

# The Potentials of a Child-centred approach to the Integration of Migrant Children

**Societies and Spaces in Contact: Between Convergence and Divergence**  
**16th - 20th September 2019**

**Zorana Medarić** (Science and Research Centre Koper), **Mateja Sedmak** (Science and Research Centre Koper) & **Barbara Gornik** (Science and Research Centre Koper)



# AIMS OF THE PRESENTATION

To present the child-centred approach

To present the child-centred approach in the context of the integration of migrant children

**MiCREATE**

## **Migrant Children and Communities in a Transforming Europe**

<http://www.micreate.eu>

Horizon 2020 research and innovation project: 1.1.2019 – 31.12.2021

15 partners from 10 countries

Comparative research

# CHILDREN IN THE CENTRE

Both literally and figuratively, **children** in modern and postmodern societies are **now heard and seen** (Bromstrom, 2012)

- Changing views of children and their **place in society**
- United Nations **Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)**
  - the right to develop to the fullest
  - the right to participate fully in family, cultural and social life
- Children seen as being **competent and with agency**
  - New childhood paradigm (James & Prout), children as social actors, studying children in their own right
  - Children as creators of their own lives and societies they live in, having their own culture.
  - Children as *beings* (already social actors with agency) and not *becomings* (yet to become adults)

# CHILD-CENTRED APPROACH IN RESEARCH

- 1) researchers have to take **children's perspective** into consideration
  - how adults and society understand children and their lives and
  - how children experience and describe their lives
  
- 2) in **research** children should be given influence and be seen as **active participants**
  - children have to be included
  - children as experts in their own lives
  - researchers: consider how to give children voice and possibility to participate

# CHILD-CENTRED APPROACH TO EDUCATION

- strives to discover **children's abilities, passions and skills through questioning, problem solving, independent thinking, innovation and creativity.**
- it encourages the children to **cooperate with each other and communicate** in search for answers - **enhances communication skills and active learning while & boosts collaboration with peers and provides** caring and supportive learning environment
- approach that **builds on children's skills and agency** and allows them to work together as a group on goals that cannot be accomplished individually.
- a way of **guiding children to accept differences and commonalities** between themselves and respect for each other

# CHILD-CENTRED APPROACH & POLICIES

- **Policies** addressing the well – being of children should take **children`s views** into account & encourage children to search **for their own solutions** to concrete challenges
- Need to **question existing adult – centric discourses** of policy makers and profesionas in the fields affecting children`s lives

# CHILD-CENTRED APPROACH & MIGRANT CHILDREN

- **Epistemological shift** in the area of migration: from understanding children as „**baggage**“ (needs to be carried, taken care for, is heavy...) towards understanding children as **co(creating) their** migration process.
- In migration studies **active role of children** as well as the importance of researching children have been recognised in the recent years.
- Nevertheless, **lack of data and research** on the role of children and youth in migration flows, their experiences and perspectives, still adult – centric views prevailing



# CHILD-CENTRED APPROACH & MIGRANT CHILDREN

- Existing social and political order does not offer enough autonomous space where children could independently speak for themselves
- What are the **potentials** of child-centred approach for the integration of migrant children?
- Creating the socio - political space where **migrant children`s voices, views and experiences** may be heard and taken into account

# CHILD-CENTRED APPROACH & MIGRANT CHILDREN: RESEARCH

- **Listen** to migrant children, **involve children in the research process**, recognise them as „**competent meaning makers**“(Clark 2006) and active participants in the construction of knowledge
- Methodologically: participatory methodologies (actively involved, co-creating)
- Possibilities to express **children`s own views and understandings** on their own integration, inclusion in societies, their needs & their understandings of successful integration and their well- being – now and in the future.
- Possibilities for **new understandings of existing migration context** and different work in this field.
- Challenges: power inequalities – constant reflexivity; complexity of representations

# CHILD-CENTRED APPROACH & MIGRANT CHILDREN: EDUCATION

- Education: one of the most **powerful tools** for stimulating social **inclusion** of migrant children
- Child – centred approach in education: building **migrants' skills and capacities** (active participation, cooperation..), which is indispensable for their **inclusion in society**
- strategy for building **cohesive and inclusive societies** on a wider societal level

# CHILD-CENTRED APPROACH & MIGRANT CHILDREN: POLICIES

- **MiCREATE: child-centered integration policies, integration programmes, practices and initiatives** are among most important factors to support migrant children to become partners and participants in the development of a cohesive societies
- First principle of the **Immigrant Integration Policy in the European Union**: successful integration requires meaningful interaction between migrants and the receiving society: integration as a two-way process' (adults)

# CHILD-CENTRED APPROACH & MIGRANT CHILDREN: POLICIES

- Current migration and integration **policies are adult – centred**: might not address all views relevant for children – children`s views can challenge existing migration & integration policies
- Knowledge created by children should be **recognised in development of all policies** affecting their well – being and integration

THANK YOU!