

COMPARATIVE REPORT ON QUALITATIVE RESEARCH: LONG-TERM RESIDENT MIGRANT CHILDREN

Migrant Children and Communities in a Transforming Europe



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement N°822664.

The project Migrant Children and Communities in a Transforming Europe (MiCREATE) aims to stimulate inclusion of diverse groups of migrant children by adopting child-centred approach to migrant children integration on educational and policy level.

www.micreate.eu

Author: Zorana Medarić

Cover photo by Matej Markovič

Published by
Znanstveno-raziskovalno središče Koper
Koper, Slovenia
www.zrs-kp.si

First published 2021

©Znanstveno-raziskovalno središče Koper 2021

This publication is copyright, but may be reproduced by any method without fee or prior permission for teaching purposes, but not for resale.

Research partners:

Znanstveno-raziskovalno središče Koper, Slovenia (ZRS)
The Manchester Metropolitan University, United Kingdom (MMU)
Centre national de la recherche scientifique, France (CNRS)
Mirovni inštitut, Slovenia (MI)
Univerza v Ljubljani, Slovenia (UL)
Syddansk Universitet, Denmark (SDU)
Universitat de Barcelona, Spain (UB)
Hellenic Open University, Greece (HOU)
Stowarzyszenie Interkulturalni PL, Poland (IPL)
Universitat Wien, Austria (UW)
HFC Hope for Children CRC Policy Centre, Cyprus (HFC)
CESIE, Italy (CESIE)
Udruge centar za mirovne študije, Croatia (CPS)
DYPALL NETWORK: Associação para o Desenvolvimento da Participação Cidadã, Portugal (DYPALL)
Fakulteta za dizajn, Slovenia (FD)

CONTENTS

1. Introduction	2
2. Methodology	2
3. Dynamics and factors influencing the integration process of migrant children ...	3
3.1 <i>Educational environment and system.....</i>	<i>3</i>
3.2 <i>Family and wider community.....</i>	<i>8</i>
3.3 <i>Conceptualizations of own well-being and life satisfaction.....</i>	<i>9</i>
3.4 <i>Perceptions about multiculturalism and existing models of migrant children's integration</i>	<i>12</i>
4. Concluding remarks	15
5. References	17

1. Introduction

This report is part of the Work Package 6 'Long-term Resident Migrant Children' and presents the results of the comparative analysis of data obtained from qualitative research among long-term migrant children in six European countries: United Kingdom, Denmark, Slovenia, Austria, Poland and Spain. Long - term resident migrant children (LTM) were defined as those who had been living in host societies for more than five years.

The overall aim of the comparative analysis is to identify similarities and differences related to the integration process of the migrant children with long-term residency in different countries/different political, cultural and educational systems and thus to better understand their integration process and their needs. After spending more than five years in the host country long-term resident migrant children could reflect on their experiences as newly arrived migrant children as well as provide an insight into their current lives.

In this report we address different factors that seem to be crucial for the well-being and the integration process from the perspective of the long-term resident migrant children (LTM children) in the United Kingdom, Denmark, Slovenia, Austria, Poland and Spain. We analyse and discuss how LTM children perceive 1) the school environment, school staff, classmates and friends and what role they play in their overall life, well-being and integration; 2) the (extended) family, the migrant community and the local community and what role they play in the integration process and overall life satisfaction; 3) how LTM children themselves conceptualise well-being, belonging, identity and sense of security and finally 4) how they themselves perceive opportunities and choices regarding the future and how they manage and control their own lives.

In the comparative report that follows, the **terms 'child' and 'children'** are used most frequently when referring to the participants in the study, although we are well aware that this may sound inappropriate and inaccurate, particularly in relation to the older group (15-18 years), and that a different term would be more appropriate when referring to them. This terminological decision arises from the fact that in our field research the integration processes were studied from a child-centred (CC) perspective. The latter is based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Therefore, the decision to use 'child' and 'children' is primarily analytical and not substantive.

What follows is 1) a short methodological section, 2) the presentation of the results of the comparative analysis and 3) concluding remarks.

2. Methodology

The comparative report is based on the findings of research conducted in 49 schools among children and young people aged 10-18 years in six European countries (United Kingdom, Denmark, Slovenia, Austria, Poland and Spain) over several phases with a total

duration of approximately 24 months (from September 2019 to September 2021). The fieldwork in the schools was interrupted and extended several times due to the pandemic COVID -19. All schools were selected on the basis of ethnic, religious and linguistic diversity and most of them had already been included in the previous research phases: Interviews and focus groups with teachers, headmasters, school counsellors, etc.

During the fieldwork, we used a mixed methodological approach to obtain different levels of data. This comparative report is based on data collected using a qualitative methodological approach only. In each country/school, data was collected through passive and moderate participant observation, focus groups and autobiographical interviews.

Due to the constraints of the COVID -19 pandemic, some phases of research were conducted online in some countries (interviews), but most fieldwork was conducted face-to-face in the schools. The researchers involved in the fieldwork already knew the vast majority of schools and school staff from the previous research phases of WP4 'Educational Community'. However, new schools/community facilities/student dormitories were rarely additionally included in the research, as access to existing schools was restricted due to pandemic restrictions (For more information, see the following reports: Educational Community and School Systems in the United Kingdom, Educational Community and School Systems in Denmark, Educational Community and School Systems in Slovenia, Educational Community and School Systems in Austria, Educational Community and School Systems in Poland, Educational Community and School Systems in Spain).

For more information on the samples, the sampling procedure, the methods used and the general research design, see D6.1 National reports on qualitative research: 'Long-term Resident Migrant Children'.

3. Dynamics and factors influencing the integration process of migrant children

3.1 Educational environment and system

Experiences of inclusion in school

Schools are generally perceived as welcoming places where children feel safe and accepted. In comparisons to newly arrived migrant children, long-term migrant children feel more relaxed and included in the school environment and class community. Most often children have overcome the initial language barriers and connected with school friends, which contributes significantly to feelings of safety and inclusion. Namely, both, language competence and friendships are important factors of inclusion. In all countries, the majority of long-term migrant children are fairly well-integrated, nevertheless the level of integration is also determined by the language proficiency. Language skills facilitate communication with both, peers and teachers as well as establishing friendships. Long-term migrant children usually feel more relaxed and due to their own experience of migration

often play supportive role for the newly migrant children. They act as translators and help them bridging the gap in the process of linguistic and cultural integration.

While the school are generally supportive and cases of exclusion are rare, some long-term migrant children report about experiences of exclusion in relation to their ethnic background, language, or religion. In addition, some experiences of bullying were also present as well as experiences of anxieties and negative feelings. For some long-term migrant children, like refugee children also their insecure legal status contributes to feelings of anxiety, unsafety and being exposed. Teachers significantly contribute to inclusion and are generally perceived as supportive and inclusive; however, some cases of exclusion were exposed as well as perception that teachers are not aware of anxieties among children.

School diversity and multiculturalism that form part of everyday experiences and make long – term migrant children feel comfortable, happy, and welcomed are important part of inclusion and were particularly stressed in the case of intercultural schools in Spain and United Kingdom. In some countries, like in the United Kingdom a small number of children also exposed the need to modify curriculums in order to be more inclusive and the need to include more intercultural issues.

In brief, friends, language learning, teachers and parents seem to be the most important factors of inclusion for long-term migrant children.

Language & School language policy and practice

Language represents one of the most important elements of inclusion. Long-term migrant children have usually overcome initial language challenges and barriers, and the majority of them are bilingual or multilingual. Even though most children have overcome language barriers, there are still some long-term migrant children who struggle with understanding and academic achievements. Students who come from the countries with similar linguistic backgrounds often have less difficulties in this regard. Thus, language also determines the level of inclusion and integration of long-term migrant children.

Because of their language skills, long – term migrant children are often an important support, translating for newly arrived migrant children, assisting in communication with both, peers and teachers and generally supporting their linguistic integration.

Long-term migrant children most often no longer attend reception classes (Spain, Denmark), support classes (Austria¹) or additional language courses (Slovenia, United Kingdom, Poland), nevertheless they report that in addition to language acquisition these

¹ Since 2018/19 children with insufficient German language skills must attend a "Deutschförderklasse" (German support class), therefore some long-term migrant children can still be part of these classes.

have been important for building friendships and their overall integration. Other important factors influencing their speaking abilities are classmates and everyday interactions with peers, teachers and parents.

In some schools, numerous languages are present and used, sometimes during classes, but most often in children`s informal communication. In everyday and informal communication children often use their native language although this is not always welcomed by teachers and school staff (Austria, Slovenia, United Kingdom). Some children report that schools have strict language policies, prohibiting children to speak their home languages in school (Denmark, Austria). In addition, also the differences between conversational and academic language were highlighted, like for example in Spain where Catalan language mediated academic contexts and Spanish prevailed in informal school spaces.

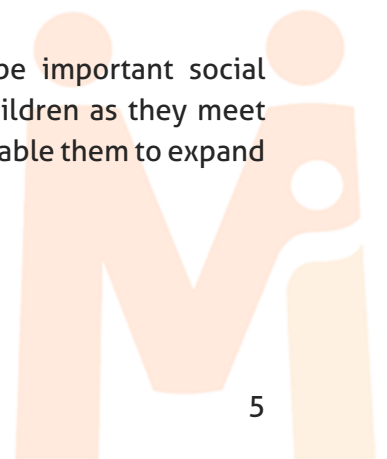
Peers

Peer relations were generally found to be very important for children`s well-being, sense of belonging and integration. Long-term migrant children often engage in multiple peer groups at school, in leisure activities and in the broader community, consisting mainly of children from diverse backgrounds. Long term migrant children recall that they had a hard time making friends when they arrived, however, over time they developed strong bonds with classmates, as well as with other peers.

Some long-term migrant children primarily form friendships with children from the same cultural and linguistic background. These are often an important part of children`s process of integration, especially early in their transition to the new country. Because of their similar experiences, long-term migrant children often offer support to newly arrived migrant children, not only in linguistic terms, but also invite them to join peer groups and help them overcome similar difficulties they themselves have had. Long-term migrant children consider the development of friendships and linguistic competence as important facilitators of the process of integration.

Interaction with classmates, but also reception classes (Denmark, Spain) are seen as important for forming friendships. Sometimes there is an age difference present between long-term migrant children and their classmates as they are placed in lower grades – this sometimes negatively affects their peer relations.

Leisure activities, such as sport activities have been found to be important social anchoring sites (Grzymala-Kazłowska, 2016) for long-term migrant children as they meet peers and form friendships there. They enhance their well-being and enable them to expand their social circles.



For long-term migrant children transnational social ties with peers from their country of origin and other countries are also important but can break over time as it is difficult to maintain long-term relationship friendship.

Coexistence of both, positive relationships with peers, but also tensions and conflicts with peers could be observed.

Teachers/educational staff

When talking about teachers, the long-term migrant children reflected on both - how they perceive them now, but also what role they played when they were new arrivals. Teachers play an important role in the lives of long-term migrant children and their opinions are valued. They often play significant part in the integration/inclusion of long-term migrant children by providing psychosocial and practical support and helping them to feel secure, especially at the beginning, when they arrive in a new country, but not only then.

Long-term migrant children mostly felt supported by teachers when they arrived and report that teachers are generally helpful and encouraging. Teachers also provide emotional support, and many long-term children feel they can turn to them when in need. Their support and non-discriminatory behaviour were particularly emphasised in the multicultural schools in Spain and the United Kingdom.

On the other hand, long-term migrant children also experience that they are not recognised and valued by teachers or not living up to their expectations (Denmark). Moreover, ambivalent experiences with teachers were reported in some countries. At the same time, some children express positive views about teachers, their commitment, support and encouragement, while others report about ignorant or discriminatory behaviour (Slovenia, Austria, Poland).

Other school staff often play a less significant role in the integration of long-term migrant children but are also sometimes involved in their school lives.

Inclusion and integration practices

Long-term migrant children expressed their views on the practices of inclusion and integration that were important to them during their integration process. Thus, they recalled the time of when they were new arrivals and disclosed the issues that were relevant to them. Language competence was recognised by the long-term migrant children in all countries as the most important aspect of the integration process. Long-term migrant children emphasise that everyday interactions with classmates and other peers, teacher support, and language courses contributed significantly to their speaking abilities and becoming part of peer groups and thus their general well-being.

The children also recognise that peers and forming friendships, social contacts in general play an important role in this regard. Because of their experience as newcomers, long-term migrant children often play a supportive role for newly arrived migrant children by translating and including them in social networks.

In general, they felt that encouragement and feeling welcome are very important aspects of the integration process. In this regard, teachers can make an important contribution to the well-being of children. Flexibility in the teaching process, such as the possibility of being exempted from exams in the first year and special activities organised for migrant children, were also mentioned by some Slovenian long-term migrant children as contributing to their well-being and integration. On the other hand, in Poland, grouping children by ethnicity (for the workshops, projects etc.) was seen as an obstacle to the language skills and integration. Similarly, a student from Spain problematized the reception classes from the point of view of integration:

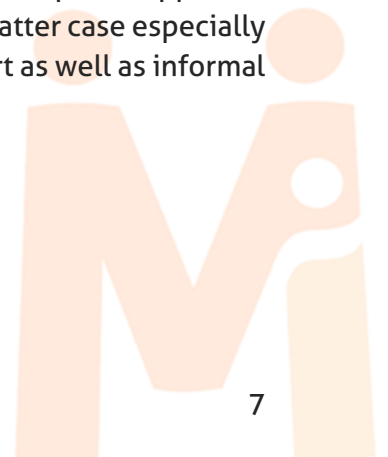
I like it (that there are people from other countries), but sometimes I'm not too fond of it. Because... I don't know. When new students come, it's hard for them when they come, like it was hard for me, so we do different things, as we are in two separate classrooms, and I don't like that. (S6, girl2, 15y/o, LT)

Long-term migrant children in Spain also addressed the issue of Catalonian education system perpetuating social exclusion as schools are divided in such a way that some accommodate diversity of ethnicity (and socio-economic status), while other accommodate mainly locals (Estalayo et al., 2021).

Psychosocial support

In general, there seems to be a need to expand/make available psychosocial support for migrant children in all countries, especially upon their arrival in a new environment. In retrospect long-term migrant children have rarely accessed formal forms of psychosocial support, such as psychologists, counsellors and the like, even though they are available in at least in some form in all countries. As reported by Austrian long-term migrant children, some did not know that this type of support existed.

More often, teachers, parents, siblings, relatives, and friends were the ones they turned to for support. As was particularly highlighted in the case of Poland and Spain, support in the school setting is mainly provided by teachers and educators, in the latter case especially in the context of the reception class. The children relied on their support as well as informal support from friends and family.



3.2 Family and wider community

Family

Families play an important role in the well-being of the long-term migrant children. Within their families, children maintain aspects of their cultural identity as well as their cultural and religious practises. Long-term migrant children are usually bilingual or multilingual and speak their mother tongue with parents, siblings, and extended family members. In some cases, families also offer support in learning the local language, or the children themselves help their younger siblings in this regard. Families also provide emotional and psychological support, give the children a sense of stability, and are generally very important to them.

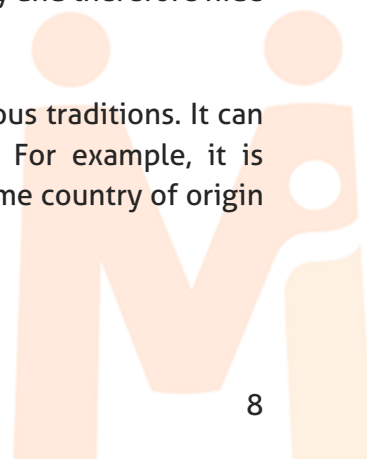
As the Danish long-term migrant children emphasised, extended families and “friendship families,” i. e., those who come from the same country of origin and have strong ties with them, also have an important influence on their well-being.

Some long-term migrant children are separated from some family, sometimes parents or siblings. Here, transnational relationships represent important social anchors (Grzymala-Kazłowska, 2016), long-term migrant children staying in touch with family members and friends via phone or online, and travel and visit them. Family members may also have migrated to the host country at different times, so also family reunification also affects children’s well-being and the inclusion process of long-term migrant children.

Migrant community, religious community

Many long-term children are involved in a broader migrant/religious community. They are at least partly engaging in their religious and cultural practices, such as attending religious services, religious education, and celebrating traditions. These practices are often an important part of their lives and provide them with a sense of stability and predictability. Such practices also enable a sense of connection to the host society. Sometimes cultural/religious traditions are slightly changed, adapted and not strictly followed in a new environment. In some cases, also traditional gender roles and social expectations inflicted by the migrant community were prominent in the narratives of children and the conflict arising from their expectations. This was for example the case of Albanian girls in Slovenia who have an intimate relationship with someone of a different ethnicity and therefore hide their partners from family members and the wider community.

However, the migrant community is not necessarily linked to religious traditions. It can nevertheless be source of support for long-term migrant children. For example, it is important for children to have a relationship with a family from the same country of origin or with members of extended family.



Long-term migrant children involved in the Polish study mostly did not participate in the activities of the migrant organisations or religious community. This could be a consequence of the dispersion of migrants within the city (Krakow) and the lack of strong, territorially anchored migrant communities (no migrant neighbourhoods). Immigration to Poland is also still occupational or work-oriented, so cultural involvement tends to be in the background.

Local environment

There are different perceptions in relation to local environment. Sometimes it is associated positively by long-term migrant children, particularly in terms of places and activities in their neighbourhood that are generally perceived as safe, quiet and diverse (UK, SI, DK), but in some cases individual negative experiences are also mentioned, such as burglaries (UK) and conflicts with friends (DK). In Barcelona, Spain, the problem of segregation was highlighted, and many participants referred to neighbourhoods with a high concentration of migrants, which are also areas with a low or low to medium per capita income index, as noisy and unsafe places. It was also highlighted that, unlike local children, they rarely interact with other children outside of school or familiar environments such as the neighbourhood.

Some of the long-term migrant children in the United Kingdom indicated that availability of leisure activities in their local area was important. In Spain, on the other hand, they reported spending much of their leisure time at home. For children living in the urban setting of Barcelona it was highlighted that their relation with the local environment is scarce and primarily mediated by school initiatives and extracurricular programs. In Poland, long-term migrant children, mostly Ukrainians, did not engage much in the community life.

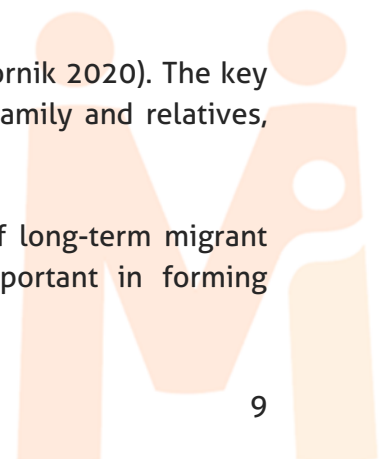
3.3 Conceptualizations of own well-being and life satisfaction

In this section we thematize how long-term migrant children conceptualize their life satisfaction and well-being, what is important for them, what makes them feel happy and secure. Moreover, we address the issue of their identification and belonging and finally, self-perceived opportunities and future perspectives.

Self-perceived well-being and life satisfaction

Well-being is important for the integration of migrant children (Gornik 2020). The key determinants of well-being for long-term migrant children include family and relatives, friends, extracurricular activities and school.

Friends, in particular, play an important role in the well-being of long-term migrant children. Language and the ability to communicate are very important in forming friendships, therefore also influence their well-being.



The family is also very important for the well-being of the long-term migrant children. This is where children generally feel well, happy, safe and where they receive emotional and other support. School also contributes significantly to the well-being of long-term migrant children. Here, for example, also the link between school performance and well-being was also mentioned as relevant for some long-term migrant children.

In addition, participation in leisure activities, such as sports is an important element of well-being. In general, long-term migrant children report about increased well-being in the host country compared to their previous lives, even if there were difficulties and lower well-being for some period of time at the beginning. Some long-term migrant children associated the well-being with better economic and living conditions and better future opportunities (Poland) and felt that it generally improved after arriving in a new country. The uncertain long-term legal status of some long-term refugee or asylum-seeking children (Denmark, Austria) significantly affected their overall well-being.

COVID-19 significantly affected the well-being of all children, including long-term migrant children because they could not spend time with friends, but it also caused anxiety and, in some cases, affected their mental health, including because of uncertainty about the future (Poland).

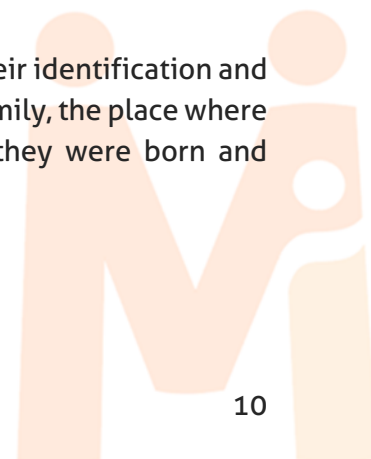
Identification and belonging

Identities of long-term migrant children are usually rooted across cultures and territories, based on their ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds.

Language represents an important anchor, that connects long-term migrant children with their culture and country of origin. Part of their ethnic and cultural identity consists of communicating in their own language within the family and friends. On the other hand, also the language of host country and the ability to communicate in the new language contributes to the formation of friendships and identification with the host country.

The identity associated to the country of origin has been maintained through the linguistic and cultural practices. While identity was initially more linked to the home country, it gradually changed and they developed a sense of belonging to both, country of origin and the host country.

As revealed through the narratives of long-term migrant children, their identification and belonging are often associated with different categories, such as the family, the place where they live, their cultural traditions, their gender, the country where they were born and citizenship.



Feelings of safety

In terms of safety, long-term children mostly associated the school environment as the one in which they feel safe and secure. Nevertheless, children expressed feelings of anxieties in relation to their first days in the new class or school. Some long-term migrant children also expressed feelings of anxiety in relation to academic demands and the future.

Feeling like they belong and are safe is related to having friends of the same ethnic background. Having family members nearby was also found to be an important element of sense of security for the family and therefore also for children. Family concerns (about other family members living in the war) are also sometimes a source of feelings of insecurity for children.

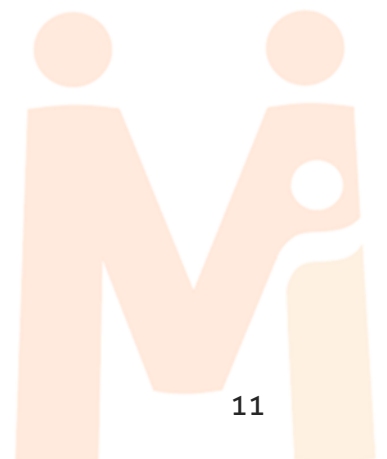
The feelings of insecurity were associated with their status, for example, for refugee or asylum-seeking children who have temporary residence permits the source of insecurity is related to whether or not they will be able to stay in a country in a long-term (Denmark, Austria).

Feelings of (in)security were also associated with certain neighbourhoods or districts (United Kingdom, Austria, Poland), also in connection with occasional xenophobic and nationalistic acts (Poland).

Self-perceived opportunities, choices and feeling of control over their own life and future

Long-term migrant children have hopes and aspirations for the future, some very specific about their education and career, others less so. Some also expressed where they would like to live in the future, either in their host country or in another European country and/or USA, less often in their home country. Long-term migrant children often said they had better life prospects in the host country compared to their countries of birth. Some highlighted the economic prosperity in particular as a goal for the future, and for some children, thoughts about the future are also associated with anxiety.

In particular, long-term migrant children with temporary residence permits are less likely to express feelings of opportunity and control due to their unclear status and uncertainty about their possibility to remain in the country.



3.4. Perceptions about multiculturalism and existing models of migrant children's integration

Perception regarding equality, intercultural dialogue, integration

Generally, long-term migrant children have positive attitudes toward equality, intercultural dialogue, integration, cultural and religious pluralism, etc. Children support equality, tolerance and an inclusive approach and are in favour of cultural and religious pluralism. Migration is seen as something positive, normal or a way to improve living conditions, a path to the better future. Nevertheless, there are also some ethnic tensions and conflicts based on ethnicity in the form of ethnic labelling, intolerant attitudes etc. Sometimes children also raise existing religious conflicts and the general issue of racism and (ethnic) discrimination. Long-term migrant children also exposed the experiences of such behaviour, although it was not prevalent.

Some long-term migrant children see there is a lack of equality in general and some also raise the issue of gender (in)equality, social and religious differences. For example, one child pointed to the generally negative perception of Islam in Europe, which has an impact on religious inequality.

In relation to the issue of inequality in Spain long-term migrant children expressed the need for more ethnic and cultural diversity in schools as in the current educational system some schools are more diverse than others.

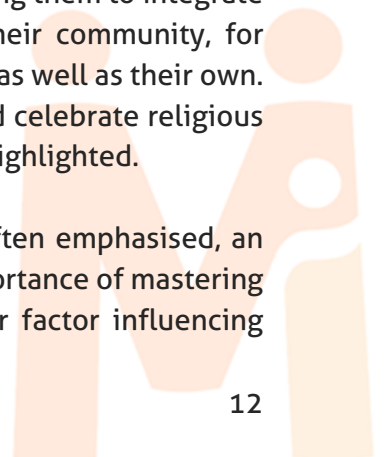
Perception of integration, Advantages & Weaknesses & Good practices

Perception of integration

Long – term migrant children had different perceptions of integration. For some, for example, it meant that everyone was respected despite religious and cultural differences. This was seen as something positive and recognised as existent particularly in the multicultural schools of United Kingdom and Spain. Integration was also associated with mutual respect and general well-being. Particularly important for children was their well-being at school.

Migrant communities were also perceived by some children as helping them to integrate into the host society while maintaining the cultural traditions of their community, for example, by celebrating the holidays and traditions of the host society as well as their own. In terms of religion, the opportunity to practise their own religions and celebrate religious holidays and traditions within their families (communities) was often highlighted.

While the importance of maintaining one's native language was often emphasised, an important element of integration recognised in all countries is the importance of mastering the local language. Good local language skills were seen as a major factor influencing



success at school. Here, language instruction, as well as everyday interaction with peers, was highlighted as an important contributor. Problematically, some children recognise language acquisition as their own responsibility. The individual responsibility attributed to migrant children and their parents that aligns with a neoliberal discourse of self-responsibility according to which the migrant children and their family are valued in accordance with their work to belong (Ni Laoire et al., 2010). Integration is therefore often perceived as a one-way process in which migrant children and their families need to adapt, rather than a two-way process involving schools, local communities, and the broader society. This places the responsibility for integration on migrant children and their families without questioning the broader society and its structures. Such discourses place migrant children in an unequal position and emphasise the perspective of integration as a one – way adaptation. This is consistent with perception of migrant children that they need to adapt to the host society that was identified in the accounts of migrant children.

Collaborative activities within school, such as sports are also seen as important elements of integration as they offer possibilities to meet and interact with other children.

In addition, some long-term children recognised having work and economic stability as important elements of integration.

In summary, long-term migrant children identified the integration on three levels: as the adaptation to the host society, as well-being in school and as personal well-being.

Advantages & Weaknesses

The openness and multiculturalism of school is generally perceived as positive for the integration by the long-term migrant children. As language learning was identified as a key aspect of the integration, the additional support provided by teachers who speak the child`s language and differentiated approach to migrant learning were perceived as significant advantages of the current integration model. The courses of local language were often highlighted as important and so was the significance of having teachers speaking their native language.

The supportive role of teachers was usually valued positively as teachers are welcoming, provide emotional support and help when necessary. Additionally, individual efforts of teachers to adapt the learning materials and offer special help and support were highlighted as relevant, however these often depend on individual teachers and are not always systematically organised. Organising a peer support system (having a buddy or a tutor) where local children help migrant learners is another tool that was often mentioned. Having friends to help with language and orientation was generally perceived as advantage. People who attended schools where a coordinator for foreigner students was appointed appreciated their support.

For some long-term migrant children, the possibility of being together with family after a period of separation was perceived as advantage, highlighting the importance and the role of the family for their well-being and integration.

In Spain also the reception classes were perceived as a positive space that creates welcoming and inclusive spaces for migrant children who don't speak the local language, although sometimes also their negative aspects were highlighted, such as being separated from the rest of the class for a few hours.

What do the children perceive as weak points of the existing integration models? What could be done better/differently?

The language courses are generally highly valued and seen as the most important aspect of integration, but they are not available to all migrant children. This has been criticized by the long-term migrant children in Austria and Spain. In Austria, for example, there are German courses intended for children with insufficient German language skills but are organised only if there at least 8 children per school eligible. In Spain, reception classes can only be attended by students entering the education system for the first time when they are over 8-9 years old.

Similarly, in Poland, even though language teaching was considered very important, it was not considered sufficient in some perspective and the importance of peer communication was also emphasized in this regard. In long-term migrant children's perspective this interaction could be facilitated by school staff, which is currently not the case. Some children would also prefer teachers to speak different languages, especially their mother tongue making it easier to communicate with them.

Some children highlighted the lack of systematic support to the migrant child in schools from teachers and a lack of information about organisational issues in school, children's duties, etc.

Additionally, some children mentioned the problems related to obtaining temporary residence and dealing with the formalities as well as the uncertainties and anxieties related to their final status.

In Spain, individual children also point to the problem that social exclusion persists through the education system in Catalonia. Indeed, some schools are very heterogeneous in terms of ethnicities and socioeconomic status (schools with high complexity), while others admit mainly locals.

Good practices

As presented, the most important practices in the integration process include language learning, welcoming and supporting school staff and general openness and multiculturalism of schools, forming friendships with children, involvement in leisure activities, educational policies that promote equality and similar.

Some of the specific best practices mentioned in the reports of children with long-term immigrant backgrounds include:

- Existence of language classes tailored to the needs of migrant children, language courses and additional language support (such as for example, tutoring or informal peer support system)
- General learning support, but particularly peer support system in schools where local learners, often long-term migrant children with more language proficiency and similar migration experience volunteer their time and support to migrant learners and help them achieve certain academic and social goals quicker
- Multiculturality and promoting different languages as a part of the school ethos – for example, the practice that every term the children are introduced to a new language or opportunities for migrant children to present their country of origin and cultural characteristics to classmates.
- The coordinator or a similar figure: a teacher coming from children's countries of origin and sharing their language. Its task is to introduce migrant children to school, their obligations, all amenities and functionalities and provide support on request. The coordinator might ease the first days of a child in the new environment, improve his physical condition and foster the adaptation process.
- Tolerant and caring teachers that help with the introduction of migrant children to school, administrative formalities and obligations as well as general caring school environment.
- Leisure activities such as sports that provide opportunities to build social relationships that would not otherwise be possible.

4. Concluding remarks

The comparative report presents the perceptions and experiences of the integration process of the long-term migrant children. It focuses on children's well-being and overall life satisfaction rather than just integration. Our starting point was that general well-being is positively related to the process of integration and the people/things/circumstances/approaches that positively affect children's well-being enhances the children's feeling of belonging, participation and process of 'becoming a part of'.

The experiences of long-term migrant children do not differ significantly across countries despite the social, political and cultural differences of the societies in Europe in which they live. They have already spent some time in the host country and could reflect back on their experiences as newly arrived migrant children, as well as provide an insight into what it means to be a long – term migrant child in terms of their well-being and integration.

For long-term migrant children, the most important factors affecting their well-being are language learning, friends, teachers and education staff, and family. This is not significantly

different from the perspectives of newly arrived migrant children, yet some differences could be identified, particularly due to their in – between cultural position.

Language is one of the most important elements of inclusion for the long-term migrant children and determines their level of inclusion and integration. Compared to newly arrived migrant children most long-term migrants have already overcome the initial language barriers and they often play an important role for newly arrived migrant children with the same language background by translating and providing various forms of informal support.

The perception of language acquisition (and thus integration) as the sole responsibility of migrant children and their parents is problematic. Namely, long-term migrant children usually do not perceive the integration as a multidimensional process involving the wider society, in addition to schools and local communities.

Peer relationships are particularly important for long-term migrant children`s well-being, their sense of belonging and overall integration. Peers seem to play an increasingly important role in their lives, and usually (strong) bonds with classmates and other peers develop over time. Long-term migrant children thus often engage in multiple peer groups at school, in leisure activities and in the wider community. **Leisure activities** are important for meeting peers and forming friendship and thus enhancing the well-being of long-term migrant children. Transnational social ties with peers from their country of origin and other countries are still important, but often less than at the beginning. Their position between countries/cultures is reflected in their identities, which are usually rooted across cultures and territories, and based on their ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds. Over time, they have developed a sense of belonging to both, the country of origin and the host country.

An important factor in the integration process of long-term migrant children are also welcoming, diverse and multicultural schools and **supportive teachers/educational staff** in these schools. Children also generally express positive views about equality, intercultural dialogue, integration, cultural and religious pluralism. Despite many excellent school practices and individual educators, the opinions of long-term migrant children reflect the need to better address the cultural diversity, interculturality through educational policies and everyday school practices.

Finally, the **family** is an important element of well-being for the long-term migrant children, providing different kinds of support, security and stability. Within the families also aspects of their cultural identity and practices are maintained. Families should therefore be included in schools` integration policies and practices.



5. References

Batool, F. & Szymczyk, A. (2021). *National Report on Qualitative Research – Long Term Resident Migrant Children – UK* (Micreate Project Report) Manchester, Metropolitan Manchester University.

Bulandra, A., Kościółek, J., Durlik Marcinowska, J. (2021): *National Report on Qualitative Research – Long Term Resident Migrant Children – Poland* (Micreate Project Report), Krakow,IPL.

Estalayo, R., Miño-Puigcercós, R., Malinverni, L.; Rivera-Vargas, P. (2021). The challenge of social inclusion, beyond school: Tensions and deficiencies in the integration policies of migrant girls and boys in Spain. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 67(29), 1-24. <https://doi.org/10.14507/epaa.29.6258>

Gornik, B. (2020). The Principles of Child-Centred Migrant Integration Policy: Conclusions from the Literature. *ANNALES: Series Historia et Sociologia*, 30, 2020, 4, p.531-542.

Grzymala-Kazłowska, A. 2015. 'Social Anchoring: Immigrant Identity, Adaptation and Integration Reconnected?', *Sociology* 50(6), 1123-1139.

Wolter, S., Liepold, M., Tatzber, R. (2021). *National Report on Qualitative Research – Long Term Resident Migrant Children – Austria* (Micreate Project Report). Vienna, University of Vienna.

Lozano, P., Malinverni, L., Estalayo P., et. Al. (2021). *National Report on Qualitative Research – Long Term Resident Migrant Children – Spain* (Micreate Project Report). Barcelona, University of Barcelona.

Ni Laoire, C., Bushin, N., Carpena-Mendez, F. & A. White (2010): *Childhood and Migration: Mobilities, Homes and Belongings*. *Childhood*, 17, 155–162.

Piekut, A., Hellesdatter Jacobsen, G., Hobel, P. et. al. (2021). *National Report on Qualitative Research – Long Term Resident Migrant Children – Denmark* (Micreate Project Report). Odense, University of Southern Denmark.

Sedmak, M. & Dežan, L. (2021). *National Report on Qualitative Research – Long Term Resident Migrant Children – Slovenia* (Micreate Project Report). Koper, Znanstveno - raziskovalno središče.

