

Mapping Report

Theme 2: Education and access to Housing and Health

Budapest (Hungary)

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Education

In Hungary presently there are approximately 12 thousands migrant children in the educational system, 20 per cent of which are not of Hungarian origin. For the rest of them integration is rather easy, since they are coming from neighbouring countries and their mother tongue is Hungarian. School integration of children in many cases depends on their parents. Social workers have told that if a family plans to move away from Hungary in the near future, they usually do not put much effort into their children's education. Once the family has decided to stay in the country, education becomes an important issue. Children staying at refugee reception centres generally go to school. If a child speaks English, the family prefers to place him/her in a bilingual school. This gives a broader perspective to the child in the future and also makes their integration in the school easier.

All children in the territory of the country are obliged to attend schools till the age of 18. Parents or guardian can be made responsible in case the child does not attend school. Social workers of Menedék Hungarian Association for Migrants have not heard of such a case.

Migrant children are mostly spread all over the country and there are several schools where there is only one or two migrant students altogether. The Ministry of Education and Culture¹ has established the institution of the so-called migrants normative which schools with migrant students can obtain. It requires higher standards in the curriculum of the school and provides a higher yearly normative amount after each migrant student. Experience shows that the amount is so low and the requirements are so high that obtaining the normative is worth only after at least 15 students.

The Ministry has also established a migrant working group which consists of the representatives of the following governmental, educational and non-governmental organizations: Office of Immigration and Nationality, Alien's Policing Department, Ministry of Education and Culture, Hungarian Language School, Dob Street Elementary and Vocational School, Menedék Hungarian Association for Migrants, UNHCR, Education Research Institute, external and independent experts. The working groups meets regularly (every two months) and responsible for developing measures regarding migrant students. The working group has recently developed a guide entitled "Handbook to the Introduction and Implementation of the Intercultural Pedagogy in Schools". The handbook consists of the principles and practices that are the requirements for obtaining the migrant normative.

¹ www.okm.gov.hu

Besides the above mentioned, presently there are no other policy measures that aim to prevent and tackle early school leaving in migrant students or encourage their participation in higher education.

In recent years Menedék Hungarian Association for Migrants has launched several programs aiming to improve the situation of migrant children in the education system. The programs have three target groups:

- Migrant children
- Teachers
- Hungarian children

In 2002 Menedék has started to develop a network that connected those schools that have a significant number of migrant students, for instance near reception centres, in certain districts of the capital, etc. The network aimed to map the number and situation of migrant students, since before 1990 there had been no migrant children except of those in families of diplomats. After the transition migrant children started to appear in schools that were not prepared to host them, teachers did not know how to deal with them.

In 2003 the Association organized two 2-day-long trainings for teacher and published a booklet on how teaching migrants children. The project was supported by the Dutch, British and American embassies. During the training sessions foreign examples and methodology were discussed with the participation of Swedish and Austrian school directors. The project's novelty lied in the fact that the national curriculum for training teachers does not include any classes on migrant students. In 2004 a 30-hour-course was developed by the Association for teachers in elementary schools. They could take part in a field visit to Vienna. The long term plan of the Association is to apply for the accreditation of their courses.

Migrant children are involved in several programs, too: one of them is the yearly summer camp for refugee children. Other programs (visiting museums, the zoo, cinemas, theatres, sports, arts and crafts, etc.) during the school year always include non-migrant and migrant children to encourage their integration. Volunteers provide extra, after-school classes for children in need.

Besides these specific projects Menedék have been constantly providing social work for refugees and migrants. Clients often ask for help in getting information about schools or in the enrolment process, therefore social workers are in contact with several schools.

In promoting tolerance in young generations, the Association targeted high schools countrywide. Volunteers and refugees visit classes where they talk to the students about their personal experiences and break down stereotypes.

Dob Street School in Budapest and a school in Debrecen can be mentioned as examples in integrating migrant students. Dob Street School became a bilingual school (English-Hungarian) and each class has a few migrant students. In Debrecen a preparatory class has been launched for those children who cannot speak Hungarian. This way they do not have to attend classes with others who could be years younger than they are, which is unfortunately is a common practice.

In school with a "history" of migrant students, usually teachers are prepared and well aware of the importance of how to welcome a newcomer.

Looking through the existing initiatives in the field of education in Hungary, small-scale programs of Menedék add up to the case study.

Housing

Disadvantaged migrants such as asylum seekers are entitled to receive housing upon arrival to the country currently at three reception centres. There are no programs regarding other groups of migrants. According to the Asylum Law and its related orders refugees and persons under humanitarian protection receive housing support after leaving the reception centre. 40 per cent of their rent is refunded for a few months. In these cases financial background of the person or family is taken into consideration. When leaving the centres, they are entitled to receive “move out support”, only for one occasion.

The Reformatory Church used to run housing programs for refugees but currently there are no such programs. Currently Menedék runs a project that support single persons in the frame of a saving program. Participants can stay at so-called worker-hostels for 3 to 6 months and part of their income goes to a saving fund. From this fund later they will be able to pay a deposit (usually equivalent to the rent for 2-3 months) when renting a flat. Social workers help participants in finding a proper place to rent with acceptable conditions and a make the owner sign a contract.

There is no information on the housing conditions of most migrant groups. Unfortunately social workers often witness discrimination from the side of the owners when Arabic or African people would like to rent flats.

There is no best practice in the field of housing migrants in Hungary.

Health

Everyone with a status (asylum seekers, refugees, residence permit, work permit, etc.) is entitled to receive basic health care and emergency services. In the case of legal employment the employer is obliged to pay social security after every employee.

People staying at reception centres can use the services of the 24 hour infirmary. During the day there is a general doctor at service. Some problems arise with pharmacies: only in few places the staff is familiar with the regulation, namely that for refugees the Office of Immigration and Nationality pays for the medication. Pharmacies close to reception centres are well aware of this fact, so patients are advised to go to these ones.

There is no best practice in the field of health care services for migrants in Hungary.