



Erasmus+, KA3: Initiatives for policy innovation –
Social inclusion through education, training and youth
Project number: 580228-EPP-1-2016-1-SI-EPPKA3-IPI-SOC-IN
3-year project: 31 December 2016–31 December 2019.
Project countries: Slovenia, Germany, Spain, Italy, FYR of Macedonia, Turkey

RoMigSc – Synthesis Report – Executive Summary and Lessons for Slovenia

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About the Project

The main aim of the RoMigSc project is to support better integration of Roma and migrant children in education through various activities that stimulate innovative policy development, policy dialogue, and implementation, as well as the exchange of knowledge in the fields of education, training and youth.

Education (good teachers and good schools) is crucial for the successful integration of migrants in society. Furthermore, multicultural diversity is an opportunity to make schools more inclusive, creative and open-minded.

Slovenia had migrant from different states of ex-Yugoslavia already in the 90s. Refugees from Bosnia and Hercegovina were enrolled in Slovenian schools since 1995/96. In that period Slovenian schools and teachers got experiences and guideline, which enabled better and easier integration of migrants coming in several short refugee waves into Slovenia and its school system. Since the year 2000, more and more elementary schools have been facing an increase of migrant children, mainly from Balkan countries. Consequently, teachers have been more often looking for organizations, from which they expected support, training, teaching materials, volunteers and other. With the inflow of migrants in recent years from countries which cultures and languages are severely different to Slovenian, it became evident, that more needs to be done for the inclusion of increasingly diverse audience of learners.

In the education of Roma children, a move forward has been made to ensure better inclusion of Roma into Slovenian education in the last decades. In 2008 Roma assistants were introduced, several pieces of training are being held for teachers who work with Roma. Initiatives and projects focused on the integration of Roma children were implemented by several governmental and non-governmental organizations and research institutes. The objectives were to promote cooperation and involve parents and local communities in Roma children learning. There were and still are significant differences among Slovenian regions. For example, Prekmurje region is a case of successful integration, while in Dolenjska region not many good



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practices of integration and collaboration could be found. Therefore, more opportunities and needs for a step further might be recognized.

In the last period, the Republic of Slovenia has made many steps in the education and integration of Roma and migrant children in school. Still, those steps need to be clearly formulated and implemented more systematically and holistically.

Project Goals

The project, which is funded by the European Union in the scope of the Erasmus + programme aims to contribute to:

- creating inclusive and democratic learning environments.
- encouraging youth participation, developing inclusion and outreach practices for young people.
- preventing and combating any form of discrimination and segregation in education.
- fostering mutual understanding and respect among people.
- enhancing the quality of non-formal learning activities, youth work practices, and volunteering.

It does so through some Key Activities, such as Initial Study, Training for Volunteers, Volunteering Activity, E-Platform on Inclusion in Schools and Intercultural Topics, Training for Teachers and National Seminars for Different Stakeholders.



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The summary of the synthesis report of the initial study at hand points out and discusses the **relevance of the overall findings** in all of the partner countries. The main conclusions and policy recommendations that were made from studying the relevant literature, good practices as well as discussing the topic with more than 50 key informants (practitioners from schools, relevant administrations, social workers and volunteer organization staff) in Slovenia, Germany, the FYROM, Italy, Spain, Turkey and Italy are:

1. Commonalities of Partner Country Situation and Policy Approaches

None of the project partner countries currently has an educational system fully capable of ensuring full and equal participation of migrants, refugees, and Roma as far as outcomes are concerned.

While official laws and regulations acknowledge the principle of a multicultural society or at least intercultural coexistence, the factual situation is still targeted at an audience of learners that is conceived as being from a homogeneously national, if not regional, white, “standard” family, functional for supporting the educational success of a student as well as his/her basic socialisation. The needs of “non-standard” learners are mostly still perceived as a “deviation” from what “should be” instead of as a starting point of introduction of appropriate educational concepts.

2. The mainstream of Current Reform

In spite of systemic limitations (orientation, mental models, funding), there is a high level of engagement of schools, teachers, and volunteers as well as some valid policies that can be part of more systemic future solutions. In all of the partner countries, the primary measure to integrate children into schools includes transition periods for a given number of years, which consist of language learning offers and a somewhat flexible grading of the students. In all of the countries studied, continuing formal and non-formal training of teachers in general, but specifically in dealing with diversity, is reported to be weak and fragmented.

Often teachers work with already strained resources (such as a high student/teacher ratio), leaving only minimal space for “additional” activities. Therefore initiatives like school-based school development are mentioned by all of the partner countries, but a skeptical assessment of the thoroughness and effectiveness of such initiatives prevails.



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In all of the countries studied, the social situation of parents is reported to be a strong determining factor of school success in children. This is true for all migrant populations as well as for Roma. The school systems have been in any case able to adequately compensate for the disadvantaged situations of students in their families.

There is a broad consensus among all of the countries involved that only a holistic approach, which includes measures for the social stabilization of parents, improvement of chances for employment and better work conditions, stable and sufficient housing, community and neighborhood development, guidance and consultancy and an adequate volume, consistency and a duration of measures, can positively improve the situation. A multi-agency approach is required in all cases, i.e., better networking and cooperation among actors in various legal and statutory responsibilities, according to an agreed overall concept.

Cooperation among different stakeholders, state, parents, schools, community, non-governmental organizations, etc. is of crucial importance. It is also expected that schools are looking for their own solutions and good practices; and in many cases, they build their own capacity for educating migrants and Roma children. But at the same time, they always stress out the importance of external support.

The opportunity for external support comes in many cases from their involvement in different initiatives and projects. Therefore, it is essential that stakeholders find a way to work with schools in a systematic, and most important, in a sustainable way. Schools need transparent information and approach to all incentives in projects, which is still not the case.

2.1. The Role of Schools

Because schools, due to universal obligatory school attendance for children, are a universal contact point to state and societal organizations as a whole, they can potentially be a hub for such holistic approaches or at least an essential part of them.

2.2. Strong Volunteerism

In all the partner countries, volunteerism plays an active and positive role. While in countries like Italy, Spain, Germany, and Slovenia there is a strong tradition of partly faith-based (e.g., Caritas and other Catholic organizations as well as their Protestant counterparts) and volunteer engagement in social care as a whole, in all of the partner countries new initiatives add to the traditional ones.



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Almost everywhere, partners assess that the formal state system would be insufficient to cope with the challenges and that volunteer work prevents the system from collapsing. Many of the initiatives point to innovation that also needs to be adopted by the regular system, such as expanded language learning opportunities, communication, and social learning, general social work and community organization.

From the analysis of this situation, the partners have drawn the conclusions and policy recommendations to follow. Based on these findings, the following principles will be used for designing the general concept for the teacher and volunteer training within the project.

3. General Principles of RoMigSc Interventions

Principles:

- Teacher training, as well as volunteer training, should be based on the insight that migration is a reality and it should be accepted as a standard situation in a transnational society.
- Being useful for the factual population in the migration and transnational society should be accepted as the general mission and core of professionalism for schools and individual teachers alike.
- “Inclusiveness in diversity” within the framework of individual democratic and civil rights in contrast to “integration” into a presupposed host “culture” should be used as a framework concept for an up-to-date “migration pedagogy” (Mecheril), which can be useful also to guide education in a trans-national society.
- The acceptance of diversity is the acceptance of individual differences and not the definition of individuals by their supposed determination by cultural or national background.
- Working with diversity in education, therefore, must avoid the “othering” of individuals due to such supposed background or “identity.”
- Practical necessities of developing abilities that are useful in the current host society must be combined and balanced with the development of competences that will be useful in the original home country as well as all over in Europe. Models like “International Schools,” which are widely used by high income and highly mobile international experts for the education of their children, can give some insights into the framework for education with an international perspective.
- The potential of digital media for teaching and validating competences in a transnational and multilingual learning environment must be more widely used.



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- Competences for a migration society cannot be developed on individual teacher competence level alone.
- The development of teacher competence must be part of the school, education system, and overall social system development. The competence for participation in school and system development must, therefore, be part of teacher competence development.
- Europe is characterized by a dynamic evolution of societies, and therefore the mission and methodology of education are also changing. The educational system must be continuously reformed.
- Teacher training is not a one-time period, but teacher learning is life-long learning. Adequate attention and resources must be used for this learning and reflection of practice.
- Learning adequate competences cannot be limited to knowledge alone, but must include actual reflected experience in diverse national, cultural and social settings.
- International good practices must not only be communicated but experienced.
- Teacher and volunteer competence can be defined by the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and practice (for the framework concept see literature citation in national report Germany, SVR Lehrerbildung 2016, the content of items listed below adapted and enlarged by RoMigSc partners), which need to be developed.

Some key points that have been identified in the literature and critical informant input as being particularly relevant include:

Knowledge:

- the fact of migration society
- concepts of diversity, multiculturalism, transnationality, integration, patterns of racism (othering, biologism, etc.), individual civil rights and democratic values
- awareness about the impact of language standards for the performance in all subjects
- methods of using appropriate language levels (ability to communicate clearly with diverse target groups)
- difference between everyday language and educational language
- awareness about language prerequisites and overall competences of pupils
- knowledge about how competences from another language context can be transferred
- basic knowledge about cultures of origin, religions, and traditions (to aid understanding), awareness of the risk of “othering” (defining and singling out individuals by their presumptive “cultural” background)
- knowledge about factors of discrimination and threats, awareness of the living situation of parents, patterns of economic and social reproduction and avoidance of negative stereotyping



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- understanding of concepts of diagnostics of competences focused on identifying strengths and potential
- practices and good examples of language support, school development, coordination

Skills:

- analyzing learning prerequisites
- identifying talents and potential
- communication skills
- trust-building skills
- cooperation skills
- teaching and developing host country language in all subjects in a motivating manner
- flexibility
- adaptability
- ability to react to diverse learning prerequisites, through adapted access pathways to learning opportunities, through flexible structures, through differentiated media, individual learning arrangements and individualized support (on class and school level)
- use of digital media to individualize learning content, speed, and methodology, including providing multilingual means of learning and learning outcome validation
- leadership skills

Attitude:

- realism (acceptance of what is, not what should be) empathy
- positivity
- orientation to potential, not deficiency
- acceptance of diversity as fact not as a burden
- pedagogical openness and curiosity
- empathy with every child
- patience
- appreciation of abilities and competences of students of all backgrounds

Practice:

- actively participate in school development to develop diversity competence and practice
- stand up for all students, not only the students in the “majority.”
- support the language competence in the original language, host country language, and internationally used communication language(s) of all pupils with or without migration background during the whole school career
- use tools of linguistic diagnostics



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- integrate experiences not only of the standard host country background families, but diverse experiences in teaching and learning materials
- participate in training and active reflection of practice
- avoid “othering” (labeling, stereotyping)
- include a diversity of background and talent in teaching staff
- use diagnostics of individual strengths
- know and work with volunteers and relevant organizations
- build knowledge and network of relevant actors for transitions (persons in relevant institutions, companies, supportive NGOs, etc.)
- use multiple media for own learning and teaching

Teachers should know and be trained in overall concepts in which teachers and volunteers should participate, based on competences such as:

- school development: implementing diversity at the school level
- continuing reflection of educational needs and current good practice
- developing and using a repository of material to be integrated into training and collegial supervision
- inter-school exchange, exchange with relevant organizations, particularly social work, etc.
- international exchange programmes
- own experiences of interculturality (work and study abroad)
- participate in relevant competitions, school networks, auditing schemes to motivate and pace targeted change and development

Volunteers:

Much of the knowledge, skills, and attitudes, as well as guidelines for practice described for teachers, apply to volunteers as well.

4. Recommendations for Policy

The policy of the European Commission and member states has most recently been synthesized in the paper “Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, on Inclusion in Diversity to achieve a High Quality Education For All” (2017/C 62/02) Official Journal of the European Union 25.2.2017, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:C:2017:062:FULL&from=EN>



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The chapter to follow makes reference to the recommendations pointed out in 15 individual paragraphs, as C 1, C2, etc...

The sections to follow will discuss these recommendations with particular regard to the situation in Slovenia.

4.1 Local Level

Follow a multi-stakeholder multi-agency approach

Most of the partners report good results from close cooperation between all relevant actors at the local level. The commission strongly emphasizes this point in the paper quoted above.

Develop a plan of intercultural opening on municipal level

In Slovenia, we do not have specific examples of the intercultural opening based on municipal levels. But there are several initiatives and projects in which schools with a higher percentage of Roma and migrant children are involved. Those schools show their full commitment towards integration, including cooperation with the local environment. Such initiatives are for example workshops and cultural events for all parents and children of the schools, where they promote multicultural education and care for all children. School cooperate with other local schools, local communities, with cultural organizations, municipality and volunteering organizations in the systematic, long-term and sustainable way.

In this context we will rely also on international example of the City of Regensburg (Germany), which was visited by project members, where all efforts are conceptually joined in a municipal “Concept for Integration,” which describes the logic of mutually reinforcing measures, shared values, and principles of action, as well as the division of activities, inventory of resources, aims and measures. The plan should clearly lay out the philosophy of inclusion in diversity and inspire a discussion about a collective identity in the shared living space in contrast to national, cultural or ethnic identity. Based on a shared sense of belonging common measures and a welcoming attitude to newly arriving citizens can be developed.

Support schools, provide additional resources (planned and contingency)

As expressed in the concept of “the whole school” municipalities and local communities must take responsibility for schools and schools must support the communities, independent from legal responsibility and funding schemes.



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In the case of and good practice which is found in Municipality of Dobrovnik, Prekmurje, evaluation of the development of Roma children and families with a multidisciplinary approach is used. The multidisciplinary team aims to continuously follow and work with Roma families, inform each other and take timely comprehensive action when needed. As for example, as systematic respond, competent institutions detect a specific challenge or obstacle that could prevent or slow down the empowerment of Roma children for an independent, responsible and healthy life and contribution to the community. The multidisciplinary team involves obligatory schools Dobrovnik, and Lendava, Centre for social work Dobrovnik, Municipality Dobrovnik, Health centre Lendava and Roma councilor. Such an approach can be the case of good practice and implemented in other local environments with similar challenges.

Support volunteers and encourage civil society

Communities thrive on volunteer activity. Policymakers can do a lot to support and promote such engagement. Volunteer activity by policymakers themselves can set an example of proper civic attitude. Encouragement and support for exposure of pupils and students to volunteering activities, i.e., in the scope of internships and common volunteer action of school classes, students, etc. can help to make volunteering a “standard behavior” of the good citizen.

Volunteering in the Republic of Slovenia has a long tradition. There are several volunteering organizations in Slovenia focused on helping Roma and migrant children. Involvement of volunteers is the essential, and it is crucial that volunteers are well prepared and trained. Schools at the same time need to ensure that volunteers have support inside the school. They need a mentor, who supports and coordinate volunteer’s activities. A mentor has to organize and supervise their work and motivate them and help them when needed.

Network teachers, initiatives, social workers and volunteers to learn from each other

Municipalities can also play an essential role in developing the competence of teachers, social workers, public servants in all agencies and volunteers and students by encouraging, supporting and funding schemes of exchange of experience, mutual job shadowing, workshops, information, and further common training. A viable and effective interpersonal network of actors often follows from such activities, next to the smoother coordination of activities.

4.2 National Level

All policies must address the overall social situation and social opportunities



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A stable social condition, sufficient livelihood and sufficient infrastructure (housing, transportation) are prerequisites for educational success. National policies, therefore, must work to provide sufficient livelihood and economic opportunities to parents. Schools must be places of holistic integration, not only of education.

The Roma educational incubator (a place where either educational activities are taking place or other activities aimed at socializing) has proved to be a good practice in Slovenia - in order to integrate members of the Roma community into a wider environment and to promote knowledge, achieving higher education and promote lifelong learning. Incubators currently operate in ten locations (2018). In any case, there are needs for the establishment of new incubators and the upgrading of existing incubators.

Base all education policies on a sufficiently complex understanding of the facts of a migration society

The EC has proposed a viable concept of “inclusiveness in diversity” within the shared values of individual rights and democracy, to which all member countries have subscribed. This concept must be regarded as binding and must be promoted more widely. It must be the basis of all training and education for educators and volunteers as well as government agents.

Provide adequate resources

All partner reports unanimously claim that the education system as a whole is underfunded vs. the needs identified. The education system is charged with many more and much more complex missions in the current situation of growing diversity, societal and economic changes, and technological revolutions. Resources must be vastly expanded, starting with early childhood education.

Encourage experimentation and flexibility to cope with new problems, adapt and mainstream bottom-up solutions. Create transnational educational spaces

The developments in a migration society are complex and sometimes hard to predict; therefore the education systems must be made systemically adaptable by allowing a multitude of educational pathways and approaches.

Those migrants who aim to return to their home countries or continue to migrate to other countries, as well as European citizens who change their place of living multiple times during their career, might not be served well by education only in one of the lesser used European languages. Models of “International Schools” exist, which currently target an audience of



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mobile expert families as well as particularly globally oriented elites for sometimes high fees. The concept of transnational education must be made available to broader audiences. Internationally accepted degrees and certifications must be developed and implemented.

Expand research and experimentation

While the effectiveness of individual pilot projects, be they national or international, is often doubted, the research done by the partners as well as the repository of good practices collected (which often have been funded by “experimentation” programmes) shows that such initiatives have yielded a rich repository of good practices that illustrate the effectiveness of many of the recommendations given by the EC. Upscaling the funds for such experimentation, as well as those for the analytical approaches and outcomes, can further increase the options available to policymakers.

Through implementation of projects, states can receive feedbacks/responses what need to be changed or improved. In Slovenia we have some experiences in implementation of projects/ piloting activities (financed by the Ministry of education, science and sport, and European Social Fund), with the aim to prepare models, that are further on submitted in assessment to the Ministry of education, science and sport. Below are described two examples:

- First example is recommendation of a two-stage model of integration of migrant children into the educational system (20 introductory hours - *uvajalnice*; up to 120 hours of Slovenian language in 2 year period - *nadaljevalnice*). Recommended model relays on the results of the projects "Inclusion of children of migrants in education 2008-2011" and "Inter-culturalism as a new form of co-existence 2013-2015".
Evaluation: The model has been proved as good, but most stakeholders agree that not enough hours of Slovenian are financed by the state (120 hours in two years is exception; most children receive much less hours).
- Second example is implementation of the project Challenges of Intercultural Coexistence (2016 -2021), which proposes the following model of integration of migrant children: additional hours of Slovenian language for migrant children in primary school (more than what is currently offered by the state), 3-year transition period in primary school; 120 hours of Slovenian language outside classes (2 months) for secondary school students; systematisation of work position of multiplier.
Evaluation: The model is currently under assessment of the Ministry.

There are also several other national and international projects (among them also our project RoMigSc) that give the proposal for improvements through implementation of activities and collection of good practices.



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Invest in teacher education and international exchange, encourage international perspective as a prerequisite for competent teaching

Knowing about interculturality and diversity cannot replace experiencing it. Partner reports and discussions notice that a majority of the teaching staff in schools is socially quite homogeneous and from the mainstream majority population. Rarely actual experience with steady elements of diversity, such as volunteering in various social settings, experience abroad, etc., is not currently an obligatory part of teacher education or a relevant selection criterion. There are many hints though that precisely such experience can build the competences that teachers nowadays need. Therefore Slovenia should consider encouraging and planning to include such experience in initial and further teacher training.

Define teacher competence requirements accordingly, emphasize communication, empathy, social-emotional competence and adaptability

The mission of education nowadays is broader than the building of knowledge or even than building individual character. Schools need, according to the concept of the “whole school,” to make bridges to communities and employers, interact with a range of other agents, educate, communicate and mediate. The competence profiles for teachers must be adapted accordingly.

Extend digital media use in schools, fund and encourage the development of digital media in education

As the EC mentions, the use of digital media can enhance the opportunities for diversity friendly education. As the partner country reports illustrate, the growing diversity of students stretches the limits of what can be done by individual teachers to customize and tailor training programmes, e.g., the use and maintenance of competences in the original native language and the use of this language to build knowledge in general in subjects like STEM can rarely be done by host country teachers. Digital media can provide instruction any time and any place. They are therefore a powerful tool to mitigate current shortcomings and dilemmas. In Slovenia, the use of such multi-lingual digital media is currently far from the usual practice. A concerted effort to achieve acknowledgment of learning and also results via the use of digital media could be a strong incentive for more extensive use of such media.



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5. Best Practices

The project has documented more than 60 good practices in the field, which are described and referenced in the synthesis report of the project in some detail. The following ‘best’ practices have been identified by the partnership as particularly interesting.

- InMigraKids (GERMANY): a Holistic concept for the intercultural opening of schools, working with parents, aided by a pool of voluntary language mediators from more than 30 languages.
- Roma assistant (SLOVENIA): Trained mediators from the Roma community help children to overcome emotional and linguistic impediments before inclusion in kindergarten or school and to act as a liaison between the kindergarten or school and the Roma community.
- Cactus project (ITALY): The project develops digital learning and textbook material in simplified Italian in all subjects to assist students in accessing learning in all subjects while at the same time acquiring the Italian language through this topic specific learning material.

Roma assistants are for sure a good practice for Slovenia, but the approach should be systematized (currently is project based).

About the integration of migrants in education, several practices exist that are mainly project-based or part of school initiatives (e.g., projects that support training for teachers, projects with school multipliers, additional hours of Slovenian language including other activities with migrant children). In Germany, the qualification of a teacher of German as a second language has been widely promoted, which should become practice also in Slovenia. In general, more systemic solutions should be found in this area.

At the end we also agree that the following selected practices shall be expanded in the future:

Integration of language learning within different school disciplines for primary school (5-9 class) including the use of digital media - an example of project Cactus, Italy. Migrant children in Slovenia face problems in learning of other subjects (e.g., geography, history, mathematic ...) due to limited vocabulary and insufficient mastery of the language of the host country. In addition to the initiative of more hours for Slovenian language (hours are officially based on decision of ministry; but also offered through different projects, or as a part of school initiatives), initiatives such as Cactus could present additional approach toward ensuring better outcomes/success of migrant children (as the bad command of the language of the country that the child has not yet mastered, is the main risk factor for individuals’ failure).



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InMigraKid practice with the pool of trained ‘native speaking’ mediators with migrant background, and organisation of discussion workshops for migrant parents is also very valuable practice that should be promoted in Slovenian school system, mainly as in Slovenia translators are ensured by the Ministry only in case when important arrangements are needed between school and parents. And also other Slovenian organizations that work with migrants, can use such approach.