

# INTEGRATION OF MIGRANT CHILDREN IN SLOVENIAN SCHOOL SYSTEM

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# Migrant Children and Communities in a Transforming Europe

- **Sample of 16 primary and secondary schools in Slovenia**
- **The selection criterion was cultural diversity of the region/school.**
- **7 schools were selected (3 primary and 4 secondary) for in-depth research**
- **38 interviews and 14 focus groups, with five observational with participation.**
- **7 schools: minimum 15 observation days with participation in formal (lessons) and informal situations (lunch, school trip, play in the yard, etc.).**

# RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- **How do teachers and others working within the school community in primary and secondary schools approach the inclusion of immigrant children?**
- **How do they understand / accept migration, cultural diversity and integration?**
- **How do they promote intercultural coexistence?**
- **How do they organize everyday school life taking into account cultural diversity?**
- **How does cultural diversity affect their work and everyday school life?**
- **What are the challenges and problems of the existing system of integration of immigrant children?**
- **What are the untapped opportunities to improve the system of integration of immigrant children?**
- **To what extent is there a child-centered approach to the education and integration of immigrant children?**

# Perception of migration in schools

- **Migration is seen as a fact and challenge.**
- **Migration is rarely understood primarily as positive feature.**
- **Negative attitudes towards migrants have been also observed.**
- **Recent years there have been changes for the better in the direction of greater sensitivity to cultural diversity.**

# Awareness of cultural diversity in schools

- **The level of intercultural awareness in Slovenian schools varies.**
- **In multicultural areas, there are some representatives of school communities who are aware of the needs and challenges arising from cultural diversity.**
- **There are schools that pay little or no attention to cultural diversity and inclusion**

# Perception of integration in schools

- **School staff generally reject the concept of assimilation and rely on the concepts of inclusion, integration and adaptation**
- **Prevailing belief that immigrant students "must adapt" to the new cultural environment**
- **Only occasionally teachers highlight integration as two-way process.**
- **Integrations is mostly seen as way of becoming a part of society, take over the cultural values and rules of Slovenian society.**

# Implementing integration measures in schools

- The integration of immigrant children is seen almost exclusively as a process of learning the Slovenian language.
- The result of the existing system is that the actual success of integration depends on individuals and their efforts.
- Cooperation with the families of immigrant children: a big difference between primary and secondary schools.
- Parents of local children: occasional reservations, including a negative response;
- Few see integration as a comprehensive process in which local children and parents as well as the local community should be actively involved.
- Nothing about evaluation and self-assessment of the success of the integration process.

# Practicing cultural diversity in schools

- **Cultural diversity affects organization of school life in many different ways**
- **Primary school teachers largely prepare additional teaching materials, translations, dictionaries, mini-projects, address cultural diversity in the classroom. Depending on the individual teacher.**
- **Teachers miss topics of cultural diversity in existing teaching materials.**
- **It is difficult to adequately address the needs of an immigrant child (overburdened teachers, oversized classes, students with various special needs, no additional help, no knowledge, no materials...).**
- **Most do not perceive intercultural intolerance and conflicts stemming from ethnicity. There are no handling protocols.**

# Concluding remarks

- **Lack of awareness that integration is a two-way process**
- **The responsibility for (successful) integration rests largely with the child (and his family).**
- **Lack of more holistic approach (social, psychological, cultural aspects).**
- **Strategies / recommendations should be binding.**
- **Stable funding and sustainability of programs / interventions.**
- **Build teachers knowledge and capacity education related to the inclusion of immigrant children.**
- **Employment of person with appropriate competencies in charge of the integration of immigrant children.**
- **A more individualized approach to the immigrant child.**
- **Sensitization of local children and local community.**