



Integrating Immigrant Children into Schools in Europe

Country Reports



INTEGRATING IMMIGRANT CHILDREN INTO SCHOOLS IN EUROPE

HUNGARY

NATIONAL DESCRIPTION – 2003/04

The national contributions contained on this CD-Rom and on the Eurydice website formed the basis for the comparative study on the integration at school of immigrant children in Europe. Each contribution has exactly the same structure with four main sections entitled as follows:

- 1) National definitions and demographic context of immigration
- 2) Measures offering school-based support to immigrant children and their families
- 3) Intercultural approaches in education
- 4) Evaluation, pilot projects, debates and forthcoming reforms

Contributions are available in English and, in the case of some countries, in French.

1. NATIONAL DEFINITIONS AND DEMOGRAPHIC CONTEXT OF IMMIGRATION

1.1. National Definitions and Legislative Sources

The 1997 Act on Asylum and the 2001 Aliens Act do not offer a definition of the term 'immigrant'. These legal acts define foreign nationals in terms of their motives for being present in Hungary. These definitions are also found in the recently amended Public Education Act ⁽¹⁾. According to Article 110 of that Act, the following foreign nationals fall under the provisions on free compulsory education and are entitled to free education and to the same pedagogical and social services as their Hungarian counterparts:

- refugees;
- asylum seekers;
- person temporarily seeking shelter on Hungarian territory ⁽²⁾;
- all immigrants irrespective of nationality holding a permit or so-called humanitarian residence permit of at least one years' validity or, if the period of residence is less than one year but exceeds 6 months, the entitlement is granted upon parental request.

1.2. Rights to Education and to Support Measures

The relevant provisions of the Public Education Act not only grant full equality of rights to all children within the age range of compulsory education regardless of their nationality, gender and belief or special education needs, prohibiting any discrimination, but explicitly extend these privileges to all children who are holders of a residence permit of at least one years' duration issued by the immigration authorities. Children who entered Hungary irregularly have a right to education as long as they have asylum seeker status.

1.3. Demographic Information

Hungary is located in the geographic centre of the European continent. Being a kind of transit station between East and West the country serves as a gateway toward Western Europe. Migration movements have been characterised by a slow but steady growth in the last ten years and both the flows of immigrants and their national origins have shown a clear link with major political and military conflicts or internal strife taking place in the close vicinity (i.e., the crisis in Romania, the conflict in the former Yugoslavia) of the country and in more distant regions (i.e., the Middle East and Afghanistan).

The first category of immigrants to Hungary are ethnic Hungarians coming from neighbouring countries. The vast majority of these persons enter the country in order to find employment and/or settle. The second group is made up of persons coming from West Asia or from the Middle East. These immigrants consider Hungary solely as a transit country on their way to Western Europe (with the exception of Chinese immigrants, whose intention is to establish themselves as self-employed workers). A large number of this second group of immigrants are asylum seekers, most of whom cross the Hungarian borders illegally.

(1) 1993 No. LXXIX Public Education Act as amended in 2003 by the Law 2003/ LXI (Preamble, Articles 3, 6, 110). The dispositions regarding the education of migrant children of the Public Education Act are fully consistent with the dispositions of Council Directive 77/486/EEC and of other relevant Community policy papers.

(2) A temporarily protected person belongs to a group of people having fled their country or place of habitual residence *en masse* due to military conflict, civil war or ethnic clashes and who is offered shelter on the territory of Hungary on a provisional and temporary basis. They are expected to return to their place of origin as soon as the conditions which forced them to flee cease to exist. It should be noted that at the time of writing there are no foreign nationals in Hungary who belong to this category.

Between 2000-2003 the total number of asylum seekers came to 25 874, out of which 21 829 entered the country illegally. The competent authorities have gradually applied tougher border control and adopted other appropriate measures. These resulted in a drastic drop in illegal immigration and, consequently, a decline in the number of administrative expulsion (*refoulement*) of foreign nationals from the territory of Hungary. The number of these expulsions dropped from an all-time high of 19 645 in 2000 to 4 129 in 2003. Most expelled immigrants were Romanian nationals. However, it is to be noted that the abolition on 1 January 2002 of visa obligations imposed on Romanian citizens entering the EU has greatly contributed to the fall in numbers of illegal immigrants. This development has also strongly modified the national make-up of asylum seekers. From 2002, the overwhelming majority of refugees are Iraqi, Afghan, Iranian and other nationals from the Middle East and Western Asia who in their majority in accordance with the principle of non-refoulement cannot be returned to their country of origin.

Between 1988 and 31 October 2003, about 8 000 people were granted refugee status, out of which 2 400 were minors. The geographic distribution of these refugees within the country reflects basic patterns of immigration. In Budapest and the regions of Northern Great Plain and Central Trans-Danubia, the number of minors exceeds 500, whereas only 34 minors were registered in Western-Trans-Danubia.

According to official forecasts, as a result of the country's EU membership the number of foreign nationals wishing to establish in Hungary with the intention of taking up a job is expected to continue to rise. This is valid for Community as well as for third country citizens. This statement is substantiated by the fact that in the course of the period starting from 1 January 2002, that is, since the entry into force of the new Act on Immigration⁽³⁾, about 11 000 foreign nationals applied for permanent residence permit, of which 6 434 applied in 2003. The number of foreign nationals making a new application, or requesting an extension of their residence permit (usually granted for a duration of one year) was 31 411 in 2000 and 37 151 in 2002. In November 2003, the total number of foreign nationals residing legally, that is possessing a permanent or temporary residence permit in the Republic of Hungary, is 35 111, out of which 3 467 are children below 14 years of age.

Since 2000, the statistical service of the Ministry of Education (Ministry of Education) has begun the systematic collection of comprehensive and analytical data on the education of immigrant children. According to these findings, in the 1999/2000 school year the number of immigrant children in primary education neared 3 700 and in secondary education 3 500. This represented respectively 0.4 and 0.9 % of the total school population. In some schools and classes the proportion of immigrant children neared 20 %. The data has shown a slow but steady increase in the number of foreign nationals admitted to public education institutions nationwide (see tables in annex).

2. MEASURES OFFERING SCHOOL-BASED SUPPORT TO IMMIGRANT CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES

2.1. Reception and Guidance

According to the Public Education Act (Article 111), upon request and upon presentation of the residence permit and the certificate on previous school attendance by the parents/consort the school head of the relevant school is empowered to take decision on the admission of the immigrant child. The school head decides also on the particulars of the admission (grade, class, etc). In case the school head is not in the position to evaluate the equivalence of the certificate on previous school attendance, he has to consult the Minister of Education or for vocational training certificates the Ministry responsible for the relevant sector.

The Ministry of Education has very recently launched a multilingual portal on the internet (www.migrans.edu.hu) offering useful information for migrant children and their parents on education opportunities in Hungary. The portal is under development and not yet fully operational. Its continuous improvement is planned.

⁽³⁾ The new law on immigration is fully consistent with community regulations regarding the definition of the legal status of the migrants and nature of their stay

A special 'School entrance allowance' may be granted to children with refugee or asylum seeker status by the Office for Immigration and Citizenship (OIC) in order to facilitate their integration into the school community.

2.2. Integration into School Learning

A special pedagogical programme for immigrant children is currently under development. This programme will become obligatory from the 2004/05 school year (see section 4). To date, the relevant general legal framework defined in the Public Education Act has been considered sufficient guidance for school maintainers and for teachers in their endeavour to successfully address the specific education needs of immigrant children.

2.3. Support for the Language, Culture and Religion of Origin

The Public Education Act guarantees for children of ethnic minorities the right to education on their mother tongue⁽⁴⁾. This concerns Armenians, Bulgarians, Croatians, Germans, Greeks, Poles, Romas, Romanians, Ruthenians, Serbs, Slovaks, Slovenians and Ukrainians. In accordance with the stipulations of the above Act over the years an extensive network of education institutions at pre-primary, primary and secondary level has been established in order to guarantee to all major ethnic minorities the effective exercise of their right to learn in their mother language. About 5.7 % of the total school population were admitted to these 'ethnic minority' schools or classes in the school year 2003/04.

On the basis of the relevant provisions of the National Core Curriculum, which entered into force in 1998/99, the Ministry of Education has issued special pedagogical programmes for the education of children of ethnic minorities. According to these special pedagogical programmes, while pupils in all major subjects basically follow education in their mother tongue, simultaneous care is taken to facilitate the acquisition of Hungarian language. To this end, special pedagogical tools (curricula, textbooks, methodological guidance for teachers, etc.) have been also developed. Teacher training institutions have also developed special courses for future teachers of ethnic minorities education.

In addition, part I (general provisions) of the pedagogical directive (Annexe No 2. of the Minister's of Education Regulation No.32/1997 (XI.5.) regarding school education of national and ethnic minorities stipulates the following: 'The ethnic minorities' education helps pupils belonging to an ethnic minority to identify, to preserve and to develop their identity...'

2.4. Adaptation of Daily School Life

There are no special rules governing the adaptation of daily school life in recognition of the cultural and religious needs of immigrant children (e.g. menus served at school canteens, observation of religious or cultural holidays etc.).

2.5. Access to School Services and Special Financial Assistance

As a result of the recently amended Public Education Act all non-Hungarian nationals who meet the criteria of article 110 of that Act (see section 1.1) are entitled to receive school care, education and pedagogical special services under terms and conditions equivalent to Hungarian nationals. These services include season tickets for public transport, use of subsidised school canteen services, participation in extra-curricular activities, etc. From September 2004, local governments who maintain schools admitting non-Hungarian speaking children of migrant workers will be entitled to receive additional financial support from the central budget.

Special provision is made for children of school age with refugee or asylum seeker status in terms of Government Decree No 25/1998. This provides for a special allowance from the OIC to all children of school age having obtained, or having applied for, refugee status. The allowance reimburses to school maintainers all extra

⁽⁴⁾ Preamble of the 1993 LXXVII Act on National Minorities explicitly provides to ethnic minorities the right to education in their mother tongue.

expenses related to the education on first and second degree of primary education (ISCED 1, 2) including the purchase of textbooks, incurred travel expenses, school canteens, etc. Upon the asylum seekers' request, the OIC may finance the expenses related to secondary level general or vocational education.

2.6. Language Tuition for Parents and Families

Language tuition for parents and families is not systematically organised within the framework of compulsory schools.

2.7. Information to Parents

There are no specific arrangements (such as interpreters' services) for the provision of information and monitoring of their children's performance for immigrant parents.

3. INTERCULTURAL APPROACHES IN EDUCATION

3.1. Curriculum and School Activities

The National Core Curriculum, in effect since the 1998/99 school year, encourages schools and teachers to teach subjects such as History, Geography, Arts and Modern Languages, Environment with a view to developing, in a creative and independent manner, an awareness in pupils that Hungarian culture and history forms an integral part of European culture and history. Pupils are also encouraged to learn about and accept the cultures of other peoples. The so-called frame curricula introduced from 2001 also articulates these pedagogical goals through different subjects.

3.2. Teacher Training

Intercultural education is an integral part of initial teacher education and in-service training, although provision of such training is not obligatory. Training providers have the autonomy to provide intercultural training if they so wish.

4. EVALUATION, DEBATES AND FORTHCOMING REFORMS

A productive dialogue has started to evolve among teachers and educationists involved in the education of immigrant children on the implications of the growing number of immigrant children for the whole pedagogical and teaching process. This public debate conducted in pedagogical reviews, various publications and journals devoted particular attention to the theory and practice, methodology of language teaching, inter-cultural education, social and cultural integration of non-Hungarian speaking immigrant children. In addition, a number of civic organisations dedicated to providing assistance to refugees have actively promoted the cause of refugee education for both adults and children and identified a number of humanitarian, pedagogical issues and, last but not least, problems of financing.

In 2001, the Ministry of Education commissioned a survey on the general conditions of the education of migrant children in Hungary, encompassing all practical and theoretical aspects of education, linguistic and cultural integration of non-Hungarian pupils.

The findings of this survey led to the adoption of a detailed work programme mid-2003 by the Ministry of Education and the setting up of an Inter-Ministerial Task Force for the co-ordination of activities regarding the education of immigrant children. This task force will be convened every three months to serve as a platform for the exchange of information and experience, and to co-ordinate actions in the field of education with a task force set up earlier by the Ministry of Interior for the cultural, social integration of refugees. Different sub-sectors of education as well as other agencies and civic organisations will be represented on the task force, which will be

located in the Directorate General for the Co-ordination and Planning of European Affairs of the Ministry of Education.

The recently amended Public Education Act (Point No 8 of Article 110) empowers the Ministry of Education to issue special pedagogical programmes to facilitate the education of migrant children. The Department for Public Education Development is in charge of the development of these new pedagogical programmes. It is planned that the programmes will be ready by September 2004. In-service teacher training programmes are also to be developed to this end, and the launching of appropriate special courses in teacher training institutions will be considered.

