Report on the study of integration of migrant children and the school relations with migrant children's parents

Elementary and secondary schools in Slovenia, Denmark, Spain and Austria

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History of Revision

Document Revision History		
Version	**Date**	**Summary of changes made**
1.0	9. 9. 2022	First draft: historic & statistic overview
2.0	25. 8. 2023	Theoretical framework: neoliberalism and integration
3.0	26. 1. 2024	Adding to theoretical framework
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5.0	24. 1. 2025	Adding to statistic overview, theoretical framework, findings, references

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Contents

1 Slovenia

1.1 Historic Overview of Migration

Historically, Slovenia was defined as emigration country: before the population from the territory of now Slovenia were moving mostly to overseas American territories or western Europe. After the war, there was a short period of "chaotic" migration related to political emigration, about which there is not reliable data. Emigration to Slovenia consisted of military officials from other republics of Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), who were sent to work on Slovenian territory, and ethnic Slovenes and other Yugoslavs, who had family in Slovenia but lived aboard (Dolenc 2007, 69–105). Economic migration was not prevalent in this period. Period of 1948–1952 also supposed to be a period of Slovenian emigration.

After the war, from late 1950s onwards, a turn in the historic migration context occurred: economic migration became to be prevalent. Most immigrants at that time came from other republics of SFRY to work in Slovenia as internal temporary migrants for work or education reasons. The next decade marks the end of the period when there was more Slovenians living in other republic of SFRY than migrants from SFRY living in Slovenia. Still, it is estimated that Slovenia was still not yet a net immigration country. In 1960 many of Slovenians emigrated due to economic reasons (high unemployment rates (Dolenc 2007). In the period from 1961 to 1970 approximately 43.000 migrants from SFRY and 4000 from other countries immigrated to Slovenia. Most of the migrants at that time came from Socialist Republic of Croatia. In the period between 1970 and 1980 immigration to Slovenia was stimulated by fast economic growth and improvement of living standard in the country as well as by migration restrictions imposed by West European countries. Economic immigrants from Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina were among the most frequent ones coming to Slovenia (40 percent). In the decade before the Slovenian independence the migration movements calmed down, especially due to economic crisis. In 1980s the (internal) immigration from SFRY in general decreased, however immigration from Bosnia and Hercegovina was still rising. In this period a change is noticeable in the structure of migrants, which up till then mainly consisted of males coming for economic reasons; females represented more than half of immigrants in 1980s (53%). They mainly moved to Slovenia for economic reasons as well as for family reunification.

In 1991 Slovenia gained independence, which brought some important changes in migration movements. Despite, even as an independent state, Slovenia remained to be linked to republics of Yugoslavia in migration terms as more than 80% of immigrants in 1990s were from the countries of former Yugoslavia. It is estimated that Slovenia offered temporary protection in overall to around 60.000 individuals from Bosnia and Hercegovina (1993–1995) and 25.000 from Croatia (1991–1992). After the independence in 1992, almost 200.000 citizens of other republics of former Yugoslavia gained Slovenian citizenship. According to Dolenc (2007) in the period from 1954–2000 approximately 360.000 individuals migrated to Slovenia, while around 200.000 people left the country. The immigration from former Yugoslavian republics (Bosnia and Hercegovina, Serbia and Montenegro) continued to be predominant also after Slovenian accession to the European Union in 2004. Slovenian economy is still strongly relying on workers from former Yugoslav republics; Slovenia was – and is to this day –, labour-wise tied to former republic of SFRY (Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs 2010; Government of the Republic of Slovenia 2019; Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Slovenia 2023).

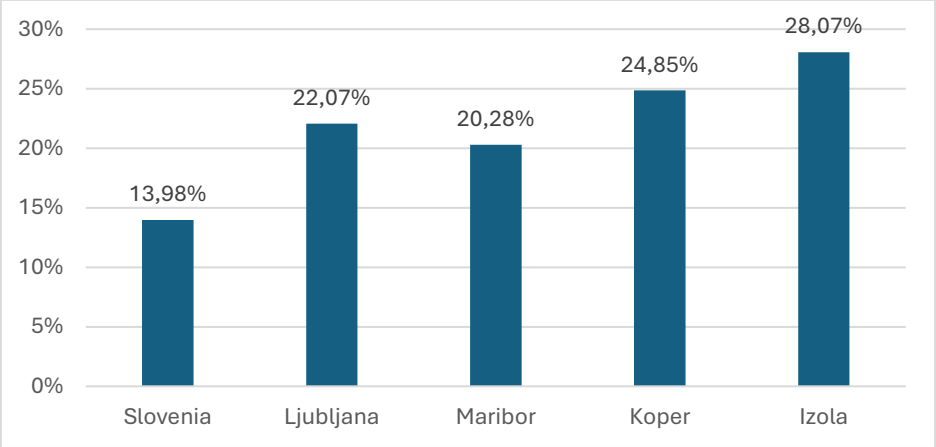
In the last decade, Slovenia started receiving vast number of refugees as in 2015 Slovenia was one of the countries on the so-called Balkan refugee route. The Hungarian closure of green

borders in October precipitated the redirection refugees to Slovenia, leading to 326.956 refugees crossing Slovenia between 20 October and 15 December 2015. A substantial rise in the number of arrivals and the impossibility of implementing return and readmission procedures forced the Slovenian authorities to facilitate the humanitarian corridor irrespective of the exiting legal rules (Kogovšek Šalamon 2016).

1.2 Recent immigration statistical data overview

On 1st January 2022, there were 294 533 **foreign-born people** living in Slovenia, which is **13,98%**. Ones of the most ethnically/nationally diverse cities in Slovenia, have more than a fifth of the population which is foreign-born. In **Ljubljana**, there were 64.709 foreign born citizens (**22,07**%), 22 922 in Maribor (**20,28**%), 13 284 in Koper (**24,85**%) and 4.673 in Izola (**28,07**%).

Figure 1: Percentage of foreign-born population in Slovenia and selected cities



According to data from **1st January 2022**, most migrants moved to Slovenia from Bosnia and Herzegovina (45,4% of foreign-born population), Croatia (14,3%), Serbia (10,1%), Kosovo (24 914 = 8,5%), and North Macedonia (19 860 = 6,7%) (Eurostat, n.d.).

Table 1: Top 10 countries of birth of foreign-born population in Slovenia, descending for 2022 (Population on 1 January of the year)

Year / Country	2020			2021			2022			2023		
	Number	% of all population	% of foreign-born population	Number	% of all population	% of foreign-born population	Number	% of all population	% of foreign-born population	Number	% of all population	% of foreign-born population
Total	2095861	100,0		2108977	100,0		2107180	100,0		2116972	100,0	
Slovenia	1814240	86,6		1816153	86,1		1812647	86,0		1807683	85,4	
Bosnia and Herzegovina	126375	6,0	44,9	132579	6,3	45,3	133778	6,3	45,4	138.471	6,5	44,8
Croatia	43915	2,1	15,6	43292	2,1	14,8	42044	2,0	14,3	40.925	1,9	13,2
Serbia	29513	1,4	10,5	30248	1,4	10,3	29678	1,4	10,1	30.186	1,4	9,8
Kosovo*	21137	1,0	7,5	23691	1,1	8,1	24914	1,2	8,5	27.801	1,3	9,0
North Macedonia	19261	0,9	6,8	19824	0,9	6,8	19860	0,9	6,7	20.667	1,0	6,7
Germany	7329,	0,3	2,6	7627	0,4	2,6	7689	0,4	2,6	7.718	0,4	2,5
Italy	4319	0,2	1,5	4597	0,2	1,6	4671	0,2	1,6	4.375	0,2	1,4
Russia	3705	0,2	1,3	3962	0,2	1,4	4170	0,2	1,4	4.906	0,2	1,6
Montenegro	3414	0,2	1,2	3428	0,2	1,2	3439	0,2	1,2	3.477	0,2	1,1
Ukraine	2791	0,1	1,0	2914	0,1	1,0	2989	0,1	1,0	8.674	0,4	2,8

Source: Eurostat (2024)

Furthermore, the UNHCR data show that from 2018 onwards, the major countries of origin of refugees in Slovenia are Syria, Eritrea and Iran. Furthermore, from 2022 the refugees from Ukraine topped the others with more than tenfold refugees (7.748 in 2022 and 9.689 in 2023).

Table 2: Top 3 countries of Refugees in Slovenia

Year		Refugees Under UNHCR's Mandate - Top 3 countries	N.
2018	1	Syrian Arab Rep.	290
	2	Eritrea	82
	3	Iran (Islamic Rep. of)	66
2019	1	Syrian Arab Rep.	307
	2	Eritrea	82
	3	Iran (Islamic Rep. of)	66
2020	1	Syrian Arab Rep.	322
	2	Eritrea	86
	3	Iran (Islamic Rep. of)	75
2021	1	Syrian Arab Rep.	326
	2	Eritrea	86
	3	Iran (Islamic Rep. of)	80
2022	1	Ukraine	7748
	2	Syrian Arab Rep.	340
	3	Eritrea	86
2023	1	Ukraine	9689
	2	Syrian Arab Rep.	341
	3	Eritrea	86

Source: UNHCR Data finder

As of January 2022, in **Ljubljana**, most migrants came from **Bosnia and Herzegovina** (31.696 = 48,98%), **Croatia** (7.344 = 11,35%), **Serbia** (7.309 = 11,30%), **North Macedonia** (5.596 = 8,65%), **Kosovo** (2.640 = 4,08%), **Russian federation** (1.566 = 2,42%), and **Montenegro** (1.137 = 1,76%) (e-mail correspondence with SURS, Razpotnik).

In Maribor, most people immigrate from **Bosnia and Herzegovina** (9.827 = 42,87%), **Croatia** (3.382 = 14,75%), **Serbia** (2.952 = 12,88%), **Kosovo** (2.437 = 10,63%), **North Macedonia** (1 244 = 5,43%), and **Germany** (678 = 2,96%) (e-mail correspondence with SURS, Razpotnik).

In Koper, most people immigrated from **Bosnia in Herzegovina** (5.056 = 38,06%), **Croatia** (2.686 = 20,22%), **North Macedonia** (1.389 = 10,46%), **Serbia** (1.318 = 9,92%), **Kosovo** (815 = 6,14%), and **Italy** (777 = 5,85%) (e-mail correspondence with SURS, Razpotnik).

In Izola, most migrants also moved from **Bosnia and Herzegovina** (1 423 = 30,45%), **Croatia** (946 = 20,24%), **Kosovo** (770 = 16,48%), **North Macedonia** (447 = 9,57%), and **Serbia** (413 = 8,84%) (SURS[1]).

In 2022, there were **15 889 foreign-born children** aged 0-14 living in Slovenia (5,39%), of those 3 478 were residents of Slovenia (21,89%) while 12 411 were foreigners (78,11%). In Ljubljana, 3 055 were foreign born (4,72%), of which 698 were residents of Slovenia (22,85%) and 2 357 were foreigners (77,15%). From 1 556 (6,79%) foreign born migrant children in Maribor, 286 were residents (18,38%) and 1 270 were foreigners (81,62%). In Koper, among 592 (4,46%) of foreign born, 101 were residents of Slovenia (17,06%) while 491 were foreigners (82,94%) and in Izola, 279 children aged 0-14 (5,97%) were foreign born, of those 38 were residents of Slovenia (13,62%) while 241 were foreigners (86,38%).

[1] E-mail correspondence with SURS, Razpotnik

2 Spain

2.1 Historical Overview of Migration

The second half of the 19th century was marked by Europeans departing for the New World. The consequences of industrialization in Europe were an excess of labour, which led to unemployment. Canada, the United States, Argentina, and Brazil became popular countries to immigrate to. The second large wave took place in the early 20th century as a consequence of the Spanish Civil War and economic crisis. Many Spanish people fled their homes from Republican Spain and Franco's dictatorship (Matas, Coca and Castenada 2010, 235). During the Spanish Civil War, 500,000 refugees left the country (Finotelli and Rinken, 2023).

Emigration to Latin America mainly stopped after the Second World War, since European countries also needed labour (Matas, Coca and Castenada 2010, 236). Between 1950 and 1970, two million Spanish guest workers migrated to countries like Germany and Switzerland (Arango and Finotelli 2009, 3). With the economic crisis of the 1970s, this pattern started to change. Although Spain was already receiving some immigrants before that time, such as European retirees, Moroccan workers, and Latin American refugees fleeing military dictatorships (Finotelli and Rinken 2023), the numbers were still relatively low compared to other European immigrant-receiving countries. The end of Franco's dictatorship and the economic growth of the 1970s made Spain more attractive to immigrants (Matas, Coca and Castenada 2010, 4) who filled occupations unappealing to natives (Finotelli and Rinken 2023).

In 1986, Spain joined the European Union, resulting in positive socio-economic spillovers and transforming the country from one of emigration to one of immigration (Matas, Coca and Castenada 2010, 233 and Rodriguez-Pena 2024, 239).

However, it wasn't until the 1990s that Spain became a “high intensity” immigration country. In the early 21st century, the share of foreign-born residents rose from 3 percent in 1998 to 13 percent a decade later, with the immigrant population increasing from 1.2 million to 6 million. This trend continued until 2008 when the construction industry collapsed, resulting in the loss of one out of every five jobs in Spain. This crisis disproportionately affected immigrants. Net inflows in recent years have again accelerated, with 500,000 immigrants per year, except during the » covid years« (Finotelli and Rinken 2023).

Between 1998 and 2022, Spain experienced very high population growth, increasing from 40 to 47.5 million, with most of the growth attributed to international migration. During this period, the shares of Asian and Latin American immigrants almost doubled, while European shares significantly dropped and African shares remained relatively stable. Over the last three decades, the number of Spanish emigrants has remained quite steady (Finotelli and Rinken 2023).

2.2 Recent immigration statistical data overview

In January 2022, 15,5% of population were **foreign-born** (Eurostat 2024), comprising 7,7% of third-country nationals (3.664.048) (European Union 2023, 8[2]). As of 1st of January 2022, the population of Spain was 47.432.893 of which 40.067.582 were born in Spain and 7.365.311

abroad. More than two and a half million were born in a country in South America, while the predominant country of birth is Morocco (852.463) – see table below.[3]

Table 3: Top 10 country of birth of foreign-born population in Austria, descending for 2022 (Population on 1 January of the year)

Year / Country	2020			2021			2022			2023		
	Number	% of all p.	% of foreign-born p.	Number	% of all p.	% of foreign-born p.	Number	% of all p.	% of foreign-born p.	Number	% of all p.	% of foreign-born p.
Total	47.332.614	100,0	/	47398695	100,0	/	47.432.893	100,0	/	48.085.361	100,0	/
Spain	40.398.099	85,3	/	40.183.817	84,8	/	40.067.582	84,5	/	39.881.155	82,9	/
Morocco	752.159	1,6	10,8	828.026	1,7	11,5	852.463	1,8	11,6	1.026.371	2,1	12,5
Colombia	431.143	0,9	6,2	541.620	1,1	7,5	564.936	1,2	7,7	715.655	1,5	8,7
Romania	587.141	1,2	8,4	568.912	1,2	7,9	542.439	1,1	7,4	538.699	1,1	6,6
Venezuela	311.832	0,7	4,5	415.323	0,9	5,8	438.627	0,9	6,0	518.918	1,1	6,3
Ecuador	411.900	0,9	5,9	420.802	0,9	5,8	423.174	0,9	5,7	430.837	0,9	5,3
Argentina	295.999	0,6	4,2	309.522	0,7	4,3	333.299	0,7	4,5	373.064	0,8	4,5
United Kingdom	290.244	0,6	4,1	316.919	0,7	4,4	319.671	0,7	4,3	293.696	0,6	3,6
Peru	216.802	0,5	3,1	255.544	0,5	3,5	265.447	0,6	3,6	322.407	0,7	3,9
France	211.920	0,4	3,0	219.207	0,5	3,0	223.655	0,5	3,0	215.283	0,4	2,6
Germany	192.090	0,4	2,7	192.377	0,4	2,7	194.515	0,4	2,6	176.496	0,4	2,2

Source: Eurostat (2024)

On 1st January 2022 there were 7 792 611 inhabitants of **Catalonia**, of which 6.142 563 (78,83%) were born in Spain and there were **21,2% of inhabitants** that were **born abroad**.

The foreign population in Catalonia was heterogeneous in terms of origin, represented by more than 170 nationalities. The **Moroccan** community was the largest (257 118 inhabitants or 3,3% of the whole population / 15,56% of migrant population), followed by inhabitants of **Colombian** (97 822 inhabitants or 1,26% / 5,92%), **Argentinian** (87272 inhabitants or 1,12% / 5,28%), **Ecuadorian** (86 633 inhabitants or 1,11% / 5,24%), **Romanian** (75 193 inhabitants or 0,96% / 4,55%) and **Peruvian origin** (68 347 inhabitants or 0,88% / 4,14%) (Statistical institute of Catalonia, n.d.).

As of 1st of January 2022, foreign-born represented 29,20% Barcelona's total inhabitants. The largest minority groups are coming from **Argentina** (35525 inhabitants or 2,17% of the whole population or 7,44% of migrant population), **Peru** (29496 inhabitants or 1,8% or 6,17%), **Colombia** (29095 inhabitants or 1,78% or 6,09%), **Venezuela** (26612 inhabitants or 1,63% or

[3] The data are slightly different if looking at the data from Spanish National Statistics Institute (Instituto Nacional de Estadística), for example 959.946 people born in Morocco, 564.227 people born in Colombia, 546.953 born in Romania and 440.953 born in Venezuela. I decided to use the Eurostat data for the main presentation to have a common methodological ground and source for all four countries in the study.

5,57%) and **Pakistan** (24527 inhabitants or 1,50% or 5,13%) (Statistical Institute of Catalonia, n.d.).

In 2022, there were 317 751 **refugees** and 134 580 **asylum seekers** in Spain[4].Data from UNHCR shows that in 2022, 118 747 refugees received **asylum applications** in Spain. Most came from Latin America: Venezuela (45 748), Colombia (36 012), Peru (8 937), Morocco (3 905) and Honduras (3 017). A total of 5 8721 decisions have been made on initial applications, of which around **12%** were answered positively. The most successful of them were from Mongolia and Congo. **88%** of asylum applications have been rejected (WorldData 2024, Statistics Spain 2024).

Regarding refuges, according to data from UNHCR, in the last two years, the largest number arriving in Spain after a long period of time are again Europeans, due to the ongoing war in Ukraine.

Table 4: Top 3 countries of Refugees in Spain

Year		Refugees Under UNHCR's Mandate - Top 3 countries	N.
2018	1	Syrian Arab Rep.	13765
	2	Palestinian	1051
	3	Cuba	885
2019	1	Venezuela (Bolivian Republic of)	35243
	2	Syrian Arab Rep.	14133
	3	Palestinian	1184
2020	1	Venezuela (Bolivian Republic of)	75640
	2	Syrian Arab Rep.	14660
	3	Nicaragua	1303
2021	1	Venezuela (Bolivian Republic of)	88492
	2	Syrian Arab Rep.	14987
	3	Colombia	2158
2022	1	Ukraine	159194
	2	Venezuela (Bolivian Republic of)	105054
	3	Syrian Arab Rep.	16670
2023	1	Ukraine	177768
	2	Venezuela (Bolivian Republic of)	134554
	3	Syrian Arab Rep.	17205

Source: UNHCR Data finder

In the school year 2021/2022, 882 814 **foreign students** enrolled in **educational institutions other than universities** (Statista 2024). Most of them came from Africa (267 349), EU (211 931), South America (183 891) and Asia (88 641) (Statista 2024).

3 Austria

3.1 Historic overview of migration

Once part of the Habsburg Empire, Imperial Austria experienced both emigration and multidirectional labour migration that was mainly concentrated on migration within the empire. After the second World War, Austria saw movements of refugees fleeing communist regimes and migrating to Austria itself and further West (unknown number). What is more, the country also faced an acute shortage of male labour, which left the country desiring an influx of foreign (immigrant) labour and consequently leading to the drafting recruitment agreements with countries such as Yugoslavia and Turkey. A significant number of migrants represent also the 2015 turning point with the so called "refugee crises" (Bischof & Rupnow, 2017).

The 1950s were marked by a division of the world with the Iron Curtain and massive flights from communist regimes due to political, economic, and personal motives. Thousands of people escaped to Austria from its neighbouring countries Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia. At the beginning Austria followed a fairly liberal policy in regard to granting asylum (in the 1950s with Hungarian refugees). In the next decades, Czech and Slovak (in 1960s) as well as Polish refugees (in 1980s) sought refuge in Austria. In both cases the public hostility grew (ibid, 99–104).

Economic immigration was also very important as the Second World War was defined by a shortage of (male) workers; Austria needed help with the "reconstruction" of its state as it faced a shortage of male labour. Thus, Austria was forced to enter into the European competition over migrant workers and signing recruitment agreements with Spain in 1962, Turkey in 1964, and the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY). Ultimately, immigrant labour from Turkey and Yugoslavia was historically most significant, as the employment of foreigners between the years of 1961 to 1973 in Austria had risen from 17,700 to about 250,000 of which 78.5% were Yugoslav citizens and 11.8% were Turkish citizens (ibid, 115). Immigrant workers were employed in less prestigious jobs, with low pay, unpleasant and unhealthy work conditions. The workers were able to emigrate to Austria and find work through a recruitment agreement that had a number of conditions, such as "compulsory medical examination before arrival in Austria, the limitation of employment of foreigners to a maximum of one year, and the '*Inländerprimat'* (domestic primacy, according to which immigrants are laid off before Austrians)" (ibid, 118). During the economic crisis of the 1970s, around 55,000 foreign employees were deprived of work and residency permits, and another 33,000 between the years of 1982 to 1984 (ibid, 137).

In 2015, public discourse was dominated with the "refugee crisis" that enveloped Europe, but the crisis arose when Austria received 88,340 applications for international protection in that year alone. The number of applications put Austria just behind Germany and Sweden in the absolute number of asylum seekers within the EU. What is more, Austria was one of the most frequented countries during that time, as it is estimated that around 800,000 people transited through Austria between the years 2015 and 2016, however, only 5-10% of them ended up filing an application for international protection (ibid, 224).

Migration is by all counts an important issue in the present and the future. It is a challenging issue as perceptions of migration are very different and distorted. It is often times paired with the demand for complete assimilation into an "indigenous" and homogenic society. Furthermore, the distorted view of migration in Austria and the European lens in general is clearly seen with the refugee "crisis" (*Flüchtlingskrise*) in 2015 was perceived as a crisis only when a large number of asylum seekers entered the country and not why they had to leave their country. Resolving issues

of contemporary of migration and its discourse are therefore in improved communication and cooperation of the (local) public with politics to ensure a safe environment.

3.2 Recent immigration statistical data overview

Austria has approximately **a fifth of foreign-born population**: as of 1st of January **2022** the population of Austria was 8.978.929 of which 7.136.503 were born in Austria and 1.842.426 abroad (20,5%). Interestingly, the most prominent group of foreign-born population in Austria are born in Germany (2,8% of the whole population or 13,7% of the foreign-born population). The other foreign-born population mirrors the "guest worker" policy: there were migrants from Bosnia and Herzegovina (9,5% of foreign-born population), Türkiye (8,7%), Serbia (7,8%) (Eurostat 2024).

Data from 2022 also shows there were 1 731 300 **first generation migrants (19,37%)** and 620 600 **second generation migrants (6,94%)** living in Austria (Statistic Austria 2024).

Table 5: Top 10 country of birth of foreign-born population in Austria, descending for 2022 (Population on 1 January of the year)

Year / Country	2020			2021			2022			2023		
	Number	% of all p.	% of foreign-born p.	Number	% of all p.	% of foreign-born p.	Number	% of all p.	% of foreign-born p.	Number	% of all p.	% of foreign-born p.
Total	8.901.064	100		8.932.664	100,0		8.978.929	100,0		9.104.772	100,0	
Austria	7.135.753	80,2		7.135.091	79,9		7.136.503	79,5		7.128.912	78,3	
Germany	237.750	2,7	13,5	244.947	2,7	13,7	251.576	2,8	13,7	258.550	2,8	13,2
Bos.&Herz.	170.548	1,9	9,7	172.373	1,9	9,6	174.261	1,9	9,5	176.736	1,9	9,0
Türkiye	159.641	1,8	9,1	159.068	1,8	8,9	159.060	1,8	8,7	161.122	1,8	8,2
Serbia	144.433	1,6	8,2	144.416	1,6	8,1	143.883	1,6	7,8	144.276	1,6	7,3
Romania	128.776	1,4	7,3	134.206	1,5	7,5	138.329	1,5	7,5	145.033	1,6	7,4
Hungary	81.886	0,9	4,7	83.914	0,9	4,7	85.316	1,0	4,7	88.866	1,0	4,5
Poland	76.132	0,9	4,3	76.641	0,9	4,3	76.527	0,9	4,2	77.119	0,8	3,9
Syria	49.687	0,6	2,8	52.313	0,6	2,9	62.968	0,7	3,4	73.931	0,8	3,8
Croatia	48.138	0,5	2,7	50.625	0,6	2,8	53.485	0,6	2,9	56.455	0,6	2,9
Slovakia	43.825	0,5	2,5	44.858	0,5	2,5	45.791	0,5	2,5	47.034	0,5	2,4

Source: Eurostat (2024)

In 2022, there were 258 613 refugees and 53.087 asylum seekers in Austria (UNCHR 2024). 109 721 **asylum applications** by **refugees** were received in 2022 in Austria — according to UNHCR. Most of them came from Afghanistan, India and from Syria. 36.158 decisions have been made on initial applications - **38%** of them were answered positively and about **62%** have been rejected in the first instance. The most successful have been the applications of refugees from Yemen and from Ivory Coast (WorldData 2024).

Table 5: Top 3 countries of Refugees in Austria

Year		Refugees Under UNHCR's Mandate - Top 3 countries	N.
2018	1	Syrian Arab Rep.	49179
	2	Afghanistan	33103
	3	Russian Federation	9946
2019	1	Syrian Arab Rep.	51955
	2	Afghanistan	37276
	3	Russian Federation	8664
2020	1	Syrian Arab Rep.	54903
	2	Afghanistan	40096
	3	Iraq	9152
2021	1	Syrian Arab Rep.	62408
	2	Afghanistan	42685
	3	Iraq	9959
2022	1	Ukraine	89862
	2	Syrian Arab Rep.	73923
	3	Afghanistan	45282
2023	1	Syrian Arab Rep.	87167
	2	Ukraine	83748
	3	Afghanistan	41456

Source: UNHCR Data finder

Data from the beginning of 2022 shows that **Vienna** had a population of 1.931.593 **residents**. 32,2% of them were **foreign nationals** and 37,6% were **born abroad**. 42,6% were of **foreign origin**, which means that they either held a foreign citizenship or were Austrian nationals who were born abroad (City of Vienna n.d.). In Vienna, there were 1 915 800 people **living in private households** in 2022, of which 951.500 had **foreign background (49,67%)**. 697.500 of those with foreign background were **first generation migrants (73,31%)** and 254 100 were migrants of **second generation (26,71%)** (Statistics Austria 2024).There were 4.478 **naturalized citizens** in Vienna (only around 0,47% of the entire population of foreign background), of those 2.089 were males (46,65%) and 2389 females (53,35%)(Statistics Austria – Naturalisation 2024).

There were 1389 **naturalized young migrants** in Vienna, aged 0-18 (ibid). In the 2019/2020 academic year, 4.96% of Viennese pupils were given the außerordentliche Schüler (**extraordinary student**) in status, meaning students who were entering a German-speaking school system for the first time and spoke little or no German were given two years to catch up with their peers and pass all core subjects (Metropole 2024).

4 Denmark

4.1 Historic overview of migration

Today, Denmark is recognized as a country of immigration (Statistics Denmark 2024). However, a brief historical overview reveals that this hasn't always been the case, particularly when tracing back to the 19th century.

Until the early 20th century, Denmark was primarily characterized as a country of emigration. Economic growth in the 1960s marked a turning point, leading to increased migration levels (Bailey-Morely, Claire-Kumar 2022, 2).

From the mid-19th century to early 20th centuries, migrants were invited to Denmark to engage in agriculture (Andreassen 2013, 1; Kalm and Lindvall 2019, 471).

During the early 20th century, Denmark welcomed Jews fleeing from Russian pogroms, with approximately 5,000 Jews arriving in Copenhagen between 1903 and 1917 (Andreassen 2013, 2). Near the end of World War II, Denmark received a large influx of refugees, with approximately 260,000 civilians arriving from Germany in a short period (Andreassen 2013, 2).

Immigration levels rise in the 1960s and 1970s due to rapid development in construction and building sectors (Henriksen 2006). Many Danes point to this era as the beginning of modern Danish migration, with migrants arriving from Turkey, former Yugoslavia, and Pakistan (Andreassen 2013, 3). In 1970s Denmark started receiving refugees from outside Europe, including from Uganda, Chile, and Vietnam. Before the 1980s, migrants arriving in Denmark were within quota limits. However, a shift occurred after the 1980s, with refugees outside UN quotas also starting to arrive, primarily war refugees from Iraq and Iran. The 1990s saw an influx of refugees from the war in former Yugoslavia, with Denmark granting asylum to 20,402 people in 1995 (Andreassen 2013, 2–3).

When discussing immigration, it is crucial to acknowledge that Danes themselves also partake in immigration. In 2009, 33 percent of all immigrants were Danish citizens returning home or born to Danish parents overseas. By the early 21st century, immigrants and their descendants comprised 9.8 percent of Denmark's population, with 54 percent originating from European nations. Turkey, Germany, and Iraq represented the highest shares of immigrants and descendants (Gunners 2010, 24–26).

Denmark continues to be a country with more immigrants than emigrants today. In 2023, the number of immigrated foreign citizens reached 79,561, while the number of emigrated foreign citizens was 50,540 (Statistics Denmark 2024). Strict national policies and rising border control across Europe have contributed to historically low numbers of new asylum seekers arriving in Denmark, with the country ranking 20th in the EU in 2021 (Bendixen 2022).

4.2 Recent immigration statistical data overview

Denmark has approximately **12% of foreign-born population**: as of 1st of January **2022** the population of Denmark was 5.873.420 of which 5.127.118 (87,3%) were born in Denmark and 745. 851abroad (13,7%). The most prominent groups of foreign-born population in Denmark are people born in Poland (0,8% of the whole population or 6% of the foreign-born population), Germany (0,7% or 5,2%), Syria (0,6% or 4,7%), Romania (0,6% or 4,6%) and Türkiye (0,6% or 4,5%).

Data from 2022 also shows there were 1.731 300 **first generation migrants (19,37%)** and 620 600 **second generation migrants (6,94%)** living in Austria (Statistic Austria 2024).

Table 6: Top 10 country of birth of foreign-born population in Denmark, descending for 2022 (Population on 1 January of the year)[5]

Year / Country	2020			2021			2022		
	Number	% of all p.	% of foreign-born p.	Number	% of all p.	% of foreign-born p.	Number	% of all p.	% of foreign-born p.
Total	5.822.763	100,0		5.840.045	100,0		5.873.420	100,0	
Denmark	5.106.209	87,7		5.118.385	87,6		5.127.118	87,3	
Poland	41.851	0,7	5,8	42.176	0,7	5,8	44.523	0,8	6,0
Germany	37.045	0,6	5,2	37.480	0,6	5,2	39.153	0,7	5,2
Syria	35.339	0,6	4,9	35.432	0,6	4,9	35.094	0,6	4,7
Romania	29.474	0,5	4,1	30.286	0,5	4,2	34.065	0,6	4,6
Türkiye	32.959	0,6	4,6	33.081	0,6	4,6	33.380	0,6	4,5
Sweden	24.283	0,4	3,4	24.754	0,4	3,4	25.299	0,4	3,4
United Kingdom	21.583	0,4	3,0	22.190	0,4	3,1	22.507	0,4	3,0
Iraq	21.725	0,4	3,0	21.746	0,4	3,0	21.785	0,4	2,9
Norway	20.370	0,3	2,8	20.409	0,3	2,8	20.581	0,4	2,8
Iran	16.998	0,3	2,4	17.367	0,3	2,4	17.838	0,3	2,4

Source: Eurostat[6]

The data from 6 March 2023 shows that **15,4%** of the population in Denmark are **immigrants**[7] **and their descendants**. Most of them, according to data from 10 May 2023, come from Turkey (66 109 = around **9%**), Poland (55 474 = around **8%**), Romania (45 040), Syria (44 683) and Ukraine (43 633), all around **6%**.(Statistics Denmark Immigrants and their descendants 2024).

Share of **third-country nationals**[8] on 1st January 2022 in Denmark was 317 962 (**5,4%**) (European Commission 2022, 8). In the end of March 2023, 34 830 third-country nationals who fled Ukraine were benefitting from temporary protection, which is **5,9%** (Eurostat 2023, 11).

In 2021, the number of **third-country nationals**, EU and EFTA, (naturalisation rate) acquiring citizenship) was 4 777 (**1,5%**) (Eurostat 2023, 19).

[5] At the time of preparing the report, there were no data regarding countries of birth of foreign-born population for 2023; there was only the information of the cumulative number of 804.061 foreign-born population (representing 13,6 % of the whole population (5.932.654) (Eurostat: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/migr_pop3ctb__custom_12669796/default/table)

[6] Ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/migr_pop3ctb__custom_12669796/default/table

[7] Immigrant: a person who has come to a different country in order to live there permanently (https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/immigrant)

[8] Third-country nationals or third country background: Any person who is not a citizen of the European Union within the meaning of Art. 20(1) of TFEU and who is not a person enjoying the European Union right to free movement, as defined in Art. 2(5) of the Regulation (EU) 2016/399 (Schengen Borders Code) (European Commission. (2024).

In 2022, there were 67772 **refugees** and 2776 **asylum seekers** in Denmark (UNCHR 2024). 2 216 asylum applications by refugees were received in 2022 in Denmark — according to UNHCR. Most of them came from Afghanistan, Syria and from Eritrea. 726 decisions have been made on initial applications. Around 55% of them were answered positively and 45% have been rejected. The most successful have been the applications of refugees from Eritrea and from Afghanistan (WorldData 2024).

In first quarter of the year 2023, 377 **asylum applications** were lodged in Denmark to migrants from countries outside EU/EEA, 219 of them were men (**58,09%**) and 158 were women (**41,91%**). 105 of them (**27,85%**) were children and young people aged 0–19 (Statistics Denmark 2024).

Foreign-born[9] young adults who are 15-29 years old are more likely to be neither employed nor in education or training (NEET) than native-born young adults. On average across OECD countries, 18,8% of foreign-born and 13,7% of native-born adults are NEET while in Denmark, the difference is 5 percentage points (16,6% compared to 11,1%). In Denmark, the share of NEETs among foreign-born young adults who arrived by the age of 15 is 14%, while among those who arrived at age 16 or later it is 20% (OECD 2024).

In **Odense**, there are approximately 18 217 **foreigners[10]**, which account for **8,84%** of the population. 9 250 of those are males (**50,78%**) and 8967 (**49,22%**) are females (Urbistat 2024). In 2021, there were 205 978 people living in Odense, of those 8,8% were foreigners (Urbistat 2024).

In the first quarter of the year 2023, there were 1 237 413 people living in **Southern Denmark region**. 1 071 872 of them were of Danish origin **(86,62%)** while 129 350 were **immigrants (10,45%)** and 36 191 were **descendants of migrants (2,92%).** 15 080 (**11,65%)** of the immigrants were children and youth **aged 0-19** and in the same age group there were 24476 (**67,63%)** descendants of immigrants (Statistics Denmark 2024).

Before the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, Syria, Eritrea, and Iran were the top three countries from which refugees arrived in Denmark. However, in 2022, a new record was set with refugees fleeing from Ukraine (UNCHR 2024).

[9] Foreign-born citizens (of foreign origin): born in a country other than that in which one resides (https://www.dictionary.com/browse/foreign-born).
[10] Foreigner: a person who comes from another country (https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/foreigner)

Table 7: Top 3 countries of Refugees in Denmark

Year		Refugees Under UNHCR's Mandate - Top 3 countries	N.
2018	1	Syrian Arab Rep.	19698
	2	Eritrea	4610
	3	Iran (Islamic Rep. of)	3253
2019	1	Syrian Arab Rep.	20046
	2	Eritrea	5320
	3	Iran (Islamic Rep. of)	3240
2020	1	Syrian Arab Rep.	19878
	2	Eritrea	5399
	3	Iran (Islamic Rep. of)	3051
2021	1	Syrian Arab Rep.	19706
	2	Eritrea	5813
	3	Stateless	2923
2022	1	Ukraine	32839
	2	Syrian Arab Rep.	19153
	3	Eritrea	5936
2023	1	Ukraine	35309
	2	Syrian Arab Rep.	18549
	3	Eritrea	5968

Source: UNHCR Data finder

5 Integration

Despite the fact that migration has occurred throughout the 20th century, the integration of immigrants only became a significant political issue in the late 1970s. Prior to that, the purpose of migration policies was limited primarily to securing a temporary labour force. Consequently, countries did not pay particular attention to the integration of immigrants – guest workers – since both governments and many immigrants themselves expected that they would return to their home countries once their work was completed or their financial goals achieved (Martin and Miller 1980, 316). However, the deterioration of political and economic conditions in their home countries, harsh working conditions, low wages, and social isolation prompted many guest workers to bring their family members with them. Although these migrations were still conceived as temporary, they introduced a new, unplanned dynamic. Family housing and other needs increased the cost of living for guest workers, further reducing their savings. As children were born in Western Europe and began attending school, the possibility of returning became even more remote. With the economic recession of 1973 and the associated decline in labour demand, it became clear that many temporary workers were unable or unwilling to return to their home countries. Over time, some governments finally recognized that migration poses challenges in terms of achieving social cohesion and integrating immigrants into mainstream society, which, if left unaddressed, can lead to ethnic segregation and ghettoization.

Immigration involves moving to a new environment, a new city, a new country, which entails various aspects of integration into life in that environment. In recent decades, this has been defined in political – and consequently also in everyday – discourse as integration. Both in the academic sphere and in the field of policy, it is defined as a complex two-way or multidimensional process that involves both the immigrants themselves and the country of their settlement[11] (Ager and Strang 2008; Penninx & Garcés-Mascareñas 2016; Klarenbeek 2021; Allen 2006).

Rinnus Penninx and Blanca Garcés-Mascareñas describe integration (as an analytical tool) as "the process of becoming an accepted part of society" (2016, 14). This definition emphasizes primarily the process-oriented aspect of integration. On the other hand, the phrase "becoming part of society" also highlights various problematic aspects related to the definition of integration. The very reference to "society" as such implies a relatively homogeneous social entity, which does not exist, while also assuming that immigrants should integrate into this homogeneous whole, i.e., active engagement on their part. As Penninx and Garcés-Mascareñas also point out, the criticism – just as it was previously with assimilation – relates to the fact "that immigrants must adapt to the norms and values of the dominant majority in order to be accepted" (2016, 12), which in the European context implies the adoption of the national language, culture, and traditions (2016, 12).

Integration, as a means of managing immigration and diversity, was conceived as striking a balance between rights and duties, whereby policies addressed various domains or dimensions of social inclusion, such as economic, social, and political rights, cultural and political diversity, etc. (Garcés-Mascareñas and Penninx, 2016, 2). Ager and Strang (2008) address the multifaceted

[11] Since the second decade of the 21st century, European Commission policies have even defined integration as a three-way process that also includes countries of origin (Garcés-Mascareñas and Penninx, 2016, 1). Some, however, cite immigrant (minority) communities in the country of arrival as a third important actor (Sedmak et al. 2021, 18).

nature of integration by developing a system of domains of (potential) integration indicators. They highlight ten overarching domains that illustrate the intertwined nature of the integration process, with four relating to key "public" domains of activity – such as employment, housing, health care, and education – which are also the primary areas addressed by integration policies (Ager and Strang 2008, 169–170). Alongside these, they also highlight other areas, such as citizenship and rights, as well as social ties in various forms and "facilitators," such as linguistic and cultural knowledge, and security and stability (Ager and Strang 2008, 170). [12]

Countries of destination manage migration and integration through various approaches, which are framed by legal frameworks (although based on common European ones). Despite the noted challenges with integration measurement indicators (Klarenbeek, 2021), these indicators allow for at least partial comparability over time and across countries, including in the field of educational integration. MIPEX (Migrant Integration Policy Index), which ranks integration management policies across different countries, illustrates the multidimensional nature of integration policies in various areas, such as education, healthcare, labour market mobility, anti-discrimination, political participation, and access to citizenship and permanent residence. A comparison of the total MIPEX scores thus shows that Austria (score 46), Slovenia (score 48), and Denmark (score 49) have implemented only partially satisfactory measures, while Spain (score 60) has improved its integration policy.

5.1 Integration of migrant children

In all the countries studied, integration lies at the intersection of three main legal frameworks: the international, the EU, and the national frameworks. The key documents governing the national legal frameworks for integration are laws, policies, and strategies in the areas of immigration, residence, and education. Most of these countries began to address the integration of immigrant children as a specific policy issue only after the 2000 (Jalušič and Bajt 2019). For immigrant children, education – or inclusion in schools – in the countries of arrival is a crucial aspect of their integration as it allows them to become fully immersed in the host society. Schools play an important role in promoting children's well-being, supporting language learning, and helping them build relationships with peers and teachers (Due, Riggs, & Augoustinos 2015; Soriano and Cala 2018)

[12] Klarenbeek (2021), who emphasizes the importance of the final state of "ideal integration" when defining integration, does not therefore focus on socioeconomic and other indicators, but defines an ideally integrated society as one without social boundaries or social differentiation, that is, without a division between legitimate and illegitimate members, thereby placing the primary goal of integration – albeit a utopian one – at the forefront. Because it focuses on social relations and hierarchies, this definition of integration, which serves as an analytical tool, is termed relational integration – which, in her view, is what finally shifts the process from a one-way to a two-way one (Klarenbeek 2019; 2021). Similarly, Allen, as a teacher of the host country's official language, highlights the problematic nature of defining integration as a two-way process – not because the process should not be two-way, but because the changes or adjustments required of newcomers are far greater than those required of the host country in terms of openness to difference (Allen 2006, 251)

As with the inclusion of adults, the integration of immigrant children into the school environment is a complex and multidimensional process at the micro, meso, and macro levels, involving not only immigrant children but also their peers, parents, school staff, the local community, and, last but not least, the state and broader society (Sedmak et al. 2021, 18).

Discussions on the integration of migrant children most often focus on the education system, which is expected to include these children in educational programs as soon as possible. Studies emphasise that schools should play a key role in improving language skills, ensuring equal academic achievement for migrants, promoting parental involvement in school activities, preventing early school leaving, and developing programs to combat prejudice and violence against immigrant students. Some researchers call for the development of teachers' intercultural competencies, greater awareness of intercultural issues, and the promotion of respect for diversity—not only within the school environment but also in relation to students' families and the broader community. In this context, numerous studies advocate for the introduction of multicultural education and recommend various measures to promote awareness of cultural diversity among students and teachers (see Gornik 2022).

MIPEX indicates that integration policies in the field of education were still lacking in the selected countries in 2019. In Austria, where the average score for integration in education is 52, deficiencies were identified in policies regarding teacher training and a lack of professional support for implementing appropriate programs for working in multilingual, diverse classrooms (MIPEX 2020a). Denmark and Spain have similar scores for integration in education, 45 and 46, respectively, due to limited support for language learning and academic achievement (Spain) and the failure to recognize multilingualism and multiculturalism as learning opportunities (Denmark) (MIPEX 2020b, MIPEX 2020c). Among the selected countries, Slovenia has the lowest score in the area of school integration, namely 33, as both immigrant families and schools "receive little support for further promoting the social integration of migrant students" (MIPEX 2020d).

At the policy level, it is evident that the integration of children focuses primarily on indicators of academic performance and language proficiency (Jalušič, Bajt & Lebowitz 2019). Many studies highlight that the prevailing focus on language learning support in migrant integration policy is insufficient for a comprehensive approach to the needs of immigrant students (Orozco-Suarez, in press [2025]). Furthermore, they also point to the lack of a general intervention framework at the national level and advocate for the development of clear and mandatory student and learning support systems that would reduce inequalities among schools and provide migrant children with greater opportunities for educational success (Medarič et al. 2021).

Some authors advocate for a critical approach to the curriculum that would help teachers understand, analyse, and identify implicit cultural assumptions, the frames of reference and perspectives of specific subjects, reflect on the hierarchical relationships inherent in the content being taught, and ensure the inclusion of immigrants as legitimate "Others" within the curriculum (Gornik 2022). Some experts support the inclusion of all languages in the school system (Evans & Liu 2018; Janta & Harte 2016), while others emphasise the need for a greater focus on the cultural and linguistic capital of migrant families (Thijs & Verkuyten, 2014; Thomas, 2016).

In Slovenia, Spain, Austria, and Denmark, immigrant children are integrated into existing school systems (with some instances of separate instruction in the official language of the host country),

which, however, differ somewhat from one another. Compulsory schooling in both Slovenia and Austria lasts nine years: it begins at age six and ends at age 14 or 15 (Primary School Act – ZOsn 2006; Educational Systems, migration.gv.at, 2024). Compulsory schooling in Spain lasts 10 years and is free in public schools. Children aged 6 to 12 attend elementary school. After primary school, children enrol in secondary school, which lasts until age 16 (Graduado en Educación Secundaria Obligatoria). Under the Danish education system, schooling is compulsory for 9–10 years, during which students must complete primary and lower secondary education. Danish public schools, known as *Folkeskole*, include one year of preschool, nine years of primary and lower secondary education, and an optional 10th grade (Denmark – Unified Structure for Primary and Lower Secondary Education 2024). After completing primary education in all four of the aforementioned countries, children may continue their education in a secondary (vocational) program.

5.1.1 Slovenia

Slovenia began implementing its integration policy as one of the pillars of its immigration policy under the 1999 Resolution on the immigration policy of the Republic of Slovenia (ReIPRS). The resolution defines integration policy as measures taken by the state and society to ensure certain favourable conditions, specifically emphasising respect for multiculturalism, "with respect for the richness of diversity, peaceful coexistence, social stability, and cohesion." In recent years, several strategies and documents have been adopted in the field of migration that introduce integration approaches into education. In 2019, the Government of the Republic of Slovenia adopted a Migration Strategy addressing several pillars; Pillar IV addresses integration, including activities in the field of education, encompassing preschool, primary, and secondary education. In 2023, the government adopted the Strategy for the Inclusion of Non-EU Foreigners in the Cultural, Economic, and Social Life of the Republic of Slovenia, and in 2024, the Government of the Republic of Slovenia's Strategy on Immigration.

The integration of immigrant children into schools in the 21st century is legally regulated primarily through the aforementioned strategies and guidelines (most recently the "Guidelines for the Inclusion of Children, Students, and Pupils from Other Linguistic and Cultural Backgrounds into the Slovenian Education System" from 2024, and previously by the Guidelines for the Education of Foreign Children in Kindergartens and Schools from 2009 and the Guidelines for the Inclusion of Immigrant Children in Kindergartens and Schools from 2012 (Slovenian Institute for Education)). The Guidelines (2024) set out several objectives and principles based on a comprehensive or holistic approach to the integration of immigrant children at three levels of the education system (from kindergartens to elementary and secondary schools). Specifically, they encompass preparing the staff of educational institutions prior to the arrival of immigrant children, an individualised approach to curricula, cooperation with parents, and regular training of school staff, with immigrant students being integrated into standard classes. Since immigrant children, including asylum seekers and children under international protection, have the right to be included in the school system under the same conditions as Slovenian children (Elementary School Act – ZOsn), which means they are placed in regular classes, an introductory, "orientation" period with adapted assessment and instruction in Slovenian as a second language – though this is organised differently across schools.

Learning the Slovenian language is seen as the primary aspect of integration (Jalušič in Bajt 2019) – a point also emphasised by school staff, as it will be later presented. The guidelines address this area in the context of integration, but they also emphasise the importance of the mother tongue. It is important to note that schools have autonomy in implementing Slovenian language learning courses and other integration programs (where the preservation and development of the mother tongue are generally omitted), and therefore the approaches adopted by schools vary greatly. While the guidelines do indeed offer a holistic approach to the integration of immigrant children in schools (including their families), however, as guidelines they are not binding (Dežan & Sedmak 2020). Schools are allocated funding for a certain number of introductory Slovenian language lessons but given the large number and heterogeneity of immigrant students, it is evident that systemic resources are insufficient (Medarić et al. 2021).

5.1.2 Spain

Spain's integration policy operates within a decentralised framework, with responsibilities shared among the national, regional, and local levels. Organic Law 4/2000 serves as the foundation of immigration policy, guaranteeing the rights of foreigners and their social inclusion. The law requires public institutions to include migrants in all policies, thereby promoting their economic, social, and political participation (Estalayo et al. 2019, 111).

Education policies are adapted to regional contexts but guided by national plans. These policies emphasise inclusive education and promote participation in public services. Autonomous communities implement their own Comprehensive Plans, which address local needs while respecting national and European guidelines (Estalayo et al. 2019, 112). For example, in the Autonomous Community of Catalonia, teachers receive support from specialised advisory teams in the areas of language, culture, and social integration for the ongoing assessment of migrant students. The typology of public education is categorised according to the needs of the school environment or the student population and their families, namely "standard," "medium," "high," and "maximum complexity." In 2023, there were 329 centres of the "maximum complexity" and 309 centres of "high complexity" in Catalonia.

Educational institutions classified as "maximum complexity" obtain this status based on the socioeconomic status of a large proportion of students; the level of education and employment of families, the proportion of fathers and mothers without social security contributions, and whether they come from families originating from developing countries, i.e., immigrant families. (Nous Cims 2023). For example, in Catalonia, official documents on ongoing assessment focus not only on language acquisition but also on other social aspects of integration. Moreover, in Catalonia, the curricula for social and civic values in elementary school and for culture and ethics in secondary school include intercultural education. Each school is also required to develop a coexistence project, for which educational authorities provide teaching materials and resources. This project promotes intercultural education both in schools and in the wider community (Eurydice report 2019, 141). Furthermore, schools in Catalonia emphasize that parental involvement in school contributes to children's social, cognitive, and emotional development (Eurydice report 2019, 26). Specialized teams provide support to teachers, schools, and parents on issues related to diversity and communication (Eurydice report 2019, 150). Official documents

in Catalonia stipulate that migrant students may receive additional language instruction, curriculum adaptations, and emotional support.

Spain is one of the countries where intercultural mediation is officially supported in most regions. In Aragon, Cantabria, and Andalusia, there are official programs designed to assist students who are less familiar with the educational system. These programs encourage their integration into school and society, promote openness and inclusion, and address exclusion (Eurydice report 2019, 110).

Various measures have been introduced to address the specific educational needs of immigrant students (whom educational regulations classify as students with special needs), such as curriculum adaptation, the development of teaching materials, flexible grouping, the organization of extracurricular activities, and special language classes for immigrants (Estalayo et al. 2019, 114). Among these measures is "language support," which involves placement in "special language classes whose main goal is to acquire the language of instruction as quickly as possible so that students can join regular classes; however, this means that immigrant students are separated in certain subjects – though there are significant differences among regions (Estalayo et al. 2019, 115). The measure has been criticised as a form of segregation, while outdated teaching materials and inadequate teacher training have also been highlighted, indicating a disconnect between public discourse and actual practice (Estalayo et al. 2019, 115).

5.1.3 Austria

Austria's integration policy has undergone significant changes in recent decades, particularly following the surge in asylum seekers in 2015. The legal framework includes the Asylum Act (2005) (conditions for granting international protection), the Aliens Act (2005) (defining categories of residence permits), the Citizenship Act (1985), and the Anti-Discrimination Act (2004) (protection against discrimination). Austria responded to the increased number of applicants for international protection in 2015 by introducing stricter procedures for asylum and temporary refugee status, which is reviewed after three years. In 2017, the Integration Act was introduced, establishing the legal basis for mandatory introductory programs for new immigrants (refugees and persons with subsidiary protection), along with an amendment to the Asylum Act (2017), which introduced the possibility of restricting the granting of asylum (Dursun et al. 2019, 7–8).

In 2010, the National Action Plan for Integration was introduced, emphasising integration into the labour market and the learning of the German language and Austrian values, as well as mandatory attendance at kindergartens and enrolment in separate classes for children with poor German language skills (Dursun et al. 2019, 7–8). In the years following the large influx of asylum seekers (after 2015), targeted amendments followed, such as the "50 Action Points" (50 Action Points 2015), in which 10 of the 50 points relate to the language and education of new arrivals, while integration is narrowed down to the necessity of learning German; two of these ten integration guidelines address integration through kindergartens, four address integration into the Austrian school system, and two focus on adult education (Dursun et al. 2019, 9). In 2019, however, funding for integration measures in schools was cut in half (Dursun et al. 2019, 9).

Austria does, however, provide written and audio information about the education system for foreigners on government websites and has released informational DVDs about the Austrian

school system. In addition, specialised centres have been established in Austria that provide information about schools, conduct initial assessments, and facilitate communication between schools and families. Regional school boards also provide reception centres for counselling young people of immigrant origin (European Education and Culture Executive Agency 2019, 75–76), yet integration processes in the education system are strongly marked by assimilation, particularly regarding the individualisation of immigrants' responsibilities and the reduction of integration funding for educational institutions.

5.1.4 Denmark

Denmark's integration policy places primary emphasis on Danish language learning and the inclusion of bilingual (including immigrant) children in regular classrooms within its education system, which is based on the *Folkeskole* model, a public, compulsory primary education system.[13] Immigrant or bilingual children are divided into two groups: they are either placed in regular classes with additional language support or in separate reception classes, which are intended for those who do not know Danish, and their purpose is to facilitate the transition of immigrant children into regular education. Enrolment in "regular Danish classes" is not a given. Under the Newly Arrived Migrant Refugee (NAMR) education program implemented by the City of Copenhagen, students' language skills are first assessed, and they are then enrolled in introductory courses, from which they can progress to regular classes with ethnic Danish students (Mock-Muñoz de Luna, Granber, Krasnik & Vitus, 2020).

Reception classes are organised in local schools and are typically divided by age groups (6–9, 9–13, and 13–16 years) and are gradually integrated into regular classes in "manageable" subjects. Children may remain in these classes for a maximum of two years, after which they must join regular classes (Hobel et al. 2019, 32–33; Helakorpi et al. 2023, 116–117).

In 2016, legislation was adopted that allows municipalities greater flexibility in designing special curricula for immigrant children. The aim was to increase municipalities' authority in implementing integration measures and to separate them from the general provisions of the Public Schools Act (the "*Folkeskole*" Act) . Municipalities have the authority to decide on reception classes, but they often directly place children in regular classes without specialized language instruction. Since 2019, the Municipal Act has been more aligned with public education legislation, and *Folkeskole* are required to provide inclusive education (Hobel et al. 2019, 33–34).

Although Denmark does not recognize any linguistic minorities (except for the German minority in southern Denmark), it has introduced programs with instruction in the mother tongue (MTI). Students with a migrant background were thus included in educational programs taught in their mother tongue, serving as a tool for facilitating the learning of the Danish language and culture as well as teaching about conditions in their home countries (Li et al. 2023). However, support for non-EU languages was reduced in 2002 (Hobel et al. 2019, 39; Buchardt 2017).

[13] Local legislation stipulates that newly arrived children and adolescents must begin school within 21 days of arrival, which is a stricter deadline than EU standards (3 months); however, child asylum seekers are only entitled to separate schooling.

The study also highlighted the factors of social segregation and the categorization of migrant families, which overlooked the varying degrees of integration of these families – and consequently of their students – into Danish society. This led to the perception that being an immigrant was something different, which resulted in students being treated differently compared to their ethnically Danish peers. Furthermore, the design of MTI programs and the teaching of conditions in the students' home countries was based on the assumption that students with Danish as a non-native language were merely temporary students, which further stigmatized them based on their nationality. At the same time, it was also noted that there was insufficient inclusion of students with a migrant background in MTI programs (Buchardt 2017). Li and colleagues (2023) describe this policy as paradoxical, as it involves both processes of inclusion and exclusion: it created a sense of equality among the group of students attending certain MTI programs, while simultaneously fostering a sense of otherness between students with a migrant background and ethnically Danish students. Thus, the problematization of migrant students' native languages resulted in an experience different from what the policies intended (Li et al., 2023, 127). In 2002, public subsidies for MTI programs for languages outside the European Union (EU) were abolished (Buchardt, 2017), and the funding and organization of MTI programs were left to the municipalities (Li et al., 2023), as the day-to-day work of integration falls under the municipalities' jurisdiction (Mouritsen et al., 2014), while state-sponsored MTI programs for students from the EU, the European Economic Area (EEA), the Faroe Islands, and Greenland remain available (Mock-Muñoz de Luna, Granberg, Krasnik, & Vitus, 2020).

The Danish education system allows for flexibility in the implementation of curricula, which promotes teacher autonomy. However, challenges such as insufficient resources, inadequate teacher training, and limited support for the broader psychosocial needs of migrants remain pressing.

5.2 The neoliberal doctrine: Responsibility and the Integration of Migrant Children

5.2.1 The Neoliberal Context

One of the prevailing ideological doctrines, entering our lives and changing its pace, values and orientation, is undoubtedly neoliberalism (Foucault 2008 [2004]; Rose, O'Maley & Valverde 2009; Joseph 2013; Razpotnik 2011; Mencin Čeplak 2012; Žakelj, Švab & Mencin Čeplak 2013; Ule 2015). Needless to say, it is present also in public realms, realms of public sectors; and one of them is also the educational system (Devine 2013; Davies & Bansel 2007; Connell 2013; Razpotnik 2011; Mencin Čeplak 2012; Žakelj, Švab & Mencin Čeplak 2013; Ule 2015, Sardoč 2021). One of its central characteristics is competition in the "free market" and responsibilisation, the process with which the individual is rendered responsible for the social and personal welfare (O'Malley 2009; Mencin Čeplak 2013; see also see also Foucault 2008; Rose 1999; Hunt 2003), including educational achievement and inclusion in the labour market (Razpotnik 2011; Mencin Čeplak, 2013). One of the ways individuals can better their position in the market is the investment in gaining education and skills – in extension, I would argue, also of their integration into the "new" society.

While acknowledging that neoliberalism is a "loose and shifting signifier" (Brown 2015, 20) – global yet locally specific (Oyarzún et al. 2022, 287; Rizvi & Lingard 2010), unsystematic, and

sometimes a “catch-all” term (Rowlands & Rawolle 2013, 260) – it nonetheless encompasses features pertinent to the analysis of migrant children integration, the roles of the schools and parents.

5.2.2 The Entrepreneurial Self and Responsibility

Under neoliberalism, *homo œconomicus* transforms from a “man of exchange” into an entrepreneur of the self, entrepreneuring in the form of human capital (Foucault 2008). The goal is to enhance one’s portfolio value through self-investment (Brown 2015, 32–34). This process is intrinsically linked to the concept of freedom. This freedom is exercised as choice, autonomy, and self-responsibility, with the obligation to maximise one’s life as a kind of enterprise (Rose, O’Maley & Valverde 2009, 12).

Central to this is **responsibilisation**: the process by which individuals are made responsible for tasks that were previously the duty of the state or not recognised as a responsibility at all (O’Malley 2009, 276). Responsibility is individualised, and failure is attributed to poor choices, leading to victim blaming (O’Malley 2009) and the “calculated administration of shame” (Rose 1999, 73).

In this context, **the family**, while seemingly a private sphere, performs crucial public functions – it becomes the **site of neoliberal governance** (Rose 1999; Olssen 2021, 62; Giroux in Polychroniou 2013). It is the space where “public objectives for good health and good order” are instilled (Rose 1999, 74) and where civility and moral responsibility are learned. The family is granted “freedom,” but this freedom is tightly bound to responsibility – the obligation to manage its members’ lives as a kind of enterprise (Rose, O’Maley & Valverde 2009, 12; Rose 1999). Even if responsibiliisation is a form of governing where responsibilities are imposed on individuals; however, individuals are not responsible merely for their own conduct, but for the conduct of others, for whom they are deemed responsible as well, e.g. parents for their children (Hunt 2003, 187). Moreover, Janet Goodall (2018) further argues that the “private family” has become highly public, a “place of scrutiny and intervention” (101), particularly for families in poverty. Thus, the family is not a counterweight to the state but a key site for its neoliberal objectives: the family becomes subjected to (policy) interventions, influenced by the deficit discourse (“culture of poverty”) and “othering” non-middle class families and their parental engagement, embedded in the myth of a meritocratic society (Goodall 2021, 100).

5.2.3 Schools: Key Sites of (Re)producing neoliberal responsibilisation

Even if the schools are among the most important institutions of bring closer the host society to migrant children – by immersing them in–, they are also among the most important institutions for instilling neoliberal norms (Rose 1999; Davies & Bansel 2007). Education is equated with human capital formation – its primary role is producing a productive workforce. Gaining education is a primary self-investment strategy (Foucault 2008, 229; Rose 1999; Hunt 2003, 169; d'Agnese 2021, 43). Good academic achievement is framed as the responsible, autonomous, rational individual path to a good job and a good life (d'Agnese 2021; Mencin Čeplak 2012).

For migrant children and their families, this neoliberal logic has important implications. Integration is not merely a social or cultural process but is reframed through the lens of individual

responsibilisation laying the responsibility of a successful integration onto the migrant children and their families. The prevailing norm for "success" is frequently a middle-class one, yet the responsibility for meeting it is placed squarely on the individual, while structural barriers, such as language difficulties, socio-economic disadvantage, or systemic discrimination, are often rendered invisible (Mencin Čeplak 2012; Žakelj, Švab & Mencin Čeplak 2013; Doucet 2011).

As parents are expected to be involved in their children's education in specific ways that align with middle-class norms, failure to do so can be interpreted as neglect or a lack of investment in their child's human capital. The "freedom" to choose how to raise and educate one's child is contingent on making the "right" choices that align with the employability imperative. When children of migrants do not achieve expected educational outcomes, **blame** is often directed at the parents and their choices – their perceived (non)interest in their child's education or their (non-)active engagement in the school. This mechanism of victim blaming and administering shame operates as a powerful tool of neoliberal governance (Rose 1999; O'Malley 2009).

Neoliberalism, as a governing rationality, can transforms the integration migrant children into one of competitive self-investment. Schools become sites where the values of the market – competition, rational choice, and self-responsibilisation – are embedded in individual values and human relations (Oyarzún et al. 2022). The discourse of choice, freedom, and responsibility masks the structural inequalities that shape migrant children's educational experiences and outcomes. This framework allows us to critically examine how responsibilisation and blame are administered to migrant parents and how their children's integration is shaped by these powerful, yet often invisible, neoliberal forces.

6 Methodology

The case studies were conducted in 6 schools in Slovenia (namely in three regions: Istria, Ljubljana and Maribor) and in 6 schools abroad, namely in Barcelona, Spain, Odense, Denmark and Vienna, Austria. The methodology of the study in part followed the MiCRRATE project's methodological design, specifically conducting semi-structured interviews with teachers and semi-structured and life histories interviews with students. The schools' case studies followed (or tried to follow) the school selection of MiCRATE. In each area where prominent migrant communities reside, an elementary and a secondary school was included in the sample. In Slovenia, there were three areas where the research was conducted, namely Ljubljana, Maribor and Istria. In Slovenia, the same schools as in the project MiCREATE were contacted and asked for a continuation of cooperation, extension and follow-up of MiCREATE research. Two secondary schools declined and for that reason a different additional school was contacted and was consequently included in the study. To gain cooperation with schools from Denmark, Spain and Austria, the MiCREATE partners in those countries were contacted and asked to help gain access to schools where predominantly schools that already took part in MiCREATE project were contacted. Three areas with distinct migrant communities in the selected country were selected, one area for each country, namely Barcelona in Spain, Odense in Denmark and Vianna in Austria.

All case studies were conducted by the main researcher, visiting schools *in situ* and conducting interviews, mainly in person.[14] The research (interviews) was conducted between 19th October 2022 and 5th June 2023 – in person interviews, while one interview was conducted online on 24th August 2023.

The process of selection of interviewees varied, however, predominantly depended on school choices. Regarding the school personnel collaboration, the contact person internally asked the school personnel if willing to take part in the study to volunteer, nevertheless, usually the contact person made a selection of possible research participants. Some contacts at schools specifically told me that they have specifically targeted particular potential interviewees, either for their classes with migrant students, either someone with previous experience with migrant children integration, someone already developing different practices, either someone who (in the eyes of the selector) is devoted to the integration of migrant student, however, in some schools, the contact person also referenced that they made a selection based on diversity of teachers' opinion, therefore including also teachers that are not so welcoming regarding immigration and integration. In the case studies carried out abroad, a major determinant was also language proficiency; the main researcher is not fluent neither in Danish nor in Spanish/Catalan nor in German, she kindly requested for the possibility to carry out the interviews in English and schools were very accommodating regarding this request. However, since in the school in Barcelona this posed a slight problem, the interviews were thus organised in pair with (at least) one school worker knowing English. Nevertheless, an interpreter was present during the interviews.

A total of 55 school workers were interviewed, out of which were 31 in Slovenia, 10 in Spain, 8 in Denmark and 6 in Austria. A total of 54interviews with students were carried out: 29 in Slovenia, 6 in Spain, 9 in Denmark and 10 in Austria. There were two interviews carried out with mother, but in order not to impose on the language barrier, they were not recorded.

[14] One interview was conducted online, on 24th August 2023 as it was not possible to conduct it while visiting the school.

Firstly, the contact with school was established, usually also visiting in person and explaining the aim of the project to principals and/or social workers. The phase in each school consisted of interviewing the educational and other personnel and in the second phase entailed interviewing students, however in the schools in Barcelona, a town in Denmark and in Vienna due to time restrictions of the visits this was not always the case.

The aim of the study, the circuit and use of interview data as well as voluntariness of the interviewing was explained to the participants (migrants students received the information of the study and the form of the written consent in different languages, besides official languages of the country where the study was conducted (Slovenian, German, Danish, Spanish and Catalan), also in English, Albanian, Croatian, Serbian, Bosnian, Arabic, Farsi, Russian, Ukrainian and Somali – the most prevalent languages of migrant students – which were delivered to students and parents to sing beforehand).

The interviews were carried out and voice recorded, then later transcribes by students (all educational personnel and the majority of students) or – for the migrant students that did not want to voice record the interview, but still wanted to participate in the study – the researcher took notes and later transcribed them into the word document (4 cases). The research design for migrant students anticipated also the use of art-based approaches; the researcher herself or via the contact person (in cases where she did not firstly introduced herself to the class(es) participating in the study) asked the students to think of their vision of a perfect school and possibly prepare a visual representation of it (photos, illustrations, etc.), but actually none of the students in the study prepared anything, thus the study lacked the art-based approach component. However, the students were still asked in the interview to describe it.

The interviews consisted of different themes and questions, the educational personnel were mainly asked regarding their view and experience of integration in general, methods used at school and during their lessons as well as regarding the relationship between the school and the parents/family of migrant student more specifically. The interviews with migrant students consisted of their representation, including migration history and reflections of integration in school, reviewing the relationship with teachers and school events and taking into consideration the integration measures.

The interviews, after they were verbatim transcribed, were anonymised and analysed following a thematic analysis.

7 Findings

7.1 The Integration Paradox: Assimilation or Inclusion?

The interviews with teachers across Slovenian schools reveal a fundamental tension at the heart of the integration process: what is the role of the newcomers and what should be the approaches of the host –could it be called also welcoming? – country, bringing divisions that shape decisions about language, classroom practice, and relationships with parents.

For some teachers, integration is understood as a one-way process of adaptation. The children (and their parents) are expected to learn Slovenian, adopt local customs, and fit into the existing framework of the school. As one teacher put it, integration means

> *"the inclusion of people from different backgrounds or from other environments, from other nationalities, possibly even other religious beliefs into something... In our case, into our culture, that they get to know our culture, that they get to know some of our customs, some of the habits that we have and that they feel at home, or when they come to a country, that they feel accepted, in such a way." (Elementary school 1, School personnel 2).*

In this view, language acquisition is not just important – it is a precondition for participation. A child who does not speak Slovenian is effectively absent from the classroom.

But alongside this assimilationist current runs another, more pluralistic understanding. Particularly in schools with high concentrations of migrant children, a different ethos emerges. Here, integration is seen as a two-way negotiation. A school counsellor with a history of migration speaks of the right to retain cultural rights while also embracing Slovenian as a sign of commitment to the new home, making it closer to cultural coexistence:

> *"But I definitely think that it is right to integrate as much as possible into this environment, this is our new environment and to internalize it to the maximum extent, with the right to retain some of our cultural and other customs, to preserve our language, etc." (Elementary school 1, school personnel 3).*

7.2 The enduring deficiency: language proficiency

This tension plays out most visibly in debates about language. Teachers unanimously agree that without Slovenian, children cannot succeed academically or socially. But they diverge sharply on what role the **mother tongue** should play. Some see home languages as an obstacle, a barrier that must be removed, as it is impacting negatively on learning the host county language:

> *"They cannot be successful in school if when they come home from school at one o'clock, they listen to their mother tongue all day, right." (Elementary school 2, school personnel 1).*

On the other hand, others oppose the view of migrant children mother tongue as not an obstacle, but argue it is the foundation. As one teacher puts it, a child must first develop in their own language; otherwise, it is difficult to expect them to communicate confidently in the host country' language.

> *In practice, I think that it shouldn't be a problem here for children to talk in, say, Albanian or Ukrainian, not even at school, but that they know how to talk in a relaxed manner in Slovenian as well. That's how I think it should be. It's not always like that, but ... [...] I think that each person must*

first develop her/himself in practically any language, i.e. the language that is closest to him/her, which is usually his/her mother tongue. Because if s/he does not do this, if s/he does not develop her/himself, if s/he will not be a fully connected person with her/himself, how can I then expect that s/he will be able to communicate with the world sovereignly and relaxedly in Slovenian, and sovereignly have an independent, full, equal life. In my opinion, if s/he does not develop his mother tongue first, then s/he will not develop in this second one either. And yes, how is vocabulary, which can be a problem, we are still there, if s/he doesn't first have the opportunity to realise himself in his own language, then what does it help him/her to know 1,500 Slovenian words if he is one wounded being? (Elementary school 3, school personnel 4).

Well, one situation came up at a PTA meeting: one parent just chimed in, saying, "Yeah, the kids often speak Serbo-Croatian among themselves," right? Then a mom from that same group of parents said, "Yeah, if they spoke English, it wouldn't bother you at all, would it?" And here we have a double standard, and some individuals are burdened by this. The fact is, we have a problem we face with the integration of these individuals who come to Slovenia, which is that the children are actually illiterate in their own language. And Slovenian is their first foreign language. And how will they [learn] a foreign language if they're still illiterate in their own? And that is the problem. And developing vocabulary, isn't it? In this regard, it is of crucial importance for them, because, in fact, in the end, Slovenian is the only language they actually learn in school. They don't learn Serbo-Croatian in school; they are illiterate in it – so how are we going to teach them anything from that? (Elementary school 1, school personnel 4).

Furthermore, going beyond the mother tongue-official host country language divide, the teachers' discourses on language use expose also Nesting Orientalism (Bakić-Hayden 1995), where teachers favourably treat language of the "West", even praising children that speak English, for example, while the ones from the (Global) South and East are viewed with contempt, for example when speaking Albanian or Bosnian.

"Well, during class they will speak Slovenian, but during the break, I don't see any reason why they shouldn't let them exchange a few words with someone. If they can talk in English during the break and none of the teachers will say 'Oh, what now', they will say 'Wow, how well he speaks English'. This is allowed; this is acceptable. But if he now speaks, I don't know, in Serbo-Croatian, or whatever, [suddenly] it's not OK." (Elementary school 2, school personnel 3)

The discourses on language reveal another discrepancy. Namely, on one hand there is a nationalistic rhetoric behind the argumentations to learn the host country official language:

"I also think that this is the task of our country, the first task, considering what our ancestors sacrificed so that we can speak and use Slovene today, from the very basis of this responsibility, we should make sure that foreigners, even if they come to Slovenia only as a stepping stone, learn Slovene to the extent that they know how to use it." (Secondary school 1, School personnel 2)

Nevertheless, even if following this rationale also these case studies demonstrate that the standards of what is a decent knowledge of the official language for school personnel are very high.

I think it's right that a teacher majored in Slovene studies, because maybe we remind them more about the pronunciation of certain words, now it also depends from where they are. It's usually "Ł"

> *to eliminate, the word order, things like that, and then, when they know more, or if, for example, they are those who already know more about grammar, so that this can also be explained to them, because those of us who master grammar, then it is super abbreviated. (Elementary school 2, school personnel 4)*

On the other hand, some teachers raise concerned which are deeply engrained in the conception of neoliberal educational efficiency. In order to be effective in delivering the subject matter, a lot of teachers as the only solution see segregated "welcoming classes", pointing to models in Germany, Austria and other EU countries, where children spend several months learning the language before entering mainstream classrooms. Migrant children who do not know the official language are consequently **framed as a problem**.

> *"First of all, I would not allow them to enter the school immediately, but they should go to a course of Slovenian language before they even go to the lessons. Because if children don't understand anything, they sit there for nothing. And we can't devote so much time to them – to do what with them?! […] It doesn't work, they take up too much of your time, and because they integrate it in our classes, especially those who don't know anything, it's difficult to work with them. It's really hard, they cry, they want to go home, they don't know what to do when you say "wash your hands." But this year, with these translators and … I'm more in favour of them going to an internship for a year, so that they learn the language, at least some basics, so that they can really start properly." (Elementary School 2, school personnel 1)*

And even if teachers recognise the limitations of such approaches (socialisation and, moreover, language acquisition with peers), it is something that should be "sacrificed" for the sake of easing the pedagogical process – even though previous research show that this is line with understanding integration as a singular act and not as a process (Allen 2006), excluding migrant students from their mainstream peers (Fandrem et al. 2024; Nergaard et al. 2020; Steinbach 2010a; 2010b; Allen 2006).

> *"Yes, the school is a safe haven where we basically enable them to be socially integrated, but we don't actually put too much emphasis on learning the Slovenian language. My personal opinion is that someone who is here, who has the status of a foreigner, should basically not attend any other subject except intensive learning of Slovenian […] And we would [give them] everything immediately, we would immediately like them to be integrated, immediately socialised, immediately know the language. Something has to be sacrificed so that the situation for these young people can be normalised. And I think it's the least of the sacrifices, if they are a bit separated from the parent class at the beginning." (Secondary School 1, school personnel 3)*

As Allen (2026) concludes "[w]hen host-language learning rather than participation becomes the primary focus of newcomer integration, those newcomers can end up feeling alienated and excluded not only from the host community but from the host language itself" (2006, 262).

Nevertheless, the systemic approaches are criticised by Slovenian teachers and other school personnel – even if recognising its benefits since the adoption, suggest some corrections. It has to be noted that the implementation of the systemic approaches varies a lot between schools. The systemic approaches are indeed implemented on the basis of Guidelines (2012; 2024) and thus presuppose a lot of decision-making on part of each school. If some schools implement the language learning concentrating at the beginning of the school year, others even the course throughout the school year, which result in two to three school hours per week only. Who is implementing the language learning also varies (profession-wise), with some schools having

different teachers for the same group of migrant pupils attending the course, meaning that throughout the week, students may be confronted by three different pedagogical approaches. Usually, teachers from one school are not familiar with practices implemented at other schools, resulting in critiques of the system itself, maybe being unaware of the possibilities and "freedom" to implement feasible changes. However, the system is not beyond critique: with the new demographic of immigrations, especially language composition (non-south Slavic), the envisaged amount of the language course hours becomes increasingly inadequate.

However, **official language acquisition** was a prominent topic that featured **across national contexts studies**, in almost all schools in all the case studies. Nevertheless, the emphasises were very differently pronounce, mirroring also different contexts, e.g. separated intensive language learning course in Denmark and in Austria a 1- to 2-year intensive language learning before enrolling into mainstream classes, typology of schools ("ghetto" school) and school ethos. In some schools, especially in Slovenia, where there were more case studies with diverse schools, the teachers proposed the system of separate, segregated intensive learning classes as a solution. Even though, the children's well-being in these cases was brough up – and children themselves may also stress the benefits of intensive language learning (Fandrem et al., 2024) – the array for of their negative effects, such as missed socialisation and language learning with host society peers, have been easily dismissed, something just has to be "sacrificed". However, the pitfalls of initial segregation learning the host society's language and culture are not easily dismissible factors. Research from countries where language is learned in segregated classes or schools (for example Canada (Allen 2006; Steinbach 2010a; 2010b), Norway (Fandrem et al., 2024)), migrant students report having troubles integrating into mainstream class, where they usually remain segregated besides being physically included in mainstream classes.

The experts above show the specific understanding of integration. Segregated classes may install an understanding of integration as an act, physical placement, rather as a process:[15] "integration is treated as a singular event: the movement out of *accueil* and into the mainstream programme" (Allen, 2006, 256). The studies thus find that they are limited in their effectives, besides imposing high standards of language knowledge which may function rather as a gatekeeper than facilitating migrant students' integration, making students resent or oppose it, it also neglecting the need for belonging and socialisation, but especially important, almost vailing a divide and segregation that is difficult to erase after the placement in regular classes (Allen, 2006; Steinbach 2010a; 2010b; Fandrem et al., 2024). Segregated classes, as Fandrem and colleagues (2024) note "operated more as a fixed structural measure for second language learning" (Fandrem et al., 2024, 451).

Some teachers were themselves knowledgeable that language acquisition is a long process and recognised that the system only offered a small part of it. Some teachers implement various approaches while being mindful that learning the language and most importantly integration is indeed a process. One teacher also explained a proposed solution connected to the local community: the language learning programme should be prepared also at the municipality level.

[15] Following Sfards (1998) distinction between Participation metaphor and Acquisition metaphor and its shift allows us to reassess how we see knowledge. Knowledge may not be viewed only as something we *have* and *posses*, but also as something in constant flux of *doing*, especially in context and communities (Sfard, 1998, 6).

7.3 Conflicting Discourses on Responsibility in integrating migrant children in schools: "Who is responsible?"

Since integration is also perceived as "becoming part of a society", the community aspect is very important. Avramidis, Bayliss & Burden (2002) view schools as a community – a community of students and teachers. As a community, schools should provide, besides education, also care and support (Avramidis, Bayliss & Burden 2002, 160). Schools can thus be torn between two contradicting principles, namely the principle of equity and the principle of excellence, which prioritises knowledge and academic achievements (Avramidis et al. 2002, 160). Following Avramidis & colleagues, the dilemma of defining school effectiveness arises, putting forward also the social aspect: "Should a school be seen as effective if it produces good academic outcomes, irrespective of its social outcomes?" (Avramidis, Bayliss & Burden 2002, 160).

The neoliberal framework prioritises academic achievement as it is viewed as an investment in the entrepreneurial self, improving their human capital and positions in the labour market (Foucault 2008; Rose 1999; Hunt 2003; d'Agnese 2021; Devine 2013; Davies & Bansel 2007; Connell 2013; Razpotnik 2011; Mencin Čeplak 2012; Žakelj, Švab & Mencin Čeplak 2013; Ule 2015, Sardoč 2021). The focus shifts from students' needs to students' performance. Class and structural blindness obscure the social obstacles and structural inequalities of (migrant) students and advance the myth of educational equality fuelled by the idea of the meritocratic society where everyone "can make it if they work hard enough" – both, in terms of academic achievement and integration into society (Lundberg 2020; Gorski 2013; Mencin Čeplak 2012; Razpotnik 2011; Goodall 2012). The schools may, accordingly, view its role through the neoliberal lens, consequently resulting in perceiving migrant children (and their parents) in deficit terms, frame them as a problem and view them mainly from a future perspective.

Language is regarded as a skill and a commodity; language learning may then be viewed not as a process that takes place in the community interaction and is a result of participation in it, but as something that must be acquired in order to facilitate the teaching process and improve the academic achievement of migrant students as well as potentially ensure economic integration in the host society (Fandrem et al. 2024; Haque 2017; Allen 2006). Conversely, schools can adopt an inclusive approach that safeguards children's well-being, promotes a sense of belonging, trust, safety, encouraging friendships, participation and joint collaboration (Nergaard et al. 2020). Adopting the inclusive approach, schools may recognise structural inequalities and view integration as a complex process that involves different actors and takes into account the structural complexities that shape it.

7.3.1 Responsibilisation of integration: "It's their responsibility!"

Neoliberal discourses in education are particularly evident in increasing **discourses of responsibilisation**. Where previously something was seen as the responsibility of the state – or not framed as a responsibility at all (O'Malley 2009), it is now increasingly individualised – individuals are seen as the ones primary responsible for their well-being, including school success and integration.

Integration is often viewed as the responsibility of the migrant children and their parents. This is especially true for acquiring the official language. Although schools have traditionally been

considered the “great equalisers”, providing opportunities for social mobility in an increasingly market-driven world, they are also spaces where conflicting discourses intersect – neoliberal discourses on one hand and discourses on equity and children’s well-being on the other. The pervading neoliberal discourses position school as ideological apparatus that instils neoliberal norms (Goodall 2021; Mencin-Čeplak 2012). Nonetheless, schools remain the primary institutions within which migrant children engage with the “host” society.

Between the case studies and also within individual schools, there exist different discourses among educators regarding integration and who’s responsible for it. Often the educators from the research perceive the integration as the responsibility of migrant children and their parents. Their narratives reflect a positive evaluation of students who strive and are successful, as well as an emphasis on personal responsibility and self-realization (Devine 2013).

Again, a telling example is language learning in cases of migrant children integration. Long-term “success” in education and consequently in society are primarily perceived as their responsibility and dependent on the commitment and efforts of the individual. The responsibility for this deficit is often attributed solely to migrant children and their parents, their perceived inability or lack of motivation, rather than taking into account broader societal circumstances, systemic obstacles or practices that create differences. These are reflected in educators’ s narratives who list activities (be part of the school community, learn the language, etc.) for which they deem responsible migrant children and their parents; even the responsibility for initiating communication with schools may lie on migrant parents rather than teachers and schools.

In accordance with the responsibilisation discourse and the myth of meritocracy: “if those who have been successful have done so either through their own or, in this case, their parents’ merit, then obviously the system is not itself to blame for those who do not succeed. Rather, the ability (or not) to succeed is seen to lie within the individual (or the family)” (Goodall 2021, 101).

In a lot of instances, school personnel expressed the belief that migrant children and their parents should take on responsibility to integrate.

> *Yeah, but this is what we see as a problem that many of our students with the different ethnicity just go to school and are taking their exams and so on, but they are not a part of the community and that’s what we are working on right now. Some of the other teachers might told you that that’s what we feel as something we have to do, that they take responsibility, that they are a part of our school as well. It’s not just about going to school and accepting some kind of teaching but it’s also to contribute and be a part of something. (Secondary school, Denmark, school personnel 5)*

The same is true for the involvement of parents. The parents are perceived as those who need to put in the effort and take responsibility for their child’ s success.

> *They will have to [try harder], yes, and I also think that we will have to put them a bit more in front of the fact that they will have to take on some responsibilities, and not us as a school, as that we are some kind of serviceman for them. (Elementary School 2, school personnel 2)*

Parents’ involvement has often been described as challenging, problematic or even non-existent, meaning that substantial part of migrant parents does not participate in their children’s education, either with homework and similar activities or by attending school meetings. At the

same time parental involvement in their children's education has been reported as a significant factor contributing to children's educational success (Doucet 2011).

Different schools take different approaches to address this problem. In quite some cases they adopt a rather narrow middle class, nation- and school-centric definition of parental involvement and the approaches stemming from it (Goodall 2021). In this case, schools and school personnel view parents' involvement in a traditional way and as "a ritual system, symbolising a particular construction of parental involvement that subsumes parents into a dominant, mainstream model of involvement" (Doucet 2011, 404).

According to Doucet (2011) there are three types or "cults": the "cult of domesticity" (positioning mothers as the prototypical involved parent); the "cult(ure) of capital" (the belief that "good" involved parents activate all resources at their disposal to position their children as favourably as possible); and the "cult of pedantocracy" (ascribing parents only a supportive role) (Doucet 2011, 407– 409). Parents should not disrupt the well-established and embedded routines – rituals – of the school (Doucet 2011, 409). Parents need to be involved, but just in a right way and not too much. Following the society's specific (even unwritten) rules of appropriate involvement, parents can – and must – "take responsibility" to come to official parents' meetings and help children with their school assignments.

> Where the parents are supportive, they go to courses, they try hard, they go to school, there communication flows well, the children can also be successful. But where they don't want to, or they cannot [because of culture restrictions], we don't know, then it's not [successful], right? *(Elementary School 2, school personnel 1)*

The discourse of individualised responsibility is also related to the pervasive **deficit discourses** (Yosso 2005; Doucet 2011) that problematise migrant children and attribute the "reasons" for the deficit to them. Deficit thinking entails the assumptions that "minority students and families are at fault for poor academic performance" of their children, because on the one hand they lack normative cultural knowledge and skills and on the other hand their parents do not value their children's education (Yosso 2005, 75; see also Gorski 2008). Similarly, the myth of culture of poverty is based on the belief that almost all groups experiencing poverty share a common culture – "poor parents" become "poor parents". It is perpetuated in a number of myths, such as: poor people are unmotivated and have weak work ethics, poor parents are uninvolved in their children's learning, largely because they do not value education and poor people are linguistically deficient, among others (Gorski 2008; Goodall 2021).

Official language acquisition was a prominent topic that featured in almost all schools in the case studies, however, the emphasises were very differently pronounced – depending also on different contexts: separate intensive language learning course (in Denmark and in Austria a 1- to 2-year intensive language learning before enrolling into mainstream classes), typology of schools ("ghetto" school) and school ethos. In some schools, especially in Slovenia, where there were more case studies with diverse schools, the teachers proposed the system of separate, segregated intensive learning classes as a solution. Even though, the children's well-being in these cases may be brough up and children themselves may also stress the benefits of intensive language learning (Fandrem et al. 2024; Zadel, coming), the array for of their negative effects – missed socialisation and language learning with host society peers – have been easily dismissed, something that "just needs to be sacrificed".

> *And we want everything right away – we want them to be integrated right away, socialised right away, and able to speak the language right away. Some sacrifices must be made so that the situation for these young people can eventually return to normal. And I think this [being placed in "welcome", non-mainstream classes] is the smallest sacrifice, even if they are somewhat separated from their home class at the beginning. (Secondary School 1, school personnel 3)*

However, the pitfalls of initial segregation learning the host society's language and culture are not easily dismissible factors. Studies from countries where the language is learnt in segregated classes or schools (e.g. Canada or Norway), show that migrant students often have difficulties integrating into mainstream classes, where they usually remain segregated even if they concluded the language course and have been afterwards physically included in mainstream classes (Fandrem et al. 2024; Allen 2006; Steinbach 2010a, 2010b). Segregated language learning classes operate as a fixed structural measure to ease the teaching process rather than integration (Fandrem et al. 2024). This reflects a neoliberal paradigm as the focus on language reflects the academic achievements are paramount to social aspects (Nergaard et al. 2020).

Migrant children who speak different languages are often perceived as a problem rather than contributors who enrich the school environment with their bilingual abilities (Jalušič and Bajt 2022). Due to attributed deficits, migrant children are thus often implicitly or explicitly devalued. They are often **viewed as a problem** that negatively affects the learning process or present an additional challenge for educators.

> *… because you have also other children, you can't just deal with that one [that doesn't know the language], all day or all morning. (Elementary School 2, school personnel 1)*

Also work with parents is perceived as difficult and an additional burden:

> *[The solution would be to] Educate the parents. But this is not my job." (Secondary School 1, Austria, school personnel 3)*

Due to the absence of a holistic and comprehensive approach towards the integration of migrant children across European countries (Onsès-Segarra & Estalayo-Bielsa 2020), schools are frequently tasked with integrating these children without adequate guidelines or additional resources, placing the burden on their shoulders which is also reflected in the narratives of educators.

7.3.2 Shared responsibility and discourses of care: "We Are All Responsible"

Contrast to discourse of individualised responsibility outlined above is the discourse that recognises integration of migrant children as a complex process and the as shared responsibility of all. Klarenbeek (2021) advocates for understanding integration as a mutual process between those who are "in" and those who are "out". Similarly, Nergaard and colleagues (2020) emphasise the community and becoming part of it, thus highlight safety, feelings of belonging, friendships, participation, etc. Such "mutual integration" has often been recognised by educators in different countries that emphasise their own role and the role of the school in this process. This is evident in school approaches that prioritise the well-being of all children and recognise the integration as responsibility of everyone involved in the process. An inclusive school ethos and leadership, along with diverse integrational practices and approaches, are key elements in shaping this

discourse. **Individual approach** towards (the needs of) students is one of the important elements contributing to the well-being and sense of belonging of (migrant) children.

> *Well, coming back to your question about integration: I think the idea of integration is very important, but I am not in favour of integration into society or culture or language, but of the integration [into] common sense, how should be, so we could live together in peace and tolerance. (Secondary School 1, Austria, school personnel 3)*

This approach was particularly evident in the case of Spanish schools which are oriented towards education of migrant children ("maximum complexity schools) and therefore had a distinct intercultural ethos and avail of practices of care.

> *[integration to me means] that they can come to the school, that they can all be here. Here we all belong, no matter where you come from, no matter who you are. We treat everybody the same way, not in the same manner but you approach everybody in a different way, but equally. And give everybody what they need. (Elementary and Secondary school, Kindergarten, Spain, school personnel 8).*

Educators in the community-building educational process also emphasise other aspects of communal relations in schools. One aspect comes to the fore, namely, the importance of being available to children and parents, making them feel accepted and welcome, and supporting them even beyond their school commitments.

> *I kind of understand them that we, or I, in this position, are the first official person that we meet. And of course, it's very important that we are kind to them, make them feel accepted and welcome, let them know that we will be available for any of their problems that will arise in the school space, many times also outside the school space. So, I help according to all these experiences that I have, I help not only to students or to children, but also to parents, in saving all other problems. (Elementary School 1, school personnel 3, social worker)*

An important element of a holistic approach towards integration, which rejects the burden of individual responsibility within the neoliberal framework, is also the recognition of deficiencies and structural inequalities shaping migrant children's lives. Some educators reflect on the problem of segregating classes which are part of a system in Denmark and Austria.

Additionally, many recognise intersectional influences and structural inequalities that impact the lives of migrant children.

> So, the problem is not immigrant, is more like the social background. We have Danish students from the ghetto areas as well and they have the same problems as the immigrants. *(Secondary school, Denmark, school personnel 3)*

The schools in the study have diverse histories, goals, locations, legislative frameworks, and leadership structures. As a result, they approach integration of migrant students in different ways. In some schools, an inclusive ethos, community-building and children well-being come to the fore – and were immediately noticeable when entering the school. The diversity in approaches was evident in the interviews, leading us to categorise these elements under school ethos and leadership. Schools thus put emphasis on emotions and well-being, providing a safe space, to contribute to the feelings of belonging and safety.

When is a person more ready to integrate? When s/he feels well and satisfied, or when s/he has to struggle to get somewhere? I think that both paths have their pros and cons, and I believe that working hard on the way to the goal is, of course, important. But it's better to feel good while doing it. Otherwise, many people would never reach their destination. (Elementary School 1, school personnel 4)

Schools with a multicultural character and ethos promote intercultural coexistence and often address cultural diversity beyond existing guidelines, laws and policies, frequently driven by a personal commitment and inventiveness of individual educators. They introduce different practices and activities that contribute to well-being of all children in schools such as tutor teachers in each class being in close contact with children and their families, using apps to communicate with parents or hosting events like Friday Cafè, where parents can gather informally with social workers over coffee and food. An essential element, therefore, is the importance placed on communication. School staff see it as their responsibility to be available to students and their families, providing information and explanations to parents, establishing informal gathering sites, and maintaining open communication channels. In some schools social workers assist parents with non-school-related issues as well.

So, I think it is very important to offer them this feeling, so that they can also ask that we are not here just to solve educational problems, or some possible conflicts between students, but, also often, I also call the Administrative unit office where they handle, for example, the application for residence. (Elementary School 1, school personnel 3, social worker)

One thing that strikes out is the crucial aspect of adopting a **two-way communication**. While some schools want parents to use official communication channels, there are some schools and educators that adapt their activities to foster forms of less formal and more relaxed atmosphere and opportunities to communicate – and even develop a community. For instance, the school centre in Barcelona utilises its own bidirectional app; combined with teachers who serve as tutors and maintain personalised contact with only eight students and their parents, facilitates effective communication.

A central approach of schools with an inclusive ethos is enabling accessible communication and the creation of open, available, and inclusive spaces to address different concerns. These schools focus on building a strong community of students, parents, and school personnel. They emphasise ensuring a sense of security, enhancing children's well-being, and facilitating two-way communication. Through these practices, they strive to create an environment in which all members feel valued and supported. These approaches align with previous research, highlighting that being part of a community is crucial for newcomers to participate in society and learn the local language (Allen 2006; Nergaard et al. 2020; Fandrem et al. 2024). Schools with an inclusive ethos adopt an initiative-based approach, distinctly recognising their responsibility in the process of integrating migrant children through a holistic relational approach.

However, despite their inclusive practices, schools in the study that embraced a holistic approach were often labelled as "ghetto schools" by the school personnel themselves. Teachers and other school employees were critical of the segregated nature of "ghetto schools" even though they found great fulfilment in their work and community. They stressed that, in their view, even with an inclusive community and a multicultural environment focusing on well-being, such schools, unfortunately, represent another form of segregation.

In the end, the interviews depict a system caught between two realities: the ideal of integration as a shared process of mutual adaptation, and the practical constraints of under-resourced schools, overburdened teachers, natio-assimilationist perspectives, and a policy framework does not adequately support a possible holistic integration approach. But without a coherent national strategy the integration of migrant children will remain dependent on the goodwill of individual teachers and the resilience of individual children, rather than on the reliable outcomes of a well-designed system.

7.4 Practices in schools

Practices of Reciprocal Integration: Inclusion as a Two-Way Process

While the systemic framework for integration in Slovenian and other European schools remains mainly assimilationist in its expectations, the interviews reveal a range of practices through which teachers actively work to create a more reciprocal process. The effectiveness of these practices, however, varies significantly and often depends on the initiative of individual teachers rather than institutional support.

Inclusion in school events and performances

One of the visible ways schools attempt to give space to migrant children is through the inclusion of migrant cultures in school events and performances. Teachers across all three schools describe occasions where children are given space to present their own cultural traditions. For example, *kolo* at graduation ceremony and having the possibility to present other folk dances alongside the Slovenian (Elementary school 1), organised events where migrant families prepared traditional dishes at home and brought them to school for shared meals,[16] creating opportunities for conversation and cultural exchange (Elementary school 3), etc. In some instances, such recognition and cultural validation may create emotional safety.

Nevertheless, even if this may be regarded as the "first step", there are school who on assimilationist's basis refuse such ideas:

> *"Years ago, we proposed to anyway hold a cultural day, because we still have a lot of children from different parts of the world, for example, the Dominican Republic. I think it would be interesting for parents and children to introduce themselves in this way, as well as Slovenian, right, our, culture, so that ... I don't know what to say now... [The idea] was not accepted by the team, that 'now we don't think it's appropriate, these are children who came to our Slovenian school, they have to [learn] Slovenian here, why should we support them even more now'". (Elementary school 2, School personnel 3)*

[16] These practices have since been discontinued due to changing regulations and staffing, even though they were appraised as very successful.

Moreover, in line with Gorski's[17] (2008) observations, in such instances we can certainly recognise teachers' good intentions, however, such intercultural events are primary tokenistic, reify "other" cultures and further contribute to Othering and stereotyping. Gorski (2008) namely advocates for an intercultural education that changes the status quo of unequal power relations that result from educational practices.

Nevertheless, beyond formal events, some teachers integrate children's cultural preferences into everyday classroom experience. In Elementary school 1, the teacher described how, when there are a few minutes of free time at the end of a lesson, she asks children which song they would like to listen to, going along with their suggestions, playing musicians from their cultural milieu, i.e. the Balkan.

Tutoring and Mutual Learning

The practice of peer tutoring emerges as one of the most effective mechanisms for integration. At schools with high concentrations of migrant children, it developed as an organic practice and in some schools, it is a formalised integrational practice. Children who arrived into the host country before them, a year, five or ten earlier, become tutors for newcomers. creating a system of mutual support that benefits both. In general, the tutor helps with translation and explanation quietly during the classes, allowing the new child to access the lesson. The tutor (in some cases) also shows the newcomer around the school.

Some teachers satisfied and positively surprised observe the eagerness of tutors to help, framing it a s system of mutual support that benefits all involved. Others questions its outcomes, e.g., that they cannot force someone to be a tutor as it is perceived as a lot of work and some teachers are concerned the tutor would regress academically.

One teacher notes that while the formal expectation is that this support lasts about two weeks, some tutors continue much longer, and the relationships that form often become genuine friendships.

One teacher is convinced that tutoring system in her experience doesn't work, and she, even though it is a formalised practice at her school, doesn't implement it:

> *He speaks Albanian to him and what did you understand then? 'Yes, the class teacher told me that I have to sit with him.' No, you won't, he will sit nicely by himself and try to understand me too. [You would be sitting together] So that you two will speak Albanian for an hour?!" What did we do then?! Nothing. (Elementary school 3, School personnel 3)*

[17] Gorski, Paul C. (2008). Good intentions are not enough: a decolonizing intercultural education. Intercultural Education, 19(6), 515–525. https://doi.org/10.1080/14675980802568319

Creating opportunities for language learning

Even though in a lot of cases, the country's official language acquisition was stressed in an assimilationist manner or as a prerequisite for becoming part of society, i.e. integration, in all cases it was stressed as an important factor for living long-term in a country without ghetto societies. Some schools took on the initiative to start language learning classes for children before the official start of the school year. Moreover, some schools provided (with varying degrees of success) also for parents the lessons of the country's official language.

Some schools mentioned organising official language courses for parents to attend (also with their children or on their own), providing at the same time also a space to socialise and get to know school personnel and the school.

> *Slovenian language instruction for parents works like this: for example, we used to hold these introductory sessions for parents as well; specifically, before the students enrolled in school, there was an assessment period – for instance, in August, at the end of August – a one-week workshop, together with their children, who were learning Slovenian. This was carried out for a while, but then it stopped due to staffing changes. […]*
> *R: Did they attend?*
> *Yes, yes, they attended. And also, for example, before all these regulations started, when you now aren't allowed to just bring food into school, because that's basically prohibited now.*
> *R: Why, because of hygiene standards?*
> *Standards, HACCP – yes, you're not allowed to bring certain foods inside. But it used to be that every family, if they agreed, of course, would prepare their traditional dishes at home, bring them to school, eat them, and talk about them, compare them. It was really nice, really successful, but we're not allowed to do that anymore, so things have gotten a bit more dry. Dry in the sense that we're really just learning the language, though they're introducing games – parents, kids – and as I was told, it was very successful, but yeah. (Elementary school 3, School personnel 2)*

Communication with Parents: Flexible, Accessible and Informal

Creating a two-way process with parents requires schools to move beyond formal, one-directional communication – and primarily to move beyond the assimilationist assumption that migrant parents will instantaneously and automatically adopt the norms of school-parents communication of their new country. Teachers describe a range of practices aimed at making the school accessible to parents who may not speak the official language or who feel intimidated by institutional settings.

Some teachers emphasised the need to communicate in a simple and understandable language, moving from institutional correctness (and maybe even superiority) to prioritising genuine understanding. A teacher from Elementary school 1 (Slovenia) explained:

At our school, we teachers try to do this, for example, even when we write notices to parents: short, to the point, so that they can understand them too, because our goal isn't to show off how perfectly we speak Slovenian. It's written in Slovenian, but it says, "On October 18, we're going to the cinema. Bring this, and that, and that." So it's clear. (Elementary school 1, School personnel 1)

From the same school also explained, that for meeting with parents, if they feel or know that the parents will not understand the meeting in the official language, they engage in other manners, also bringing in translators:

And since I knew I'd have a meeting with parents or a parent-teacher conference – because the first parent-teacher conference is important for explaining the "rules of the game" – the rules of how the school system works. Because I could tell they wouldn't understand me – because when the mom comes to pick up her little one, she nods, nods, but I can see she doesn't understand what I'm saying. I arranged for a colleague who started working at our school this year and speaks Albanian. And I asked the principal, and he said absolutely, no question about it, she should come to the parent-teacher conference and, while I'm speaking, she'll translate for them as well, so they're informed that way and so on. Even now, for example, if there are any misunderstandings and we don't understand each other, [I'll contact] [colleague's name], please translate this for me, [colleague's name] translates it, sends it, and I send it to the parents in their language. Slovenian, their language – I send it on like that because I think it's crucial, because it's as if, for example, someone somewhere were treating my child that way. My conscience just compels me to do so. (Elementary school 1, School personnel 1)

The principal from the Danish school along the same lines indicates the necessity to be understood by the migrant parents, however, exposes also pitfalls of a ghettoised society:

Well, actually not. Only in a few cases. We did during Covid, then we translated a lot of things, that was before I came here, but I know they did it. We have a discussion in school management as to whether we have to change practice there also because … But it's a broader discussion, it's also about where are we present as management. Normally, the school meetings are done only by teachers and pedagogues, I think we have to change that because for several reasons, but also because we need to know, the school management, we need to get to know our parents better and we have to be there in order to do that. But I took, starting here, took a lot of school parents' meetings during evenings. And of course, I presented myself and talked about my visions for the school and the hope I have of our continued cooperation. They were good meetings, but I did it in Danish and I got a lot smarter and a lot … yeah, I was really welcomed to the area. That was my experience, but I am not sure they got that much of what I wanted to explain to them. They nodded and smiled and "mhm". So, we are discussing if we have to change our practice for some of the meetings. Of course, economy is also a part of it, we can't translate everything. But we have the economy to translate some things, so we are discussing that. When we have, I think I would say we have four main languages spoken at our school. Danish of course as one. And then it's Somali and then it's Turkish and then it's Arabic. And if we did information in these four languages, I think we could change at least some things. But it's difficult because I know we are getting a new government in Denmark these days; at least I think we are getting a new government – it's taking longer than normally. But in former government it has not been well seen to translate things because … well you are here and your children are attending Danish school you've been living in Denmark for fifty years, many of you have to be able to understand Danish or the system has failed. And that's also what we are up against. So, if I say we translate everything, they say, "Well, hm, you are too friendly" or it's: "you are supporting a system where somebody else failed and should

have integrated themselves more". So, it's not .... I think we can translate things, but also, I think politically, it would be a problem if we translate everything, because they've lived in Denmark for ... many of our families for third or fourth, three or four generations. One would expect the parents to be able to understand a message in Danish. Perhaps ought to do that, but it's just the case so either we try to navigate in the ideal world, or we try to navigate in the world we are in. And then the world we are in, I think, would be better for us to translate more than we do right now. So, it's the discussion we have, but as a political overlay to that discussion in Denmark, because of course something has, we have failed in society in some things, if you still don't speak the language after third generation. *(Elementary school, Denmark, school personnel 1)*

Practices that follow the strict use of only the official language and official communication channels – with the rationale, that it's the parents' responsibility to learn it – are probably alienating and excluding much more than offering an incentive to learn the language and become part of the community:

> *Then [we are sending] emails and notifications, which they didn't understand either. Then another problem: we had a class photo shoot. And right then Iran [Iranian parent] shows up, giving me a whole speech about how he didn't get the photos. I can't order the photos [for them] on top; the parents had to do it themselves—they got a code and had to log in and all that. And I also said that the school should order these photos for the first-year students, because the parents don't know how. (Elementary school 2, School personnel 2)*

Moreover, it seems that parents that are not fluent in the official language of the country, prefer more informal communication exchanges:

> *Oh, they don't come to [the parents-teacher meetings]. They just hassle you when they see you out somewhere, that's all.*
> *R: Do they ask you about the students?*
> *[Annoyed] Yeah, like, "Is everything okay? How's it going? Is it good?" (Elementary school 2, School personnel 2)*

In contrast, the schools that understand that informal (two-way) communication is crucial for parents to trust in the school as an institution of their new country, consequently, contributes to parents coming to schools (to class and other meetings, events, etc.). This was achieved with some informal gatherings, picnics among Slovenian school, however, one of the striking examples was a practice implemented in the schools of "maximum complexity" in Barcelona. The schools implement a system of tutor, but they are teachers tutors who via a mobile app communicate with the parents of their students – but there are up to three tutor teachers in a class, each communicating with only eight of the parents from the class.

> *Okay. The first thing we use – I think is that in every class we have – three teachers that are tutors. So, every one of us only have about eight or nine students. So, our relation with the families is very close. Yeah, so we speak with them a lot of times. When we have a new student, from the first moment when they come here to* matrícula*... [...]*
>
> *R: To enrol, yes.*
>
> *Okay, I always be with them like head of studies, and I explain them everything of the school. We also have an app on the mobile where we can speak with them, we can write them, we can send*

them a message.[...]. And they can also send us a message, and... (Elementary and Secondary school, Kindergarten, Spain, school personnel 3).

The app that tutor teachers use to communicate with parents is used for different purposes; more formal ones tied to the educational process, while also more informal ones, as sending pictures of what happened that day in school, on the school trip or how they celebrated a birthday in the class.

I2: We have like three or two tutors per class, so this means that every tutor, like class tutor tutorizes or keeps straight contact with eight students [students' parents]. So, even though, maybe like obviously they are 14 years old, mami is not there to pick them up. But it's really like amazing to see how they [parents] come up for every interview, they need, only because, you know ... like you are not having like a class of 20 students in secondary, you have your class, but you have these eight specific students like you want to really keep contact with them, with the parents.

I2: [...] the app is not only used like for basic information but also like to send pictures of the day or how do it went ...

I1: For birthdays.

I2: Yeah, happy birthdays. Really like a way to make community as well like within, no? Like all the parents in class. (Elementary and Secondary school, Kindergarten, Spain, school personnel 1 and 2).

The cases demonstrate a **relational and holistic approach** that transcends the school's mere official obligations, where teachers and other school personnel (for example school counsellor and principals) step out of their formal roles to support and care for migrant families in navigating life in the "new" country.

These practices reveal that for many teachers, integration is not merely about what happens in the classroom. It is about creating conditions of trust and security that allow families to engage with the school as partners rather than as passive recipients of services. When parents experience the school as a place that cares about their survival – not just their children's grades – they begin to show up differently. However, the integration of migrant children and their parents in schools should not rely only on creative initiatives of teachers, on the enthusiasm and resourcefulness of school personnel that is willing to go the extra mile in order to build a trusting relationship and work on a holistic approach to integration but should be systemically implemented and funded.

7.5 Children's perspectives

First of all, I must make the premise that because of the extensive fieldwork in four countries and 12 schools, I did not had time to properly get to know the children as the project did not envisaged observations and entering the field phase. This resulted in a more reserved stance from interviewed migrant children. Even if initially the plan was to implement arts-based practices – besides interviews – it turned out to be time consuming, taking migrant children away from their "much needed lessons" (in teachers' undertones). When making arrangement with the school and when organising interviews with children I also asked the school personnel to pass along my

request for interviewed children to write, draw or otherwise prepare how would a perfect school look like in their opinion. Unfortunately, none of the children prepared anything – definitely connected also to the fact that they did not know me before.

Also, there was a difference conducting interviews with elementary and secondary school children: the first ones were usually more reserved, giving shorter answers and interviews lasting less (arts-based approaches would be essential), while the secondary school students were more outspoken.

Usually, the decision to migrate was not chosen by migrant pupils themselves (the exceptions are students on a (sports) scholarship or other secondary school students), adding additional emotional distress.

> *We didn't choose this city and this country, they chose.*
> R: Who they? You don't know, it was just chosen?
> *Yeah. (elementary school 2, migrant pupil 1, 14 years old, 1 year in Slovenia)*

Some interviews in Slovenia were very short, especially with children from elementary school and with those with whom we did not speak a common language. Namely, some schools have set me up with migrant children who were only a couple of months in the county and were not fluent in the official language (especially migrant children from non-Slavic language background) or English (some have explicitly said it was to show me how impossible it is to "work" with newly arrived migrants who don't speak the language).

In general, children that have fiends, either from the arriving country or they home country, seemed happier. Moreover, some of the pupils who were immersed in the lessons directly (in Slovenia) and gained friends from the host country, report having the possibility to train the official language:

> *My friends were really great. They helped me... learn some things in Slovenian, figure out where things are, I mean ... (Elementary school 1, migrant pupil 3, 12 years old, 2 years in Slovenia)*

In general, the migrant children did not critically address the integration practises, along with learning the official language, but generally just agreed with the practices implemented, whatever they were. There were mainly two different approaches, with one, again, differentiating in intensity, but crucially contributing to language acquisition:[18]

1.) Separate "welcome" classes designer only for language acquisition, lasting from 1 to 2 years. Inclusion into mainstream classes happens after this language acquisition period.
2.) Inclusion directly into mainstream classes, where some lessons are destined to the official language acquisition. These can be carried out in different ways, the two major approaches encountered were:

[18] And indirectly this may be tied to teachers' criticism as the pace of acquisition differs, but, nevertheless, teachers' responses are connected to other interconnected factors as well, for example their views, the overall school ethos, school leadership, etc).

2.a.) at the beginning of the school year, for a couple of months, newly arrived migrant students are several hours a day learning the official language, while only attending lessons like Fine arts, Physical education, Music, etc. with their mainstream class
2.b.) Newly arrived migrant students language learning classes are scattered throughout the whole year, encompassing only a few hours per week (for example three or four). Sometimes they are taken from other lessons with their classmates, but the emphasis in not put on which subject do they miss (and to let them have "socialising subjects" where they can easily interact with their classmates). Another option is that they have the language learning classes as an addition to their regular curriculum, having the official language classes in the early morning before starting regular classes or late in the afternoon, after finishing their regular classes.

Even if the approaches differ a lot between then, the interviewed migrant children responded that the approach they had, was fine.

1.) Separate "welcome" classes designer only for language acquisition

I think this [that we had = separate classes for learning the language] should be better, because if you put me, which I, Let's say, if you put a new student, who can't speak German, with other classmates, who speak, everyone speaks German, and you are alone, you feel lonely, if you are alone and you can't understand anything, you can't communicate with anyone, if you want to ask a question, okay you have to talk in English. [...] (Secondary school, migrant student, Austria, 15 years old, 5 years in Austria)

2.) Inclusion directly into mainstream classes

2.a.) at the beginning of the school year, for a couple of months, newly arrived migrant students are several hours a day learning the official language, while only attending lessons like Fine arts, Physical education, Music, etc. with their mainstream class.

When a student of this type of approach was asked to imagine a perfect school, she responded:

R: Okay, let me ask you this: if you were to imagine what the perfect school would be like? Something like this school.
R: Okay.
Well...
R: Like this?
Yeah, the basic idea is this school. (Elementary school 1, migrant pupil 1, 11 years old, 5-6 years in Slovenia)

2.b.) Newly arrived migrant students language learning classes are scattered throughout the whole year, encompassing only a few hours per week.

Yes, it was okay for me. (Elementary school 2, migrant pupil 1, 14 years old, 1 year in Slovenia)

As far as the language goes, it was easier for me, for example, because during the class I listened to what they were saying [in Slovenian] and analysed it, which made it easier for me to understand.

Because first you have to understand how they speak, and then you just practice speaking, and it gets easier (Elementary school 2, migrant student 2, 16 year old, (more than) 2 years in Slovenia)

R: And what do you think about that? Would you have preferred to do it more often? Was once a week okay with you?
No, once a week was actually great. (Elementary school 2, migrant student 2, 16 years old, (more than) 2 years in Slovenia)

In short, mostly, whatever the country's and school's integration approach was, the children were satisfied with it. Nevertheless, some (mainly older) students, proposed some changes (but not in a way to alter the approach completely).

I think they should like if there is some new student here – the only mistake – I think, is to teach him math in German. You have to teach him math in English, because he can't understand German. Like it was some words in math I couldn't understand and in biology, I couldn't understand those words, that's why I had bad grades in those years. So, I think the best thing is when you have extra German lessons, but also you should have extra math lessons in English. So that you can understand, yes. (Secondary school, migrant student, Austria, 15 years old, 5 years in Austria)

However, in some schools, some issues regarding cultural and religious differences arose (swimming for Muslim girls, going on school's trips that last several days for Muslim girls). In the Danish school, the school trips were brought up by teachers and students as well. Three female Muslim students in a focus group explained their view, in contrast to teacher's interpretations of strict Muslim parents about their daughters, revealing a much more nuanced take than the teachers' view of Muslim culture and their unwillingness to integrate:

I3: We have some – what´s it called? Trips.
I1: Yes, trips with the school when we go outside of Denmark. Or even like in Denmark but to Copenhagen, for example. And be there for four days, five days. Or even Spain sometimes. Where there are some students who would not like to go there, so the school would do anything to get them there. So, they would contact their parents and ask why, is it because you can't let them, or are there problems at home. So the school talks to the parents.
R: Why does the school want and why do the parents don't?
I3: They say it's like … what's it called?
I2: Obligation
I3: Obligation. If you pick a language, you have to go to that country. I am going to Spain in April.
I2: I went to Germany.
I3: She went to Germany last year. So, they want everyone to go to experience the culture and the language. So, I don't know why this school made it an obligation, a rule, that you have to, because most …
I2: … Because the other schools …
I3: Most schools you don't have to.
I2: Yes.
I1: In this school they almost force you to pay and come.
I2: Yes.
I3: Yeah.

I1: I have also heard a story about people almost getting kicked out or getting help from outside like therapy. Maybe because they don't even want to come and at that point the school doesn't like to think about the person but like …
I2: It's prejudice.
I1: They call the parents and ask "Is there any problem at home? Why are you not allowing your kids to do so and so …?"
I2: Even though it's not the case …
I3: Most of the time it's because they don't want to go with that class. I have Spanish with another class so it's not the ones I am usually with. It's people that I don't really talk to. So, there is a lot of people that doesn't want to come because they are spending a whole week with them and Spain is just … If you don't know them, you don't like them.
I1: And you have to sleep with them.
I3: Yeah, you have to sleep with them and pay a lot, so it's just … Why would you spend that money if you can just stay home.
I2: But the school doesn't see that as a solution. They think that the parents force you to stay at home and something at home makes you say "no".
(Secondary school, Denmark, I1 = 19 years old, second generation, I2 = 18 years old,16 years in Denmark, I3 =19 years old, second generation).

However, it has to me noted, that migrant students themselves are a very heterogeneous group, with different backgrounds, families, socio-economic status as well as personalities, among others. It may seem surprising if a girl who is in Slovenia for two years may be involved in the schools activities and leading them, however, different factors may contribute to this, her easygoingness may be part of it:

R: Okay. Are there any other activities at school, if you know of any?
Well, we sometimes have school plays, just like at any other school.
R: But you're not really part of that, are you?
I am. I even lead/present them sometimes. (Elementary school 2, migrant student 2, 16 years old, (more than) 2 years in Slovenia)

However, the schools that were labelled "ghetto schools" in the end had a more proactive and inclusive approach toward migrant students who took the stage at various occasions.

I5: We have several events we really enjoy being a part of; for example, we participate in a music project – it's an elective course – and our teacher often likes to include us, which we really love because we both enjoy being emcees/presenters, and that helps us overcome our shyness.

I4: Yeah. Even though I always get so nervous, I'd still want to do it again and again. (Elementary school 1, migrant pupil 5 & 4, both 13 years old, I4 born in Slovenia (parents from Bosnia), I5 approximately 4 years in Slovenia)

In general, there is a difference between elementary school pupils and secondary school students: the first one like to engage in school (extra)-curricular activities and like to perform at various school productions, also or especially for parents, while the older students don't engage in this activities as much – and perform in from (or for) their parents is usually something not on their priority list.

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