

RoMigSc – National Report Slovenia – Executive Summary

About the Project

RoMigSc project aims 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 (i.e., good teachers and good schools) is crucial for successful integration of Roma and migrants in society. Multicultural diversity is an opportunity to make schools more inclusive, creative and open-minded.

To Slovenia, immigrants from previous states of ex-Yugoslavia came already in the 90s. As they had lived in the same state as Slovenians before the year 1991, the inclusion and integration were more straightforward, although there were differences in language, culture, and religion. The differences appear much more significant in the last years when Slovenia was facing the flow of migrants from other countries. Therefore, the needs have arisen to do something for the inclusion of a heterogeneous audience of learners. From 2008, Slovenia started to implement various projects financed by the European Union funds and by Republic of Slovenia - Ministry of Education, Science and Sports (further on Ministry). The projects had been focusing on facilitation of integration of migrants in schools and providing teachers with needed knowledge and skills for work in an intercultural environment. Many other steps have been implemented by the Ministry as well, including responding to dilemmas from schools, and introduction of two crucial documents for inclusion of migrants in education: Strategy for the inclusion of migrant children and students in the education system in the Republic of Slovenia (2007), Guidelines for inclusion of migrant children in kindergartens and schools (introduced in 2009, amended in 2010 and 2012). However, support to migrant children in Slovenian schools has not been systemised yet nor precisely defined. Integration of students/pupils without certificates into the secondary schools remains a challenge. In general, more systemic, holistic and sustainable solutions are still needed.

Attention has been paid to ensuring better inclusion of Roma into education in Slovenia. Roma assistant, for example, was introduced in 2008, several pieces of training have been organised for the teachers and schools working with Roma, several organisations and research institutes have been implementing initiatives and projects focused on the integration of Roma children and cooperation with parents. However, the Roma community still feels that, despite all the efforts from the side of different stakeholders, there have been almost no visible results in some regions related to Roma education.

Project Goals

The project 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.

The goals will be achieved through several key activities, such as initial study, training for volunteers, volunteering activity, e-platform on inclusion in schools and intercultural topics, training for teachers, national seminars for stakeholders in the field.

Summary of the initial study

The summary of the initial study is based on the initial study in Slovenia. The findings come from the study of relevant literature, good practices and from the discussions with several key participants such as teachers, headteachers, relevant experts and administrators, school counsellors, volunteers, and volunteer organisation staff, are:

a) Lessons learned from literature and discussions in project workshops:

- The number of children applicants for international protection and children granted international protection in Slovenian education system is low (98 children in February 2017, according to the data available at the Ministry of the interior).
- The overall situation of Roma minority in different parts of Slovenia is very heterogeneous. For example, in the Dolenjska region, only a few children enter middle schools, while Prekmurje has a better level of integration.
- The successful strategy of Roma integration includes the initiative Roma assistants in schools and kindergartens, various textbooks in Roma language, seminars for teachers, as well as networks for exchange of experience.
- Recognition and exception of ‘multicultural society’ as a fact and a principle of policy in regulations on education can benefit all children not only migrants and Roma.
- Language problems and low parent’s status and social capital are the main problems of migrant and Roma children integration in schools.
- Schools develop multiple innovative, and flexible solutions as well as networks.
- Support for schools and teachers is not sufficiently systematised and defined yet.
- There are no systematic contents on multiculturalism in curricula, systematic and project-based training for teachers,

- More extensive language learning opportunities for learning Slovenian language are needed, particularly in secondary school
- Innovative projects results are poorly integrated into regular policy.
- Criteria for the assessment of migrant students is incomplete - systemic regulation in this area is unclear, as it is not clearly defined what kind of help should migrant children receive, what kind of adjustments at the level of the programme and of assessment should be ensured and how long should it take to allow migrant children adjust to Slovenian education system and environment (e.g., children can learn Slovenian language to be able to communicate in two years, but for a command of a language it takes more time; at least seven years, which should also be taken into consideration).
- Profile and status of teachers in Slovenia teaching the second language is still not yet defined.
- Volunteers must be trained before starting to volunteer in schools.
- Good organisation, coordination, mentoring and appreciation for volunteering is needed.
- There are several NGOs that support the integration of migrants which should be connected and synchronised.

b) Lessons learned from key informant interviews and focus group:

Policy recommendations concerning the migrant situation in education may include:

- Policymakers should have more insight into the needs and practice in schools.
- Currently, two years' transition period for migrants in primary school should be prolonged to three years.
- More hours of Slovenian language should be offered for migrant's children at all levels of schooling.

Policy recommendations concerning Roma include:

- Stronger emphasis on socialisation of Roma children in schools and local communities is needed.
- Additional initiatives are needed in the area of early inclusion of Roma children in kindergartens (at least 2 years before entering school).
- Better national coordination for the integration of Roma children would be beneficial.
- There should be more financial resources for the needs of Roma children available.
- More work with parents at a national level is needed.
- A systematic and sustainable position for the Roma assistant needs to be established.

c) Good Practices:

The initial study has identified number of good practices targeted at building good relationships with Roma and migrant parents, improving knowledge and skills of professionals for more successful integration of migrant children into educational system, developing support mechanisms for acquiring knowledge for members of the Roma community, volunteer engagement to assist migrant, refugee and Roma children.

Good practices presented in the report include:

Good practices concerning migrants:

- Project: ***Challenges of Intercultural Coexistence***

Responsible organisations: ISA institute, Primary school Koper

Short description: Improving skills of teachers for work in multicultural classes; approaching the integration of migrant children in kindergartens, primary schools and secondary schools (15 schools in the consortium and 75 partner kindergartens, primary schools, secondary schools, and dormitories).

Duration of the project: 2016 – 2021

- Project: ***Only with others are we***

Responsible organisations: ZRC SAZU, Educational Research Institute

Short description: Aim of the project is to raise awareness among pedagogic workers on the importance of intercultural competencies for work in multicultural classes. In this respect, different seminars are being organised in all Slovenian regions. Aim: to train around 10.000 pedagogic workers.

Duration of the project: 2016 – 2021

- Students' practice with migrant children in primary schools: ***Potential of students' tutoring for development of intercultural dialogue***

Responsible organisations: the University of Primorska, Faculty of education

Short description: One semester (3 months) of planning and implementing learning assistance to the selected student –migrant in Primary school. Practice is being held within the course Intercultural Education (course in 2nd year at BA programme)

Year of delivery: starting in 2014/15

Good practices concerning Roma:

- Good practice: ***Kindergarten Romano in Roma settlement Pušča***

Responsible organisation: Kindergarten Murska Sobota (Romano is unit of kindergarten MS)

Description: Kindergarten Romano is Roma kindergarten. Roma and non-Roma children attend kindergarten (which is a result of the coexistence and harmony of living between the Roma and the majority population in the municipality Murska Sobota).

Year of the opening of the kindergarten Romano: 1962

- Initiative: ***Step by step***

Responsible organisation: Educational Research Institute

Description: Main aims of the initiative: a) ensuring the inclusion of Roma children in high-quality preschool programmes, b) encouraging enrolment of Roma children in kindergartens at least two years before the compulsory school begins.

Start year of the initiative: 1994 (In the frame of Open Society Institute), from 1997 at Educational Research Institute

- Project: ***Together to knowledge***

Responsible organisation: Centre for School and Outdoor Education

Description: the purpose of the project is to develop and upgrade existing and establish new support mechanisms for acquiring knowledge for members of the Roma community.

Key activities include upgrading Roma educational incubators to multifunction centres; Roma assistants; and out of school activities.

Duration of the project: 2016 – 2021

- Project: ***Roma Assistants***

Description: Roma Assistants help children to overcome the emotional and linguistic obstacles and represent a kind of bridge between kindergarten, school and Roma community. The position has been project based since 2008.

Duration of single project and names of responsible organisations:

- 2008 – 2011: position of Roma assistant within the project Successful integration of Roma pupils into the education system I, responsible organisation: Union of Roma in Slovenia
- 2011 – 2014: position of Roma assistant within the project Successful integration of Roma pupils into the education and training system II, responsible organisation: Adult education centre, Kočevje
- 2014 – 2015: position of Roma assistant within the project Acquiring knowledge together, responsible organisation: Centre for School and Outdoor Education
- 2016 – 2021: position of Roma assistant within the project Together to knowledge, responsible organisation: Centre for School and Outdoor Education

Good practices concerning Volunteerism:

- Practice: BA course **Social responsibility and volunteering**, 6 ECTS.

Responsible organisation: ISSBS, Celje

Description: Course Social responsibility and volunteering is an elective BA course at the ISSBS, Celje, Slovenia. Students have 20 hours of tutorials as well as 100 – 120 hours of volunteering activities in different organizations in which underrepresented groups of people are involved. The course is being upscaled within project RoMigSc (as good practice, on which project RoMigSc builds on). The course activities in the RoMigSc contribute to:

- activation of youth;

- the better social inclusion of Roma, migrants in schools by an implementation of volunteering activities delivered by volunteers, trained to work with multicultural groups.

Year of the introduction of the course: 2015/2016

- Practice: ***Young migrants***

Responsible organisation: Slovene Philanthropy

Description: The Programme for Young Migrants is a part of long-term endeavours by Slovene Philanthropy to improve the conditions of minor migrants (especially of unaccompanied children, children seeking asylum and child refugees). Primary activities include mentoring for unaccompanied children, psychosocial support – as individual counselling, practical help with integration, activities for facilitation of integration in Slovenian environment, help with learning the Slovenian language, training of volunteers that work with unaccompanied children, etc.

Year of the introduction of the practice/programme: 1994