

METHODOLOGY FOR THE INTEGRATION OF BENEFICIARIES OF INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION IN HUNGARIAN PUBLIC EDUCATION

SOCIAL INTEGRATION OF BENEFICIARIES
OF INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION IN HUNGARY
– NIEM POLICY BRIEFS

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– KATA HETZER

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PUBLIC EDUCATION

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– NIEM Policy Briefs**

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Executive summary

In our analysis, experiences gained in relation to the integration into school of pupils that are beneficiaries of international protection are summarised and systematically discussed. It will be briefly outlined how the legislative environment and the lack of special policy measures exert an impact on access to education and what kind of situations this creates for those affected, at different levels of education. We assert in our analysis that due to the lack of proper special policy regulations and in the absence of uniform inter-cultural educational and teaching aims, good practices for promoting the integration of refugee children and pupils have developed in the educational and teaching institutions concerned and under the targeted programmes of NGOs and confessional organisations. We will briefly sum up the circumstances of the development of such good practices, their content-related nature and the persons and entities implementing them. Pedagogical practices pursued in the educational institutions concerned will be discussed in more detail. Finally, special policy recommendations will be proposed concerning of the potential system-level interventions. In our proposals, the emerging problems and the currently used ad hoc practices will be discussed item by item and recommendations will be formulated for future system-level solutions.

1. Introduction

In our analysis we summarise and systematically discuss the experiences gained during the past decade – in relation to the integration at school of pupils that are beneficiaries of international protection – and we provide special policy recommendations as to what could be done at the different levels of the education delivery system in order that children being in an exposed situation from several aspects can have access to public education more easily and successfully.

Our paper has a dual aim: it is important for us to draw the attention of those interested but being inexpert to the situation of refugee children in public education, on the other hand, we would like to motivate the concerned persons and entities so that they make experiments on developing good local practices despite the cumbersome circumstances.

We do hope that our recommendations will also reach the decision-makers and the working group for the education of migrant children coordinated by a joint effort of the competent ministries can be set up again. The present analysis is based on several recently published technical papers in this subject-matter and interviews with the concerned professionals and pupils. The main

basis of our technical paper is personal experience gained by the authors: in recent years both of us have devoted time to supporting the integration at school of pupils that are beneficiaries of international protection through various professional activities. We have an insight into the difficulties and challenges in the educational delivery system, and likewise, we have experience also with respect to local good practices that we have gained as facilitators of pedagogical professional forums, elaborators of mentoring programmes, conceivers of integration projects at schools and as researchers. The basis of our experience as experts is the work that has been pursued for over two decades by Menedék – Hungarian Association for Migrants, but in addition, we have gathered important information from the collaborators of other organisations active in similar fields.

2. Current state of affairs

The enrolment in school education and the integration at school of refugees, beneficiaries of subsidiary protection and asylum seekers is one of the policy domains measured by the indicators of the [National Integration Evaluation Mechanism](#), hereinafter referred to as: NIEM. Out of the 170 indicators of the evaluation mechanism 15 deals with the access to education, the method of getting into the educational institutions and with the existence and types of targeted special support available during the studies.

It is known, even on the basis of the data of MIPEX ([Migrant Integration Policy Index](#)) that the Hungarian public education system is one of the tail-enders in Europe in terms of integration opportunities and support provided for foreign (migrant) pupils¹. If we take the NIEM indicators narrowed specifically to the situation of the beneficiaries of international protection under analysis, the situation shows a similar pattern: the Hungarian score is very low in international comparison.²

What could the reason for that be? Four specific factors can be identified by the analysis of the data. Firstly, there is an especially large gap between the existence of eligibility and entitlements and the lack of support for ensuring equal opportunities. Hungary achieves a relatively good average score (87.5 out of 100) in terms of legislative framework, but in the field of special policy

1 Huddleston, Thomas et al.: *Migrant Integration Policy Index* 2015. Barcelona, Centre for International Affairs and Migration Policy Group, 2015, 30.

2 Wolffhardt, Alexander – Conte, Carmine: *The European Benchmark for Refugee Integration: A Comparative Analysis of the National Evaluation Mechanism in 14 EU Countries. Evaluation 1: Summary Report*. Warsaw, Brussels, Migration Policy Group – Institute of Public Affairs, 2020, 36–37.

measures to ensure the exercise of such rights the average score is only 16.7, while in the case of implementation and institutional cooperation the score is 0. The second structural reason for the low scores is, that as opposed to several other countries, beneficiaries of international protection in Hungary cannot meet the requirements for pursuing studies in higher education even despite that equal rights are granted to them in principle and despite the fact that access to the educational institutions, the opportunity of enrolment and even compulsory schooling is accessible without any further restriction in the primary and secondary level educational institutions.³

The third problem is that specially-targeted programmes are completely missing from the public education system that would assist pupils that are beneficiaries of international protection (or with migrant background, in general) in successfully integrating and catching up with their studies and language skills. There is no such element either in the national core curriculum or in the public supplementary programmes or in the spectre of the teacher training and further training programmes. One of the aims of this policy analysis is just to present those bottom-up programmes and teaching and educational methods implemented by schools, which have been developed in order to make up for this deficiency. However, it is a declared aim of the NIEM system of indicators to analyse those policies and measures only, which form part of the national integration programmes and for which there is legislative, public administration and financing background and which do not operate in an ad hoc, project-based manner.

The fourth problem is that statistical data on the public education situation of pupils with migrant background are very rough and inaccurate and it is almost impossible to identify pupils that are beneficiaries of international protection within that group and evaluate their situation. This makes not only the evaluation of the policy programmes more difficult (though in Hungary this problem does not exist due to lack of appraisable programmes), but it renders their planning and professional justification in favour of their necessity also difficult.

In Hungary, compulsory schooling applies to children that have been granted international protection (refugee, children eligible for subsidiary protection or authorised to stay) in the same way as to children with Hungarian nationality, therefore, the provisions of Act CXC of 2011 on national public education are relevant to their enrolment and participation in public education.

³ See the analysis by Julianna Faludi and Zsombor Lakatos in this series

Article 92 (1) Minors of non-Hungarian nationality become eligible for kindergarten care and are subject to compulsory schooling in Hungary if his/her legal status is refugee, person eligible for subsidiary protection, temporary protected person, or a person authorised to stay under Article 25/B. (1) b) of Act LXXX of 2007 on Asylum.

The situation is special in the case of children that are applicants for international protection: they are eligible to take part in public education from the date of submission of their application for international protection and they are subject to compulsory schooling after they have been granted that status. It has been experienced by support service professionals working in the field and by collaborators of the accommodation facilities that access is strongly hampered to education for children staying at Refugee Accommodation Centres, it is characteristic that the employees of the accommodation centre refer to administrative difficulties (difficulties in arranging for a residence address, Hungarian social security number (TAJ) and NEK data sheet⁴) and they rarely support the child's joining in the public education institution system. If it takes place despite that, there are several examples that the regionally competent school does not meet its obligations defined by the legal act. Occasionally, travelling teachers hold "lessons" in the accommodation facilities, but they are merely aimed at improving language competences and developing the children's knowledge in some subjects but they can be no means considered part of the mainstream educational system.⁵

Several professional recommendations⁶ address the issue that in the beginning teaching in the native tongue of the children is required, but this is currently not fulfilled either in the case of children that are applicants for international protection or those that have already been granted that status. It is worth noting here that in recent decades the Hungarian public education system has been showing a deteriorating trend in creating a level playing field for equal opportunities, reducing the rate of early drop-outs and ensuring free-of-charge access to high-quality education. Territorial disparities are constantly increasing, abandonment of the profession is continuous among teachers and it is increasingly difficult to find an appropriate educational institution even for disadvantaged children of Hungarian nationality. Due to the reduction of the compulsory schooling age in 2014 (currently it is 16 years) many young people drop out of the education system.⁷

4 Even though the administrative arrangement for the residence address is automatic, administration for the TAJ card often takes a long time. And the data sheet that can be applied for in the Uniform National Card System (NEK) will be issued only if the TAJ number and the address card have already been obtained. The NEK data sheet is necessary not only for applying for a student card but for the enrolment, too.

5 Information provided by the interviewed collaborators of Menedék Association

6 E.g. Council Directive 2003/9/EC laying down [minimum standards for the reception of asylum seekers](#) and [more info](#)

7 More information about this subject-matter is available [here](#)

All these factors determine fundamentally how pupils with special needs that are beneficiaries of international protection can make their way in public education. Some policy recommendations⁸ were formulated at the beginning of the 2000s with respect to migrant children, so that schools can integrate these special aspects in their pedagogical programme at local level. The Guidelines issued in 2005 by the Ministry of Education (OM)⁹, were forward-looking in their approach and fundamental standards and guarantees of an inter-cultural pedagogical system were formulated in them: *“Children and pupils of non-Hungarian nationality take part in an increasing number in Hungarian public education. That fact poses new challenges for the kindergartens and schools because the mother tongue of several children and pupils is not Hungarian, they have pursued their studies in countries other than Hungary or they enrol in the kindergarten or school not at the beginning of the school year. And the purpose of the stay in Hungary and the plans for the future of the family also influence the pedagogical work. The aspects of dealing with and treating pupils with foreign nationality are various, but there exist still such basic principles – mainly based on the experiences of countries having great traditions in teaching foreigners – that can serve as guidelines for elaborating a coherent system of aims and tasks and there are procedures that make learning and teaching efficiency possible and attainable.”*

The adoption and introduction of those principles were set as pre-conditions to be eligible for the so-called ‘normative subsidy for migrants’ (a kind of special subsidy allocated per capita of foreign children), which provided possibility and extra funds so that proper support can be given to foreign children and pupils. As a result of the anti-migrant campaigns conducted in recent years, there are some schools that – afraid of losing pupils originating from the majority society – tend to shift on the responsibility of enrolment.¹⁰ The educational delivery system is not prepared for conducting the school aptitude tests for children with special needs (e.g. language barriers) or in relation to other special educational needs. There are great differences and disparities in this field, too: certain professionals and institutions ask for help in order to solve the problem that has emerged, but there are such cases as well, where the children do not receive proper service and care.¹¹

8 E.g. The Babel Project of the Artemisszió Foundation, and the recommendations of the working group operated by the Office for Immigration and the Ministry of Social and Family Affairs (SZCSM)

9 OM (2005). [communication of the Ministry of Education](#) on the issuance of the directive on the education of kindergarten children and students in kindergartens and school education according to the intercultural pedagogical system. (2005)

10 Several NGOs have similar experiences in this respect, most recently this problem has been raised at an educational round-table conference coordinated by – UNHCR. In many cases, the headmasters of the schools themselves raise that it is a disadvantage in the competition for pupils if the number of migrant/Roma children increases among the pupils.

11 EThere is information available to us in this respect from the day-to-day practice of Menedék Association, there are cases when the parents of the children concerned enter into contact with the Association, but it also occurs that the Pedagogical Special Service or the schools turn to them for help in a concrete matter.

Acceptance of the previously pursued studies (either in the country of origin or on the way to Hungary) of children and pupils that have been granted international protection takes place also in various ways. The heads of certain institutions have more experience in handling children that are beneficiaries of international protection and accept the statements made by the pupils under the asylum procedure and recognise their previous studies. In other institutions, however, the student is required to pass an equivalency examination or his/her completed studies are not taken into account. In most of the cases, this diversity derives from the lack of central regulation or from the non-harmonisation of legislation on education and asylum-related matters. Though it often facilitates the process of enrolment if the professionals of NGOs providing aid for those concerned draw their attention to the opportunities offered by the legal rule.

Refugee pupils also have a clear disadvantage in the course of the entrance examination for secondary schools. For completing the central test for secondary schools mother-tongue level Hungarian language skills are needed and pupils of a non-Hungarian native tongue are not exempted from that rule (the only concession for them is that there is a longer time available for them for writing the test).

It can be concluded that while access to kindergarten and 'primary school education is ensured in most of the cases, the opportunity for them to have access to secondary level or high-level studies¹² is very limited because of the reasons mentioned above. Their chances are furthered deteriorated by the fact that the compulsory schooling age is 16 years; this leads in many cases to an early drop-out of refugee pupils. There are not much means available for the schools for retaining less motivated pupils in the system that are often forced to opt for work and they often refer to this reason for not accepting their enrolment. Setting back the compulsory schooling age to 18 years of age does not mean a solution in itself::a complex and flexible training system would be necessary that supports integration in the labour market.¹³ The reform of vocational training in 2020 is intended to serve this purpose, but in the opinion of certain educational researchers, its impact on the successful social and labour market integration of disadvantaged pupils is not completely positivet.¹⁴

In teacher training there is no such course among the general pedagogical and psychological ones preparing the students for the teacher profession, which would prepare them specifically for teaching and educating refugee (or

¹² See the analysis by Julianna Faludi and Zsombor Lakatos in this series

¹³ www.ofi.oh.gov.hu/sites/default/files/attachments/hany_eves_korig_tartson.pdf

¹⁴ www.net.jogtar.hu/jogszabaly?docid=a1900080.tv; Criticisms can be read here e.g.: Krisztina Ercse – Péter Radó: [A magyar közoktatásban zajló privatizáció és annak hatásai](#). *Iskolakultúra*, Vol. 29, 2019/7, 8–49.

even foreign) children and pupils. As a general rule, there are very few courses available in the field of multi-cultural education or in the subject-matter of inclusiveness and integration. Even for teachers working already “in the terrain” it is aleatory, whether they can have access to methodological training tailored to specific issues related to refugees.

In summary: The status identical with that of Hungarian nationals and the equal rights ensured in the field of learning and education creates an apparently favourable situation for children that have been granted international protection and ensures their successful integration at school. However, even data gathered by indicator systems measuring the integration level of third-country nationals and refugees (MIPEX, NIEM) substantiate that Hungary belongs to the tail-enders in the field of education, revealing structural deficiencies both in terms of the legislative background and in the field of mainstream and specifically targeted measures and policies.

Guaranteeing equal conditions is not sufficient by any means: though it legally makes participation possible, but targeted support would be required both at the policy and the micro level, so that the concerned children and young people can use their rights. And this is completely missing. In many cases, equal rights do not signify genuine access and opportunity for genuine participation.

3. How come that there are good practices still existing?

Due to the lack of proper special policy regulations and in the absence of uniform inter-cultural educational and teaching aims, good practices for promoting the integration of refugee children and pupils have developed in the educational and teaching institutions concerned and under the targeted programmes of NGOs and confessional organisations. (Most often in institutions where bilingual teaching is provided or which are located in areas densely populated by immigrants, therefore foreign pupils enrol there in greater numbers.) The above-mentioned NGOs and confessional organisations have set as an objective to support the integration of immigrants/refugees as their main profile, with supporting their educational integration as an important segment. In many cases, the NGOs/confessional organisations implementing such programmes and the educational institutions receiving the pupils have found each other through that objective.

It also hampers the establishment, strengthening and professional enhancement of good practices that in most Hungarian institutions pupils of foreign

origin are present in very low numbers: their ratio is about 1% in the case of each teaching and educational level and the presence of beneficiaries of international protection is a fragmentary portion of even that.

The institutions that have developed good practices generally admit refugee and other migrant pupils alike, and they have established integration practices mainly in the fields where the needs are similar.

Programmes responding specifically to the special needs of refugee children are implemented mostly by NGOs and confessional organisations, in many cases in close partnership with kindergartens and schools. Such institutions include the integration objectives consciously in their educational profile and sustain their operation in the long term (either with or without project support).¹⁵

As it turns out from the current state of affairs, the schools and teachers involved in the teaching and education of foreign pupils do not receive support from the education authorities or from the competent ministry either in terms of financial funds, human resources or methodological support. Despite that fact, they were able to develop several methods and practices, whereby they can successfully provide assistance for integration at school for foreign pupils (and among them for beneficiaries of international protection). Such practices have been established partly as a persisting outcome of previous support programmes, partly as a result of international and domestic project-level methodological and training projects and partly as own development based on their experiences.

The practices and programmes hereby established are, however, of a fragmentary and ad hoc nature, and respond to satisfying certain important needs and they apply a holistic approach rarely only. This trend is further strengthened by the fact that such practices and programmes are mainly implemented on a project basis from grant funding, therefore it is difficult to plan and sustain them in the long term and in many cases, the real needs and development directions are overridden by the requirements and indicators set by the support objectives. Nevertheless, such programmes and good practices still provide real help for the integration and advancement at school of refugee children.

As regards their content, most of the good practices are aimed at the individual development of and providing learning support for refugee children. And within that focus is laid on developing Hungarian language skills as a foreign language, individual mentoring and assistance in learning. Very often such programmes are complemented with social work and lay emphasis on

¹⁵ E.g. The Hungarian-English Bilingual 'primary school of Erzsébetváros (Dobsuli), Bem József 'primary school of Kőbánya, BMSC Than Károly Eco-School and Secondary Grammar School

supporting communication between the families and the educational institution. Many support programmes target the development of teachers and professionals. Their focus is generally on providing training and professional forums, with the aim of shaping attitudes and providing methodological assistance. However, the number of programmes aimed at increasing the social consciousness of the “host community” (i.e. the other children and their parents) remains negligible. Unfortunately, this points to the fact that there are gaps in the bi-directional nature of the integration process and that responsibility rests with the refugee families. Therefore, the clear advantages of inter-cultural pedagogy, that would apply identically to the minority and majority participants, cannot manifest themselves in the Hungarian educational medium.

A significant part of the support programmes were implemented from EU funds (EIF, EMF, AMIF) but the Hungarian State did not earmark resources from them for educational purposes due to reallocation following the migration “crisis” of 2015.¹⁶

In addition, the presence of other (international or state-run) support programmes is negligible. Currently the UNHCR supports such a programme in Hungary: Menedék Association provides a supportive service in order to support complex integration at school, volunteers provide coaching for catching up in certain subjects, the children can have access to psychic support, children’s clubs are set up according to age groups, and programmes for deepening social consciousness are implemented at schools. Inter-cultural mediators are in work in order to bridge the cultural gaps. The collaborators of the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) provide Hungarian language teaching and social support, the Lutheran Diaconate Integration Service and Kalunba Szociális Szolgáltató Nonprofit Kft. established from the Refugee Mission of the Reformed Church implement educational integration objectives. In addition, there exist some projects – mainly under ERASMUS+ – sporadically, which are often implemented by organisations not specifically specialised in refugee target groups. Given that certain such organisations can reach the target group with difficulty, they use the help of experienced supportive organisations in most of the cases.

As a result of civil society joint action in support of the refugees in 2015, such supportive communities were established that have been providing active and non-professional assistance ever since for those in need.¹⁷

¹⁶ A more detailed presentation of the projects can be found here: Lakatos Zsombor – Pataki Nikolett: Hogyan tovább? Migráns háttérű fiatalok köznevelési-oktatási integrációja. *Educatio*, Vol. 26, 2017/3, 352–364. Ex-post evaluation by ICCR-Budapest Foundation, Interdisciplinary Centre for Comparative Research in the Social Sciences, of projects supporting integration at school implemented between 2007 and 2014 with funding from the European Integration Fund and European Migration Fund ([research report](#)).

¹⁷ E.g. Let’s Help the Refugees Together – an informal group that has been set up in Facebook, Saint Eged Community

4. Best practices – the institutional environment

Best practices for supporting the learning and educational integration of children and pupils that are beneficiaries of international protection will be presented through the implementing institutions in the following, by making reference, in addition to our professional experience gained as experts, to several studies that discuss this subject-matter in detail.¹⁸

The integration practices of educational and teaching institutions are fundamentally determined by the number of pupils of foreign origin present in the institution. In Hungary, the ratio of pupils of foreign origin (and within that those that are beneficiaries of international protection) is very low in public education. (In the 2018/2019 school year, the number of children that have applied for international protection or those that have been granted refugee status amounted to 30 in kindergartens, 52 in 'primary schools and 84 in secondary schools.) This also reveals how few institutions are concerned at all in this respect at national level.

4.1. Institutions where foreign pupils are present in greater numbers

There are schools that can be traditionally considered refugee-friendly. Most of them took part in a project that was targeted at the specific development of migrant/refugee pupils. Due to their location, they are easily accessible for those concerned. It can also be an advantage if children of families belonging to a specific ethnic community attend the institution, but good relations established with a supportive organisation could also signify help.

In kindergartens and schools, where foreign/refugee pupils are present in greater numbers, good practices supporting the integration of the pupils have been developed.¹⁹ They are familiar with the administrative conditions and procedure of registration and enrolment, and they can assist the families in such matters. In many cases, information leaflets are available also in foreign language(s) and access to information is easier for those involved, in the social network that has evolved around the institution. There has evolved some practices in 'primary schools for taking previous studies into account – in many cases, it means the acceptance of certificates (or, in the case of refugees, an

¹⁸ Zsuzsa László (Ed): „Tehát egymástól tanulni nagyon-nagyon sok mindent lehet.” [Hazai és európai jó gyakorlatok az interkulturális pedagógia és a migráns gyerekek integrációja terén](#). Menedék Egyesület, Budapest, 2013.

¹⁹ E.g. “Mocorgó” Kindergarten of Kőbánya, Bem József 'primary school, Hungarian-English Bilingual 'primary school of Erzsébetváros, Bókay János Specialised Secondary Grammar School of Semmelweis University

allowance for doing without it), rather than a real assessment of the knowledge level or mapping of skills and competences. The pedagogical methodology of assigning the pupils to year groups or grades has also been established, often by following the practice of assigning them to the year group corresponding to their age (though, unfortunately, it can happen that they are directed to lower grades.) Getting into secondary schools is unfortunately a less easy and smooth process.²⁰ As we have mentioned above, pupils of foreign origin are not exempted from the obligation of writing the central entrance test that requires them to have high-level skills in the Hungarian language. Given, however, that this means great difficulty for refugee pupils, there are some NGOs that have undertaken to prepare them for the entrance examination. The headmasters of the receiving secondary schools may decide on the admittance of the pupils in their own powers (they can admit pupils without having to pass an entrance examination during the course of the school-year or on the basis of an oral examination in addition to/instead of the result of a written test) and the headmasters of supportive secondary schools do use this right.

It is characteristic of each schooling level (and also of kindergartens) that there is a practice in place for communication with the parents. Since the NGOs also lay a great emphasis on supporting communication between the parents and the teachers, they promote this by delegating professionals specialised in inter-cultural intermediation and there evolves a social network that can also help newly-entering families. However, it is still a prevailing practice that the pupils (or their brothers or sisters or other children) translate for their parents, which often poses a difficulty. In addition to overcoming language barriers (or along with them), teachers working in such institutions are more open-minded and self-confident in communicating with the parents and it occurs less frequently that relations cannot be established because they are afraid of the unknown.

Language barriers manifest and occur in various ways at different ages of the pupils or at different levels of the institutions. In the kindergartens concerned, the pedagogues emphasise and practice the integrating role of non-verbal activities (such as creative handicraft activity, play, music, etc.) and they endeavour to allow refugee children to learn the language through playing with their Hungarian classmates. The absence of mastering the Hungarian language signifies less difficulties at 'primary school (mainly in the lower grades), and often even a teacher specialised in teaching Hungarian as a foreign language (briefly: MID) is also available in the institution who provides assistance for developing the pupils' skills individually or in small groups. Even if it is not

²⁰ [On the basis of information provided by the headmaster of a secondary school and by the professionals](#) of Menedék Association engaged in supporting integration at school

achieved, provision of individual support is characteristic of almost all the institutions, just as that the pedagogues have developed a system of differentiated requirements and assessments for pupils that do not speak Hungarian (well) yet. The lack of knowledge of Hungarian causes greater difficulties in the upper grades and mainly in secondary schools. There is generally a teacher present who has specialised in teaching Hungarian as a foreign language at institutions attended by pupils of foreign origin in greater numbers: there are examples also of cases where MID is accessible for such pupils such that it is integrated into the timetable (e.g. for example instead of a lesson of Hungarian literature or in the framework of coaching in groups) and the pupils can participate in education in an integrated way. However, there are examples existing also for the case that the language preparatory class intended for refugees remains segregated later on within the school.

The differentiated requirements, support for learning and assessment of knowledge usually develop in an ad hoc manner in the schools that admit pupils of foreign origin. Provision of individual support and help in catching up with the curriculum of the subjects is prevailing, even by providing learning aids and lesson plans elaborated by the teacher. Such practices are of an ad hoc nature and not uniform even within the same school, because failing a generally-accepted method, it depends on the individual sense of responsibility/competence of the pedagogues what kind of approach they follow concerning this issue.

Inclusion in the community and inclusion of the pupils and families also takes place in a more conscious manner in such institutions. It has an important impact if the presence of children of other languages and cultures is not unknown to the kindergarten and school community. Even though management of conflicts deriving from cultural differences does not always work well, there is still a collective open-mindedness, experience and there are best practices. Another characteristic feature is the preparation of children belonging to the majority society and that their social consciousness is enhanced. In many cases, a need and endeavour to learn about the culture of the refugee people (e.g. holidays and customs/traditions) develops, but it often remains at the level of exoticising practices. Such institutions cooperate actively with NGOs and confessional organisations supporting refugees and successfully apply for and win support programmes, thereby enhancing their professional experience and resources alike.

4.2. Institutions where pupils of foreign origin are present in smaller numbers or are not present at all.

In schools attended by a few refugee pupils, this issue often does not get thematised at all. Such situations are characterised rather by the strategy of “cold

integration”²¹, during which the pedagogue’s attitude toward the refugee pupils is that “this child is also just a child, knowledge will stick to him/her”. This strategy could work in some cases (but it largely depends on the family background and the individual characteristics of the pupils), but according to the experiences gained by the supportive organisations, the problems might remain latent. It might occur in such situations that the refugee pupil becomes isolated. It can also occur that some pedagogues develop instinctively, or on the contrary, fully intentionally, a portion of the above-mentioned best practices in line with professional arguments. However, it is not always sufficient for successful integration at school.

There are some institutions, which would have been supposed, due to a special situation (e.g. a regionally competent school of a state-run institution accommodating unaccompanied minors, or a regionally competent school of a temporary shelter for refugee families) to admit refugee children or children that have applied for international protection but it did not fully or did not at all meet that obligation. It is characteristic of such schools that (in a situation otherwise posing a truly great professional challenge) they did not receive any support from the State and in the absence of such support they could not live up to those professional challenges. They did not admit or they referred the refugee children (or part of them) to homeschooling, which signifies that integration at school becomes impossible.²²

5. Special situations and needs

In analysing the individual school career of the refugee children and pupils it can be concluded that apart from the factor as to what kind of institutions (from the types outlined above) they are admitted to, it is also defining for their integration at school, the school level (i.e. at what age) at which they enter the education system. For the children who enter the Hungarian educational system at kindergartner or primary school age, there is a much greater chance of integrating and subsequently following a successful school career than for those arriving at an older age.

Those children who are forced to stay in Hungary without or separated from their parents constitute one of the most exposed groups of refugee children

²¹ For more information about this phenomenon, see: Margit Feischmidt – Pál Nyíri (Ed.): *Nem kívánt gyerekek? Külföldi gyerekek magyar iskolákban*, Budapest, MTA Nemzeti-etnikai Kisebbségkutató Intézet – Sík Kiadó, 2006, 136.

²² At the occasion of the establishment of facilities for accommodating refugees, no due attention is paid to providing sufficient information for the local population e.g. see the cases in Vámoszabadi and Debrecen. It is most probable that resistance could be mitigated if they were accommodated with the involvement of the local population.

from educational aspects. Characteristically, they are already above the compulsory schooling age and very often they are in a position of being forced to take up work.

It is a special feature of the Hungarian educational delivery system that they are eligible for support in the framework of after-care only if they continue their studies. That is why the motive for attending school is limited on their part to obtaining the certificate of school attendance. There have been several schools that assumed the responsibility of supporting – in cooperation with an NGO or church organisation – the integration at school of refugee children that have entered specialised care. There had been motivation, extra resources and professional support for some years starting from 2008 under projects supported by grants so that they can fulfil that task in an innovative way. In recent years there have been fewer and fewer institutions/professionals that would invest extra efforts in supporting the studies of young refugee amidst the narrowing opportunities. Certain schools admit refugee pupils merely because normative subsidies are increased per capita and there will be thereby pupils in sufficient numbers that will ensure their survival.

6. Policy recommendations

An overview is provided below, on how the practices deriving from the current legislative regulations support the integration at school of pupils that have been granted international protection and it is also examined the necessary systematic interventions in order that equal rights can signify actual access to it. Naturally, it is also necessary that best practices operating well at the micro- and meso level should be consolidated in a uniform system, supporting the work of the professionals concerned.

Table 1. Challenges, current ad hoc practices and recommendations for system-level solutions in the field of integration at school of pupils that are beneficiaries of international protection

Challenge	Current ad hoc practices	Future system-level solutions
Children that have applied for international protection do not have access to the public education system.	Pre-integration programmes implemented by NGOs, development of Hungarian language skills, preparatory courses for school, “traveling teachers” – all this in an ad hoc manner, depending on available funds. E.g. Menedék Association: accommodation centres and Fót.	Opportunity should be provided for attending school even during the procedure for international protection. Providing support to and making educational institutions interested. If applicants for international protection would be accommodated during the application period at places where they could later receive subsidised housing, there would be greater motivation on the part of the families.
Children with special needs signify an extra burden for schools competent according to the place of residence.	Training for teachers and pedagogues, mentoring, intercultural intermediation between parents-teachers-children. E.g. JRS, Kalunba, Menedék	Provision of comprehensive professional assistance (e.g. establishment of a network of mentors), normative support for migrant children (special subsidy paid per capita of migrant children, structural pedagogical development training programmes, e.g. MID training, further training courses)
There is no uniform practice in place for the acceptance of previous studies	Provision of help for headmasters in interpreting legislative acts. E.g. Menedék	Provision of clear guidelines at the level of legislation, harmonising legislation on education and asylum-related matters.

Due to the negative attitude of the society in relation to migration, some schools avoid the problem	Setting up local cooperation; training courses for pedagogues from grant funds, occupations at school for enhancing social consciousness E.g. Artemisszió, Menedék, JRS	Changing the governmental communication related to migration; national programmes for the enhancement of social consciousness.
There exist no refugee-specific curricula in teacher training	Training courses implemented by NGOs (generally outside the system of high-level education), mentoring programmes Menedék, Artemisszió (earlier)	Integrating refugee-specific curricula in teacher training e.g. inter-cultural knowledge, supportive work for refugees, psychology of migration, etc.
Due to the age limit of compulsory schooling, refugee young people not having sufficient Hungarian language skills do not have access to public education	Individual and case-by-case solutions, committed schools JRS, Menedék	Setting the age limit for compulsory schooling back to 18; inciting the institutions professionally to admit refugee children
The children concerned do not have access to the school aptitude test and to the procedure for determining special educational needs	Ad hoc solutions are used in the institutions, assistance provided by NGOs (e.g. in translating)	Elaborating and spreading indicators of measurement (which are not based on the Hungarian language),
Difficulties in access to secondary-level and high-level education (because of the focus on knowledge of the Hungarian language)	Programmes preparing the pupils for entrance examinations, implemented by NGOs and church organisations	Elaboration and making entrance examination procedures focussed on assessing real knowledge and skills (not based on the knowledge of the Hungarian language) accessible to pupils with native tongue other than Hungarian

Source: own compilation

Pending the implementation of the system-level changes outlined above, the pedagogues and heads of the institutions can do a lot at the local institutional level in order to support the integration of refugee children and pupils. Further decisive elements of integration at school (and social integration) are: an inclusive environment and as many positive and retaining (contemporary) relations as possible. The headmasters of the institutions may decide on the admittance of refugee children to the institution within the scope of their own powers, they have the opportunity to make allowances as regards their certificates, and to assign the children to grades matching their age, which is an indispensable condition to the establishment of the relations mentioned above. Sometimes it is enough to draw the attention of the headmasters to the opportunity allowed by legislation, thus the option of positive judgement may later become an automatic. It makes a huge difference if the class (and the school) is prepared for the arrival of a refugee classmate with a positive, sensitising approach. It could help that process if there are pupils in the class or school who can talk about their own integration experience.

Several methodological aid materials are available for supporting both educational integration and integration beyond learning and the NGOs are also available for providing help in this respect. But most of all, an open-minded, pro-active, supportive attitude responding to the needs can really provide support for those concerned.