result of aforementioned issues there is no clear guidance for teachers to engage in any intercultural or integrative work during the teaching time. Furthermore the curriculum base is overloaded with knowledge that child need to learn leaving no space for more innovative approach adjusted to the specific situation of particular school. All these problems discourage teachers from using even existing tools and materials for the intercultural education.

### 3. Results

At the beginning it must be noted that in our interviews we could not find all issues that had been determined as relevant for the study. The script for the interview was probably more adjusted to educational staff working for years in the multicultural environment that is characteristic for the Western European countries. In those countries open questions asked by the interviewer probably would lead to expected answers from the respondent. That included at least covering multiple and complex problems of integration issues. That was a major problem for us because our interviewees, having spoken about migrant children almost never referred to more complex issues such as child identity, its social background or the understanding of the interculturalism itself. Sometimes they were even avoiding answers to direct questions about these issues making more or less relevant digressions. For this reason we have difficulties with analysis of the gathered material in order to be in a line with scientific structure of the report.

#### 3.1. How schools approach to integration

##### *Knowledge, perceptions and attitudes about integration of migrant children*

According to the respondents of our study integration shall be understood as creating the classroom community or larger, a school community out of the children who are different in terms of language they spoke, culture they were raised in, identity or nationality. It is fostering the community in which all children are feeling good (S2T1). One person underlined that integration is more dependent to the arriving child who shall reveal active attitude in this process and must be willing to integrate itself in the new environment (S6T3). Integration shall rely on tolerance, understanding of cultural factors, including elimination of prejudices and last but not least on equal treatment (S1R1). Integration means cooperation and coexistence of Polish and migrant children without antagonisms in their peer relations, but covering mutual culture learning (S1T2). One of the most important school tasks is to cherish migrant children's identity. It shall not root them out culturally, but simultaneously need to engage migrants in getting know Poland and its traditions. As one of the respondents said: "we allow foreign children to express culturally, we do not forced them to dance Cracovienne<sup>4</sup>, and we do not assimilate them." (S7).

The presence of migrant children in schools support the evolvement of all school communities. Mutual merging of the cultures brings only benefits. "With getting know something new children become more open to the World, to ones problems, they learn to build relations, sometimes quite difficult and in hard or conflict settings, but they learn the nature of such conflicts and how to solve them." (S1T1). It was underlined that children with migration experience are not only talented, but also hard-working, which motivate also Polish students (S5R1). They eagerly engage in different school events and initiatives (S5T1).

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<sup>4</sup> Krakowiak (Cracovienne) – a lively and popular Polish folk dance originated from Krakow area, one of the official national Polish dance considered as national heritage.

It was frequently highlighted, which is totally understandable, that successful integration is related to the language proficiency. Some far reaching opinion claimed that: "if those children mastered the language on sufficient level they would integrate spontaneously as at certain age no help is needed for that". (S5T1).

It is currently common that school's websites provide information about its multicultural profile, describing institutions as open to diversity. Multiculturalism is considered as an asset. There is also a positive trend to publish information about enrolment in the native languages of the candidates. In S1 school there is English and Ukrainian version, but in S4 we have Russian, Ukrainian and English information. S7 provides information in English, German and Spanish.

### *Knowledge, perceptions and attitudes about migration.*

Migration is positively perceived by the school community, more as a challenge rather than a problem. There are almost no negative attitudes among parents regardless if they are Polish or foreigners (S2R1). It is not something uncomfortable or difficult, it is accepted as something natural. As S2T1 marks: "I see difficulties and hardships they [migrant children – auth. note] are facing at the beginning, but feel personal satisfaction when they make such huge progress." Teachers and other school employees are sensitive to migration issues but one of the most basic problem of the presence of migrant children is the language barrier. It quite often deteriorates communication between those children and the school staff. The school personnel declare however a readiness and good preparation to work with children having migration background. As one said: "For me, they are all children at first, no matter if they are Ukrainian or Polish, this does not matter to me." (S6E1).

Only one respondent see some negative consequences of the presence of migrant children in schools: "Teachers spend a lot of time to prepare themselves for classes with foreign children, to adapt the lesson to their needs and for that reason they neglect Polish students which prompt the frustration of the latter." (S4R1).

Teachers in schools with higher migration rates better value migrant children's advancements and see less problems connected to their presence. Performance at 40% in final exams are considered by them as major success, not a failure or harm to school rank. Generally teachers who spoke with us have not attached much attention to migration status of the child they taught. They do not distinguish or acknowledge such student, do not reflect over his/her identity and fulfil their needs only in the context of classes' participation.

### 3.2 How diversity in a migratory context affects school

In most schools there are no problems observed in coexistence with local communities. If there are issues concerning school students there is no difference whether they relate to foreign or local children.

Only in case of one institution where children of regular migrants were enrolled there had been negative reaction of local community observed. They were bullied and verbally abused, which never affected any of the Polish children attending to this school (S6R1). A slightly different situation occurred in the schools where asylum seekers' children were accepted, especially in Lublin, however thanks to the intervention of educators such conflicts had been neutralized over time. It happened at one time that Polish parents resigned from their child enrolment once they heard that Ukrainian children are present in the school. This are however much individual cases and rare.

The issue of diversity in school agenda usually appears when migrant child arrive and starts attending, earlier it is not recognized (S1E1).

### 3.3 How diversity in a migratory context affects school

*School reception policies.*

Programs:

Respondents noticed that in the curriculum base there is lack of any multicultural content, tolerance teaching or diversity question. In residual form it can be found in Polish learning curriculum base, but only in relation to literature and writers. Such content, due to the rising numbers of foreign-born children in the schools is introduced by school management and pedagogic councils in the prevention and upbringing programs. Such plans for teaching oblige teachers to introduce multicultural content, but only in classes reserved for educational hours.

There are lack of integration programs in schools. They are not planned, adopted or supported by the Ministry of Education, which caused that particular schools did not decided to design such permanent and overall integrative approach. Most of them limit their action to singular projects, sometimes recurrent. The most frequent forms of integrative action are internal multicultural festival or diversity days, joint celebration of different holidays or concerts and shows during which foreigners are allowed to share their cultures. There are also city trips, presenting the multicultural heritage of Kraków. Integration is done also through practical, everyday activities such as joint cookies baking, making decors. Such activities are for example planned and implemented in S6 as part of prevention and upbringing plan. Sometimes their character might be considered as child-centered because initiative and idea for such workshops come from children. Another positive action is an adjustment of the school calendar of events to the intercultural environment of school, especially by respecting the other's cultures holidays or celebration of major historical events.



Unfortunately it is very rare to organize Polish language classes outside the classroom framework, which respondents determined as useful. Foreign children shall be invited to market or bakery, etc. (S1T1) to learn languages in practical situations. Integrative actions shall be continued outside schools with the cooperation of cultural institutions (S12). Finally all agreed that lack of integrative programs at schools' level is caused by shortage or no time to create them.

There were also few respondents who had not been enthusiastic about integrative programs introduction. As teacher from the S8 argued: "It is not possible to design one program. It is indispensable to take a look at each student separately. I believe that all systemic solutions, wherever they are proposed, will always be imperfect as nobody ever asked teachers what they are expecting, what are the children's needs, but they are enforcing something that is no way connected to reality and just does not work in many cases."

### *Practices addressing migrant children's integration*

Most of schools benefited from possibility to organize additional classes of Polish as a foreign language or compensatory lessons for children in subjects they are most needing. These additional classes are financed by the local government as the institution who runs schools. The application is submitted by school management. Such classes are available for children during only singular school year. Additional classes are designed to explain things that were unclear to a child during regular lessons, increasing according to S2T1 their feeling of safety and wellbeing. It opens child to make progress in language proficiency. In two schools out of the six selected for the in depth study cultural assistants are employed every school year. This is the person who assist teacher during the classes and shall be a mediator between teacher, child and parents. The only one current competence that is required from such assistants is knowledge of the child's language and proficiency in Polish. Assistants are invaluable help in contacts with migrant children's parents who do not speak Polish. They allow teachers to avoid situation when child is translating (S4T1).

The most common practice used in schools covered by the research was placing children in groups formed according to their ethnical or national similarity. It is believed to ease acclimatization in new school environment. It may however negatively affect the integration with local children as larger groups of migrants have tendencies to stick together. There are some exception from this practice when children are dislocated between different classes which supposed to allow deeper immersion in Polish language practice (S2T1). In S1 school the child interests key is used for class formation, not ethnical or national background criteria. As it was underlined: "These classes shall be multicultural by definition. We would like to preserve these multicultural pot" (S1T2F). There were suggestions to limit the number of foreign children in classes in order to secure better integration with local children (S5T4). Each time there is a visible migrant group in the class they stick together and naturally separate themselves from Polish, usually due to language practice, but when there are few foreigners in the class they start to mate with Polish students.

Initial qualification of foreign-born students in schools is made by interviewing a child and his parents during which an intellectual and linguistic assessment is done. It is highlighted that one, two or three such interviews are sometimes not meaningful causing errors that after some time of child's presence in the school require its transfer to the higher class (S1T1). The major challenge is to assess children's knowledge and skillfulness in case of students who were attending to schools in different educational systems. The school requirements in terms of knowledge to be acquired for a child at certain age much differ between countries. One respondent comparing British and Polish systems of teaching mathematics noticed that Polish requirements are much more advanced forcing children to gain a lot of knowledge in very short time (e.g. mastering fractures are done in one month comparing to one year in British case) (S3T3F). The curriculum differences between national systems are the greatest challenge. The principal from S10 presented the following example, which is not singular: "The girl who came from United States, speaking decent Polish, having problem only with writing, when she joined the chemistry or biology classes she just understood nothing. She told me that there was no chemistry in her school agenda, so she was unable to jump in into what was happening during lessons." It shows another integration obstacle which is attached to the difference between language of communication and language of instruction. Nobody who is learning foreign languages outside of the school context is familiar with words such as "rozwielitka" (Daphnia) or "wodorotlenek potasu" (potassium hydroxide). Children learning in schools are obliged to use those words in first, whether they want to perform.

For the above mentioned reasons there is a frequent practice in schools covered by the research to place foreign child in a class one level below, contrary to the assessment of the stage such child finished outside Poland. It is believed to secure that way a time for a child to accommodate in school environment and gain adequate language skills. Unfortunately usually even such solution does not protect child from educational failure and flunking a class.

Sometimes this function is taken over by preparatory classes where migrant children can be placed for one school year. In such preparatory class intensive language classes are provided supplemented by compensatory lessons in different school subjects, so this seems to be a better solution to downgrading a child. After one year of learning in such classes children are transferred to regular class. According to educational law preparatory classes are regrettably still obliged to follow the curriculum of certain stage of education. The law allows however to gather in one preparatory class children from at most three levels of education. This means that teacher in such class, despite providing language classes, is obliged to conduct three different curriculums. Fulfillment of such undertaking is almost impossible. There is also no integration with local children developing as contacts with them are limited.

In relations with migrant children who perform linguistically poor teachers are often using certain handiness. They allow for oral exams as many underlined: "It is very hard for those children to comprehend writing skills in Polish. It is quite common that pupils have good or average oral communication skills, but if they are obliged to write down their thoughts this makes a real big problem (S3T3F). It happened that test could have been written with capital letters

or in English if a child knew that language better than Polish. It is also possible to resign from grading student in the first semester (S1T3F). It occurs that teachers with migrant children in the classes simplify the language to be better understood and communicative (S4T1). Unfortunately, as one of the respondent had been complaining, not all teachers, especially those who do not teach Polish, have abilities to use simple Polish, to transform information from language of instruction to living language: "We build complex sentences, compound sentences, which make these children disoriented, unable to understand it, separate at least any useful information, and we as teacher cannot explain and speak less sophisticated language if not specifically trained" (S3T4F). Despite the fact that children from far countries, non-Slavic ones, are more challenging and need more time to learn Polish in all its spheres it need to be remembered that also Ukrainians are used to much different alphabet. This makes grading for writing content redundant.

Schools are also ready to cooperate with non-governmental organizations, including migrant and minority ones. The representatives of one such organization met with parents in one of the schools (S1) to support them, share experiences and speak about the problems. Support of the families is one of the key issue in social work with migrant children. "The success is karma for children whose parents, despite all patriotic believes, feel that their child must integrate with a place they went to. If parents are blocked it affects child as well (S1T2F). One of the schools is cooperating with diplomatic personnel of Ukraine. In case of troubles schools often ask special pedagogical and psychological counselling centers for support, especially those who are specializing in providing aid to children with special educational needs. Unfortunately schools are not collaborating with academic community to a larger extent.

It seemed to be a good practice to introduce a coordinator teacher (S1), who would have been responsible in the school for all issues concerning migrant children presence. In this case such teacher was appointed for Ukrainian children. School introduced Ukrainian language classes to support and preserve the identity of children. This is very important issue as focusing only on Polish language proficiency is causing atrophy and decline of the native language abilities. One of the respondent shared a story of Ukrainian child that supposed to return to Ukraine and had lost ability to write in Cyrillic.

Usually the presence of the migrant children is not expected to affect negatively the school rank or popularity. Some respondents recalled however that during the enrollment process it happened occasionally that Polish parents complain that migrant children can disturb the classes and lower the performance. It is not common but noticeable (S4E1), very much irrelevant to school policy. It is more connected to the general social attitudes towards foreigners and lack of any diversity policy on the national level. Another respondent noticed however that she cannot recall the case when parents took a child out of school because of the migrant children presence. Furthermore she felt that school is recommended for parents looking for the pleasant and safe place for their children (S3E1).

Child-centered approach:

In S6 dormitory management appointed a children council, elected by the community, including migrant children. This body is collaborating with the management of the boarding school and have right to vote, e.g. in case of relegation of the student and other important issues. It has also advisory duties uniting all members in mutual goal to improve the social functioning of the place. It has very much integrative potential.

Migrant children, especially those from former Soviet states, are often artistically talented and engage in many school events. Sometimes those initiatives are coming from children itself. Often children with migration background feel obliged to present their cultural heritage for their classmates or at larger school forum. Such initiatives are supported by schools and have space to be developed (S3T1F).

### **3.3.1 Teaching material resources**

As it was previously mentioned teachers are not using any particular integrative tools during the lessons. No such materials were identified during the study. Availability of such materials is however recognized and teachers have knowledge about their existence and content. They focus more precisely on "accessing the materials to teach Polish as foreign language. Offer here is really huge. There are free of charge e-learning platforms and manuals adjusted to the European system of language learning description (S2T1). There is however a shortcomings in access to professional textbooks for younger children (S3T3).

If teachers use the materials for integrative work, which were not identified apart from declarations, they search for them on their own, exchange between themselves. There are Facebook groups created for that purpose.

Teachers are declaring to frequently use materials developed and shared by ORPEG – The Center of Polish Education Development Abroad (Ośrodek Rozwoju Polskiej Edukacji za Granicą). Again most of these materials are for Polish as foreign language teaching. This reflects the purpose of the organization that was erected to support the education of children of Polish diaspora.

### **3.3.2 Training and accompaniment**

Teachers who spoke with us had usually long-lasting teaching experience and attended to different trainings many years before interview was made. There was a time in the first half of the twentieth first century first decade when trainings and workshops concerning migration were frequently offered and popular. Presently our respondents did not feel any need to participate in further self-developing trainings. Most of them felt enough competent to work with migrant children. They underlined that Russian language knowledge, which they gained in their own school years during the compulsory classes, is presently very helpful in

contacts with migrant children or even in grading, as it happens that Ukrainian children complete tests partly in Polish and partly in Ukrainian, whenever they cannot find a right word in Polish.

There is a numerous opportunities to sign in for post-diploma studies focused on work in intercultural environment. Such studies are co-financed by local government, and in Krakow teachers may get 85% of reimbursement. They however do not attend due to the shortage of time and lack of interest to sacrifice a spare time to gain only soft competences. Otherwise, studies or training sessions of teaching Polish as foreign language became very popular and in most schools who accepts migrant children teachers of Polish gained such competence.

If any problematic issue arise that is not familiar to teachers, they are searching for solutions and knowledge themselves, usually using internet or consulting it with the pedagogical and psychological counseling center. Many of them consulted also an intercultural councilor that was appointed in Krakow in February 2017. The post was released formally in August 2019 due to shift of competences in this regard to higher regional level, however person who had been appointed is still consulting teachers informally.

Recently Krakow with the participation of non-governmental organizations invested in establishment of the Academy of Intercultural Assistants. This was a one week intensive workshop preparing persons who are or plan to become cultural assistants to such job. Over thirty five people enrolled for this training. Presently there are seventeen cultural assistants that are working in Krakow schools and supporting teachers.

There is an ongoing cooperation between schools and non-governmental organizations, including migrant and minority ones. This usually refers to integrative actions or events and antidiscrimination trainings or tolerance teaching for children. Unfortunately larger development of such cooperation had been jeopardized after the shift of power. Government withdrew support for such classes and some right-wing, ultra-catholic associations started to intimidate schools with consequences of introducing anti-discrimination classes without parents consent. Human rights, tolerance and diversity became a "bad words", wrongly attached to left radicalism and LGBTQ movement.

### **3.4 Obstacles, difficulties and weaknesses**

Our respondents observed lack of any actions that would foster adaptation of the migrant child in the new country and environment. Such actions shall familiarize children with school requirements, class they supposed to attend, accustom them to new situation, resulting in specific orientation actions. Children usually have first contact with school on the school inauguration academy. This is very stressful itself due to pathos and formalities. For children who first arrive in school and do not understand everything because of poor language this must be uncomfortable. As one of our respondent (S2T4F) underlined describing the experience of two girls on their first day in school: "I assume that this first day caused so much tension and stress, which I, as human would not like to experience, let alone those children."

The same respondent (S2T4F) noticed negative emotions in the classroom caused by local children belief that migrant children experience lenient treatment from teachers and also less is demanded in terms of learning obligations. On the other hand different respondent convinced that migrant children are much more ambitious and hard-working, which cause the rivalry behaviour on behalf of the local children and even some forms of jealousy.

In certain institutions there is a problem of participation in the language classes by different migrant children. Such additional hours are organized for all migrant children and it happens that children from very different classes and with outlying language abilities are placed in the same group. There were situations where children from the first class attended to the same language group with the children from the sixth class (S2T1F).

One of the most significant problem that migrant children experience, especially those from the east, is feeling of uncertainty, not being anchored, lack of personal stability, lack of future plans – if it will be bonded to Poland or not. In the context of school education it negatively affects motivation to learn Polish and generally to educate. The feeling of instability they bring from homes does not motivate them to progress in school. There is visible cultural difference in cooperation of schools with Polish and foreign parents. Parents of migrant children, especially Ukrainian ones are passive, withdrawn, fear contacts with schools which lower the level of their engagement in school matters and life. "I had impression that all those children are functioning much better than their dismayed and home sickening parents." (S2T5F). It is quite common that parents do not speak Polish or perform poorly. Frequently children are used as translators, which might lead to negative consequences in communication between parents and teachers, especially if child willingly or unwillingly distort messages. Foreign parents often have problems with using electronic school register, mostly caused by low level of language abilities (S3T3F). Homesickness is another major problem that affects both parents and children. In extreme situations it led to depressions. "Children are missing a dog, who was left behind, grandfather or grandmother, with whom they have no contact. One only say so, that everything is online, and internet can fix all problems, but I saw a girl crying on the Grandfather Day, because other kids could call their relatives and she could not, as her grandfather had no phone" (s4T3). When you are far from home all problems seem to be bigger, because you are losing the safe ground and usually have not anchored yet in a new place.

Another significant problem connected to migrant children's education is school discontinuation. It was observed that children can vanish from school next day without a notice. This is also a legal problem as school is obliged to assess the reason of the school absence. Such assessment is almost impossible, so school usually do not know what happened to a child. It might be justified if child is returning home or move somewhere else with parents, but situation got worse in case of custodians. Usually they have written consent from parents to transfer child freely in all countries within the Schengen zone. This is very problematic and on the edge of human trafficking definition. Respondents from dormitory (S6) witnessed situations when custodian of fifteen years olds, being in his early twenties openly flirted with those underaged girls. As dormitory is closed for holidays and midterm brakes such custodians are responsible for students' accommodation. This was not perceived

as a healthy situation. In other dormitory there was already a case of pregnancy of a minor girl (below the age of consent).

Non-governmental organizations, despite their incontestable role in integration, helpfulness and engagement in a work with children having migration background, might also deteriorate the integration process. It mostly refers to migrant associations who focus on foreign children only, excluding local children from organized events or actions (S6T5F).

Conflicts on the base of cultural differences are very rare. This can be explained by cultural proximity between the migration groups. Poland do not experience cultural diversity, and most of the migrants comes from Slavic countries with very similar culture and historical heritage. For that reason existing conflicts are very banal. It for example concerned the disposal of toilet paper. In Poland all used paper is disposed to the toilet, but in Ukraine and Belarus it is thrown to trash bins, as pipes are obstructed. The conflict was simply resolved by posting relevant stickers in the toilets in Russian and Ukrainian (S6).

The next problem attach the question of hours to be spent on work with migrant children. All respondent noticed that they do not have enough time for that. Teachers and educators are overloaded with regular duties and cannot find time to pay additional attention to children with special needs, including children with migration background (S5T2). It is common knowledge that Polish education system is facing crisis, revealing staff shortages and overloading teachers with additional hours. Structure of school salaries force teachers to work on several jobs to get decent paycheck. Respondents were directly complaining on overstrain, and losing motivation, caused by stress and responsibility. This resulted in lack or only singular number of integrative programs in the schools. As it was underlined: "We have ideas, but we are lacking time. I must recall that our basic duty is teaching, our main goal is children education. Entering some big projects is out of our reach as there is no time for that." (S12).

Despite the positive evaluation of the cultural assistant institution, respondents claimed that status of such employees is unclear, their duties are not listed and familiar to the rest of the staff. It is also hard to find person for this position, and people who apply often do not have expected competences. Although assistants in terms of legal requirements just need to know Polish and foreign language, this is considered as not enough to work in a school.

One of another significant problem is shortage of experts, pedagogues, psychologists, speech therapists, who speak other languages. It refer also to the special pedagogical and psychological counselling centres. "This is very serious problem, as children cannot express in their own language all bad emotions they feel. It grows in them. Polish language is not the one allowing to express their feelings and experiences." (S1T1F). Additionally there is resistance of migrant children parents, especially coming from east, to send a child for psychological consultations. It can be explained with cultural differences or different system of psychological evaluation in countries of origin. Parents were explaining that they fear accusations on bad parenting and as a result limitation of their guardianship (S1T1F). They are often stressed with the simple invitation for a parent-teacher conference. They assume that



they or their children do not meet expectations, so they are not used to cooperation with school on daily basis, which probably is driven by cultural differences (S4R1).

Next problem is connected to the knowledge and consciousness of teachers. Many of them ignore the migratory status of a child and do not realize that such children are experiencing hardship being root out of their previous communities. Subject teachers just cannot show enough empathy. They judge children on lack of knowledge when problem lies in lack of language proficiency (S3T1). Lack of communication between school management and teachers is another issue. Many teachers are disoriented in school initiatives, especially external ones that was approved by principals. They were not informed on forms of support to migrant children (S5T1).

The final problem concern lack of support from the Regional Education Supervisory Board that is responsible for the implementation of the education policy on behalf of government. The one for the Krakow region declared no interest in any intercultural issues, and the head of this institution is very conservative and attached to traditional Catholicism.

Boarding schools and dormitories:

This issue reflects probably the most important and compelling problem concerning migrant children presence in Poland. Frequently these children are living on the territory of Poland without parental guardianship. Theoretically they are under the care of so called "representatives", acting on behalf of act of entrusting, signed by parents yet in Ukraine. Such person is not recognized in Polish law as legal guardian. In Poland a custodian must be appointed by the family court with our without the consent of parents. This entrustment institution became a huge business in Ukraine and Belarus. Such representatives are paid approximately 40 EUR per month for performed duties. Some have over fifty to one hundred children under care, which makes custody feigned. The educational system does not allow school to refuse child acceptance due to lack of parental presence in Poland. All children in the school age have right and obligation to attend to school.

Dormitories and boarding schools often does not provide catering. They are also closed for holidays and mid-term brakes. In case of sickness child shall not be present in the dormitory. This means that custodian shall take over the care. Children in those circumstances are often left alone and are living in rented flats, hostels or vanish and nobody knows what was happening with them during those periods. In extreme situations child become homeless.

There are another implications of such problem. The legal provisions are blurred and there are no clear instruction how to behave in certain situations, who is responsible for child safety when it leaves dormitory for shopping, leisure or any other possible activity in the city. Nobody knows who is decisive in cases of health issues, emotional or social problems. Teachers do not know anything about the child past which make educational work harder. There are no instructions regarding the reaction to social maladjustment or criminal activities of migrant children.

There are no problems referred to cultural differences. They are accepted and treated as something natural. Both parties in the dormitory setting are learning each other and being flexible.

### 3.5 Possibilities for doing it better

Respondents highlighted the necessity to increase hours of compensatory lessons. That would enable more individual work with particular migrant child and such work is most valued in the context of educational progression. "I think that individual contact even in case of language barrier is crucial. These children need someone who will show interest in them." (S6T2). It is also postulated to introduce language lessons in one-on-one system, where subject teacher is working individually with migrant child (S5T2).

A bigger emphasis shall be put during lessons to team work, preferably mixed (Polish and foreign children). This model is limited by the school agenda and curriculum base that force teachers to speed up with material and leaves no time for team work tasks (S5T3).

All respondents highlighted that presence of cultural assistant in the classroom is very important improvement. It is postulated to extend its responsibilities to work with whole families, especially just after migrants' arrival. Only assistant who speaks in child's and his parents' mother tongue can properly take care over the pupil and his educational progress. Such complex aid would be more effective in the context of integration and adaptation to school requirements. It is equally important to make assessment of the child before assigning assistant. Sometimes child does not need such support and might be even disturbed by its presence, or support can be limited to certain subjects. Assistants shall have access to Librus system in order to facilitate communication channels between them and parents (S1T4).

Teachers shall learn languages as well. Most of them would benefit from even basic knowledge of Russian and Ukrainian. That would ease the communication with Ukrainian children at the very first stage of their presence in the school when they still do not speak Polish. Children would also benefit as the process of learning is not so much interrupted by language inability.

One of the school principals (S2R1) presented an idea of creation by the city hall an e-learning platform dedicated to foreigners and their children, which would also serve as communication tool and problem solving place, clearing doubts concerning the presence of migrant children in schools.

It is very important to try to adapt children to the new school environment before they will join classes. It can be orientation camp in last weeks of August or any other form of training. A meeting between Polish and foreign parents allowing them to get know each other, talk and clear out doubts on effects of migrant children presence in the school and the school ranks seem to be a good idea.

There was a proposal to introduce topics referring to the countries of origin of migrant children and their culture during classes. "Each teacher or educator shall in all his doings present openness, tolerance and interests in the matters of migrants children. They should ask them about their countries, cities and homes they were living in. These children would have been encouraged to speak about themselves, their family background, facilitating mutual acquaintance (S5T2). Intensification of integrative events, such as joint trips, visits in cinemas or for bowling is also desirable.

The issue of placing children without parental custody in dormitories shall be regulated in details. Representation of a child by so called "entrusted representative" need to be banned and only family courts shall be allowed to appoint custodians for migrant children.

More specialists in schools shall be hired, especially those who have experience with the work in intercultural environment or with migrant children. Those experts should not occupy their offices, being available only for intervention but actively work with teachers and children on daily basis.

Yet, at the stage of educating future teachers on the pedagogical studies there are no lectures considering intercultural issues in the school environment. Such content shall be included in the teachers' studies agenda (S1R1).

There are no reliable test of language competences on the current market. It requires a sufficient funding, including research, and then standardization of the questions. Publishers are not interested in such investments.

Teachers, despite overwhelming responsibilities, are open to learning and gaining new competences in the field of intercultural education (S3T7F). The offer shall be however adjusted to teachers' needs and abilities, especially in terms of time framework. It shall be less theoretical and focus on practical issues, led by people who have experience gained working in school environment and knowing the reality of this institution (S4T3F).

One of the administrative staff proposed to hire a Russian speaking person for the period of school recruitment in order to provide support to the Ukrainian parents (S3E1).

#### 4. Other issues

It must be underlined that school management is generally very enthusiastic towards acceptance of the migrant children, however these do not overcome the problems caused by such presence, including among other a disorganization of the school work. This require often reorganization of all tasks within the school, often limited by structural obstacles.

Next issue concern the difference between new migrants and the national minorities. These "old Ukrainians" have right to additional classes about their culture and can learn their mother

tongue which is not supported in the case of newly-arrived children. This is leading, after couple of years, to decay in native language performance, especially in younger children. They are forgetting the alphabet, their history and heritage. Schools do not have any response to this problem.

Integration is also jeopardized by structural elements of the system of education. School performance is acknowledged by its ranking on final exams and presence of migrant children is problematic in this context. Most of migrant children need at least three years of intensive learning to get decent grades on final exams. The overload of knowledge required from the child in the curriculum base leave teachers with no time for individual work, which again affects school ranking.

Administrative constraints concerning the legalization process, which is long-lasting, deteriorates integrative work as often children enrolled to Polish school are unable to travel abroad, making hardly possible for them to join trips, international contests, exchanges, winter or summer camps.

## 5. Conclusions and discussion

Poland is still a homogenous country in terms of ethnical and national structure. This homogeneity is even more visible in the context of education. The migrant children rates in schools are four times lower than overall migration rates, which makes those children hardly visible in schools. They do not have enough power to equally negotiate their statuses and are more administered according to centrally or locally set agenda. Furthermore the curriculum base petrify this homogeneity by introducing nationalistic and country-centric symbolism behind the education. The issues of diversity were eradicated from the educational process and replaced by postulate to assimilate others. There is a visible emphasis to uniform society and to build national pride around the concept of exceptionalism. A foreigner who wish to settle in Poland need to deserve to be a part of this great country and nation. This is very dangerous attitude that always led to rise of xenophobia and hostility. Meanwhile, tolerance and multiculturalism are a derivative of globalization processes, which is affecting each of us in different dimensions. Paradoxically, we participate in a reality that not only unifies but also differentiates our worldviews. This naturally affects the interaction between people. Despite this, understanding, as well as recognizing diversity and, consequently, initiating actions that will facilitate existence in a multicultural mosaic, still arouse much controversy. It is worth to mention, that respect for otherness - need for tolerance, are one of the most important values in the European Union.

The policy of assimilation pursued consequently by almost all post Second World War authorities became a weapon that fought against all differences. The socialist interference of the state in collective life, through, inter alia, the educational system, strengthened the belief that an ethnic state is an absolute boon. As a result of these historical processes and events, the attitude of Poles towards otherness is still diverse, often ambivalent, and even hostile. Unfortunately after short period of greater openness the new government started to

mirroring PRL policies seeing enemies in Western countries, but also creating new evil – in asylum seekers, human right workers and most recently LGBTQ activists.

Education has certainly been and is an area full of challenges in this context. The lack of properly prepared staff who could conduct classes on multiculturalism and tolerance to this day is a serious problem. There are still no systemic solutions that would introduce this type of education to schools, including programs where teachers could supplement their knowledge. Unfortunately, despite the long period that has passed since the political transformation in our country, we did not see any breakthroughs in this area. They were also not caused by the migration crisis and nationalisms that strengthen xenophobic attitudes. On the one hand, it was these attitudes that caused aversion to different groups, but on the other hand, they showed how urgent is the need to educate future generations in a spirit of openness and tolerance.

Unfortunately, as has already been mentioned, educational programs have lack of solutions and ideas that would meet the problems and constitute an alternative to contemporary threats. Lessons, during which the topics of different groups are discussed, are limited to discussions about the presence of minority groups in our country or their cultural and folklore activities. There is a lack of in-depth reflection on various aspects, including those related to multiculturalism. Non-governmental organizations active in the field fill this gap. As part of their activities, they initiate many activities that are addressed to the school environment; to both students and teachers.

Nevertheless, Poland is on the very beginning of its way to become more diverse and social friendly country. For that reason most issues discussed in this context is not connected with any core values but refers to practical and structural problems. Postulates of change are specific and distinct, not aimed on any systemic change. Such change is however indispensable in order to prepare Poland for the real demographic metamorphosis that is clearly approaching.

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