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Provision for Ethnic Minority Pupils and Parents in Slovenia

Report for Learning Migration Network Transnational Seminar Group for Educational Authorities

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Information based on:

- **Various National documents,**
- **Published examples of good practise,**
- **Experience of National Education Institute with teachers working with migrants pupils and their parents.**

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1. BACKGROUND/HISTORY OF MINORITIES IN SCHOOLS

The second part of the Seventies gave rise to the most intensive migration, primarily from the former Yugoslav republics, i.e. Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Serbia; its aim was, in the first place, to find employment.

The immigrants of that period differed from the “conventional” ones, since they were full-fledged citizens of the same country. The main change experienced by other conventional immigrants when they “move over”, was inflicted on the above immigrants with the onset of the political act of the state in 1991. Presently, it is the third generation of immigrants from the former Yugoslav republics who live in Slovenia, and this generation is worse off than the first one, since with the change of political system, we repudiated the so-called “Yugomulticulturalism” which was functional to a certain extent, and adopted, in principle, a new, Eurocentric and/or Anglocentric multiculturalism.

In the Nineties we are faced with the following characteristics of migration trends: ageing of population combined with negative population growth, predominance of immigration over emigration, immigration flows from the neighbouring areas and predomination of migrants for employment. Among the most recently admitted member-states of the European Union, Slovenia features the lowest mobility rate, and no major emigration from Slovenia is to be expected in future either. In spite of that it has been observed that the new Schengen border is causing changes in migration flows. An increasing number of children of immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers and persons enjoying temporary protection are being included in the Slovenian education system.

2. RECENT IMMIGRATION

There is no central record of the number of children who are second-language Slovenian speakers. There is merely an estimate for 2006 (a survey made by the National Education Institute of the Republic of Slovenia) according to which about 1000 children or pupils enrolled in kindergartens, elementary schools and secondary schools were migrants to Slovenia and about 2000 of them were born in Slovenia and were second-language Slovenian speakers.

Based on the status overview for 2006, the countries of origin of the migrants’ children are as follows:

in kindergartens: Albania, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Italy, China, Macedonia, Germany, Poland, Russia, Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo, Ukraine, Great Britain;

in elementary and secondary schools: Albania, Argentine, Austria, Australia, Belarus, Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Croatia, Estonia, France, Guinea, Italy, Ireland, Japan, South Africa, China, Kosovo, Macedonia, Moldavia, Germany, the Netherlands, Slovakia, Serbia, Switzerland, Taiwan, Ukraine, Great Britain, the U.S.A.

The countries evolved from the former Yugoslavia hold the leading positions with respect to the number of migrants from a particular country.

3. NUMBER OF MINORITIES IN SCHOOLS

According to the Slovenian legislation, a “migrant” shall be deemed to be every person who resides in Slovenia after the expiry of one year from registration of residence. Migrant children are those residing in Slovenia for a period shorter than one year and those who already are Slovenian citizens.

The migrant groups in Slovenia are divided into:

- **former migrants** who are Slovenian citizens, who were born in Slovenia and have been residing here from birth (the second and the third generation of immigrants), or persons who were not born in Slovenia and have acquired Slovenian citizenship,
- **typical migrants** who do not possess Slovenian citizenship (but hold the permanent or temporary residence permit),
- **forced migrants** (asylum seekers and refugees),
- **migrants enjoying special status** (citizens of other EU member states),
- **Slovenian emigrants and migrant workers** who returned to their native country.

4. PROVISIONS IN SCHOOLS

The Slovenian education system is based on the European legislation which underlines that migrant children should be provided with free learning, which in particular involves suitably adapted learning of the official language of the host country, and encouragement in learning their mother tongue and culture of their country of origin, and that they should be enabled access to the education system under conditions equal to those enjoyed by the citizens of the host country.

After the adoption of the National Strategy of Integration, kindergartens and schools will observe the principles of integration which are as follows: accessibility of education, openness of curriculum, autonomy and professional responsibility of the schools and its employees, equal opportunities, respect for differences between children, ensuring conditions required for achievement of goals and standards in the domain of knowledge, active learning and allowing for the opportunity of verbalising and other modes of expression and cooperation with parents.

5. CURRICULUM

To date, integration of migrant children in the education system took place in the form of supplementary classes of Slovenian (in average, 1 lesson a week). The scope of classes was set out by the Ministry, while the schools selected the mode of conduct of classes at their own discretion. There were no special provisions as to who was supposed to conduct such classes.

In 2007, a new National Strategy of Integration of Children, Pupils and Students in the Education System will be introduced; this strategy will likewise affect the recommendations regarding implementation of the existing curriculum.

6. BILINGUAL EDUCATION

There are two traditional national minorities in Slovenia – the Italian and the Hungarian national community – as well as a separate Roma ethnic community, all of which enjoy a high level of legal protection. Education and schooling of members of the Italian and Hungarian national communities constitute an integral part of the education system.

The preschool educational programmes are adapted for the members of the Italian and the Hungarian national communities in accordance with the goals stipulated in the relevant Act, enabling the children to develop their mother tongue and to also get acquainted with the basics of the Slovenian language.

In the ethnically mixed areas, kindergartens organize a free bilingual preschool educational programme for children one year prior to their entry into school. Parents enrol their children in this programme on a voluntary basis. Both the educational programmes for the members of the Italian national community and the bilingual educational programmes are adapted so

as to complement the education and schooling goals, conditions for enrolment, schedule of courses, curricula, skills schedules and examination schedules.

In educational work at schools using Italian as the language of instruction, textbooks and teaching aids in Italian are employed, while in bilingual schools, textbooks and teaching aids are bilingual – in the Slovenian and Italian language.

7. ACTION PLANS

The starting point of the action plan will be special features of the target group, i.e. the second language of the migrants, their age, level of education and social circumstances. These data will serve as the basis for determination of time of integration, mode of instruction, evaluation of proficiency in the relevant language, socialization of the child, mode of cooperation with parents, and selection, application and development of new materials.

8. TEACHER TRAINING

The National Education Institute of the Republic of Slovenia encourages the training of teachers for work with migrant children by developing and conducting special training courses in the form of seminars, teaching workshops and practical counselling as well as consultations at large with kindergarten and school managements. The Institute also issues support didactic materials for work with migrants.

There are two special development projects currently being implemented by the Institute. Schooling and Education of the Roma, and Migrants – development of educational concept. In addition to the above, the Institute encourages kindergartens and schools to exchange experience in work with migrants by providing assistance in search for partners for international cooperation.

9. NEW INITIATIVES

It is expected that in 2007, the National Strategy of Integration of Children, Pupils and Students in the Educational System in the Republic of Slovenia is to be adopted, thus providing a go-ahead for implementation of activities envisaged in the Action Plan.

10. EXAMPLES OF BEST PRACTICE

In a survey made in 2006, the following examples of good practice were listed by the interviewed teachers:

- taking into consideration the child's strong areas of functioning and its culture of origin in developing the curriculum, integration of parents and out-house staff as well as team approach of experts and practical workers in formulating the relevant types of approach to working with migrant children, their parents and other children in the group.

Examples of good practice given in the publication which addresses this topic include:

- lessons on the topic: This is me, People talk about others, Hidden identity, My values, Prejudices, Choosing a partner;
- teacher-parent conferences;
- preparing for classes on the topic: Celebrations, Folk tradition, Home reading, We among ourselves, Healthy way of living, and
- didactic games on the topic of tolerance and non-violence, and understanding those who are different: Let us create together, This object reminds me of, My name is, My name has a history, We live in the same house, What I appreciate in myself is, What we encourage and what we refuse, I advise you to, I was falsely accused, Greetings from different cultures.