The general objective of the INTEGRACE project was to promote the educational integration of refugee and asylum-seeking children in the EU through developing common standards and sharing of best practices in programme development and evaluation. Particular attention was devoted to vulnerable groups – i.e. unaccompanied minors and children who have been victims of crime.

The more specific INTEGRACE objectives were:

- to enhance the effectiveness of policies and programmes for the integration of refugee and asylum-seeking children in the EU;
- to identify best practices in the integration of refugee and asylum-seeking children in the educational systems of the EU Member States;
- to establish EU wide standards for the evaluation of initiatives for the integration of refugee children at school;
- to develop analytical tools for impact assessments of programs and policies for the integration of refugee children at school;
- to suggest a common methodology for preparedness programs in countries where the target group is relatively small;
- to establish a network of NGOs and universities promoting the integration of refugee children in the educational systems of EU Member States and researching related issues.

The project team pursued the following medium and long-term impacts:

**Medium-term impacts:**

- Best practices in the integration of refugee schoolchildren identified, described and (particularly in CEE) promoted;
- Increased capacity of stakeholders to evaluate policies for the integration of refugees by conducting standardised program evaluations/impact assessments;
- Increased readiness of certain Member States with smaller target groups to prepare for sudden increases in levels of asylum-seekers and refugees.

**Long-term impacts:**

- Establishment of a network of NGOs and universities, active in anti-discrimination initiatives (with respect to migrant, minority and refugee children) from both Western and (New) Central and Eastern EU Member States, promoting and sharing expertise and best practices;
• Synergies with projects and policies promoting not only the integration of refugee children, but also the integration of immigrant and minority children at school, will facilitate the creation of overall positive atmosphere for vulnerable groups in EU schools;
• Greater social cohesion in EU Member States as the improved integration of refugee children leads to better opportunities for educational and professional advancement.

The INTEGRACE project team has described and catalogued best practices in the integration of refugee and asylum-seeking children at schools and has conducted program evaluations of select initiatives in three Western European EU Member States (Italy, Sweden and Austria) and impact assessments for their implementation in two Eastern European countries (Bulgaria and Slovenia). In cataloguing best practices, the research conducted by the project team, with the help of external experts, encompassed all 26 EU Member States participating in the European Refugee Fund (where it is also hoped that some of the best practices identified will eventually be implemented), as well as Denmark, Norway, and four Western Balkan states at various stages on their way to EU Membership (namely Serbia, Montenegro, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina). In countries where best practices are lacking, situation reports were produced, outlining areas that need specific improvement. Moreover, in countries where the target group is small, best practices were considered in the implementation of preparedness programs (i.e. “stress tests” designed to gauge the level of preparedness of elementary, middle and high schools in the event of a sudden and unexpected arrival of refugee minors). Specific attention was paid to initiatives aimed at the well-being and integration in education of the most vulnerable groups, including unaccompanied minors and refugee and asylum-seeking children who have been victims of crimes such as human trafficking.

The INTEGRACE project involved five main partners – three institutions from Western Europe (the Censis Foundation, Italy, the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute of Human Rights, Austria, and Halmstad University, Sweden) and two NGOs from Eastern Europe (the Center for the Study of Democracy, Bulgaria, and the Peace Institute, Slovenia), thus achieving balance between New and Old Member States. The project partners from Western MSs shared their knowledge and greater experience in refugee and/or immigration research and initiatives and in protecting vulnerable groups with NGOs from new Member States.

The extraordinarily wide coverage of countries and practices was assured by the commitment on the part of the project partners to cover additional countries than the ones they are based in, as well as by the contributions of a variety of eminent external experts in the field of migration and refugee studies. The quality of research and sustainability of the project were assured by its appropriate design: partners (apart from CSD) researched best practices in countries that are close geographically and/or linguistically. This allowed for the review of best practices in the integration of refugee and asylum-seeking children to extend to all 27 EU Member States and to cover non-EU MS as well.
The project partners were involved in the following activities:

1. Researching best practices in the educational integration of refugee children in their country as well as in several other European countries (typically linguistically and/or geographically/culturally close). Where the target group was relatively small, best practices were reviewed in the design and implementation of preparedness programs (if any), or “stress tests” designed to measure the readiness of national institutions to receive and integrate a sudden influx of refugee schoolchildren in certain smaller or peripheral countries where the target group is relatively small (e.g. in Estonia). Where best practices were lacking (Bulgaria and the Western Balkans being notable examples), preparing situation reports and highlighting areas for improvement was the main focus. Attention was also paid to best practices in the integration of other vulnerable groups as well, such as immigrant and minority children, to the extent that any such practices could be feasibly and successfully applied with respect to refugee and asylum-seeking children as well;

2. In the case of project partners in Austria, Italy, and Sweden: conducting project evaluations in their countries, and contributing towards developing common European standards for conducting such evaluations (working together with the other partners). In the case of Eastern European NGOs (in Bulgaria and Slovenia): conducting brief social impact assessments of the introduction of select best practices in their countries, and contributing towards developing common European standards for conducting such social impact assessments;

3. Summarising the results of the research on best practices in their own country and the other countries they are responsible for researching, as well as presenting the project evaluation of initiatives or the social impact assessments of the introduction of initiatives in their country in written form, in order for these to be integrated into a Handbook on the integration of refugee and asylum-seeking children in the educational systems of EU Member States.

CSD as the project coordinator was responsible for research in the rest of the EU Member States not covered by the other partners by hiring additional external experts. The external experts had their work reviewed by CSD as well as by Members of the Expert Advisory Board (Professor David Ingleby, Dr. Nando Sigona, Professor Mati Heidmets, Professor Inggerd Rydin, Professor Krystyna Iglicka, Professor Anna Kresteva, and Dr. Eugenia Markova).

CSD was in charge of coordinating the work of other partners and, with the help of the Expert Advisory Board, provided general guidance and ensured the overall quality of the project deliverables. The written reviews of best practices in the integration of refugee and asylum-seeking children in each country, of best practices in the design of stress tests referred to above, the situation reports where best practices were nonexistent or scarce, and the summaries of the program evaluations and impact assessments, all underwent several rounds of feedback provision before being included in this Handbook. CSD also coordinated the dissemination of the Handbook.
to stakeholders throughout the European Union as well as in Norway and the Western Balkans by providing paper and e-version editions of the Handbook to various stakeholders in all 27 EU Member States:

1. Ministry of Education of the respective country (more specifically, the department and/or most influential decision maker(s) with respect to setting policy priorities in the field of migrant/refugee education;
2. Ministry or government agency responsible for the general integration of migrants/refugees/asylum seekers;
3. Academics/research institutions/NGOs focusing on immigrant/refugee studies and specifically on migrant/refugee educational integration, or advocating immigrant/refugee rights;
4. The UNHCR Office/Contact person for each country;
5. Major Refugee/Migrant Associations in each country surveyed;
6. Representatives of the Save the Children Network in each country surveyed;
7. Representatives of the RAXEN Network in each country surveyed.

The following table provides a summary of the countries where INTEGRACE research was conducted and the types of project activities:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Countries where project partners were based and conducted research: Italy, Sweden, Austria, Slovenia and Bulgaria</td>
<td>Full range of activities carried out, including reviews of best practices in the integration of refugee and asylum-seeking children or situation analysis (as applicable), and program evaluations/impact assessments of (the introduction of) select best practices (as applicable)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Countries where partner institutions based in neighbouring or geographically/culturally close states conducted research: France, Spain, Denmark, Norway, Germany, Serbia, Montenegro, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
<td>Reviews of best practices in the integration of refugee and asylum-seeking children, or best practices in the design of “stress tests”, or situation analysis (as applicable)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Countries where individual experts were based: the UK, the Netherlands, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Poland, and Estonia</td>
<td>Reviews of best practices in the integration of refugee and asylum-seeking children, or best practices in the design of “stress tests”, or situation analysis (as applicable)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Countries where individual experts based elsewhere (in neighbouring or geographically/culturally close states) conducted research: Ireland, Belgium, Luxembourg, Finland, Greece, Cyprus, Portugal, Malta, Latvia and Lithuania</td>
<td>Reviews of best practices in the integration of refugee and asylum-seeking children, or best practices in the design of “stress tests”, or situation analysis (as applicable)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The direct beneficiaries of the action are children who have been granted asylum status or are seeking to be granted asylum in EU Member States participating in the ERF. Since UNHCR estimates that around 41 per cent of all refugees and 27 per cent of all asylums seekers worldwide are children, it could be estimated that roughly over 715,690 such children reside in the countries where the INTEGRACE project conducted research (2009 Global Trends: Refugees, Asylum-seekers, Returnees, Internally Displaced and Stateless Persons):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COUNTRY</th>
<th>Total refugees and people in refugee-like situations</th>
<th>Asylum-seekers (pending cases)</th>
<th>Estimated number of refugee children</th>
<th>Estimated number of asylum seeking children</th>
<th>Estimated total number of RASC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>38,906</td>
<td>32,146</td>
<td>15,951</td>
<td>8,679</td>
<td>24,630</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>15,545</td>
<td>18,233</td>
<td>6,373</td>
<td>4,923</td>
<td>11,296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bosnia</td>
<td>7,132</td>
<td>367</td>
<td>2,924</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>3,023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>5,393</td>
<td>1,196</td>
<td>2,211</td>
<td>323</td>
<td>2,534</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croatia</td>
<td>1,238</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>508</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>518</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyprus</td>
<td>2,888</td>
<td>5,015</td>
<td>1,184</td>
<td>1,354</td>
<td>2,538</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
<td>2,323</td>
<td>1,265</td>
<td>952</td>
<td>342</td>
<td>1,294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>20,355</td>
<td>1,193</td>
<td>8,345</td>
<td>322</td>
<td>8,667</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estonia</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>7,447</td>
<td>3,784</td>
<td>3,053</td>
<td>1,022</td>
<td>4,075</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>196,364</td>
<td>35,268</td>
<td>80,509</td>
<td>9,522</td>
<td>90,031</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>593,799</td>
<td>38,932</td>
<td>243,457</td>
<td>10,512</td>
<td>253,969</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>1,695</td>
<td>48,201</td>
<td>695</td>
<td>13,014</td>
<td>13,709</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>6,044</td>
<td>647</td>
<td>2,478</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>2,652</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>9,571</td>
<td>2,755</td>
<td>3,924</td>
<td>744</td>
<td>4,668</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>54,965</td>
<td>4,365</td>
<td>22,536</td>
<td>1,178</td>
<td>23,714</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latvia</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lithuania</td>
<td>793</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>325</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>344</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>3,230</td>
<td>465</td>
<td>1,324</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>1,450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malta</td>
<td>5,955</td>
<td>1,828</td>
<td>2,441</td>
<td>494</td>
<td>2,935</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montenegro</td>
<td>24,019</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9,848</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9,850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>76,008</td>
<td>16,245</td>
<td>31,163</td>
<td>4,386</td>
<td>35,549</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>37,826</td>
<td>16,639</td>
<td>15,509</td>
<td>4,492</td>
<td>20,001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Certainly, the above table provides only a rough estimate of the numbers of refugee and asylum-seeking children in the countries surveyed. While it has the benefit of following a common method for estimating these numbers, its assumption that 41 per cent of refugees and 27 per cent of asylum seekers are children is certainly not to be interpreted as necessarily reflecting reality accurately. Whereas on average these percentages are probably good approximations, there may be significant variations in individual countries.

**COUNTRY REPORTS**

In order to collect information regarding successful initiatives and policies for the educational integration of RASC, the project team used the following sources of information in the preparation of the country reports:

- academic research and publications;
- reports by government institutions of EU Member States;
- reports by EU institutions and agencies;
- reports and studies by other international organisations;
- reports and studies by non-governmental organisations in EU Member States;

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- reports by government institutions of EU Member States;
- reports by EU institutions and agencies;
- reports and studies by other international organisations;
- reports and studies by non-governmental organisations in EU Member States;
• interviews with stakeholders, conducted over the phone, via email or in person – conducted during fact-finding visits (primary data).

The reports first presented a general overview of the demographics of refugees and asylum seekers in the respective country, the institutional set-up, legal and policy framework, as well as of the educational system and the educational status of refugees and asylum seekers. This was followed by an overview of best practices in the educational integration of RASC (where those could be identified). Several criteria for the identification of best practices were followed in the preparation of the country reports:

• **Part of an overall strategy**: Is the initiative elaborated and implemented as part of an overarching strategy?
• **Impact**: Is there any evidence that the initiative has a measurable output in reaching its aims?
• **Transferability**: Does the initiative have the potential to be one that others can copy, and that can be transferred to other settings and/or Member States?
• **Sustainability**: Does the initiative have the potential to lead to enduring structural changes?
• **Innovation**: Is the initiative of a new type, does it present a new way of doing an existing task? Is there any added value?
• **Relevance for the aims**: Is the initiative an adequate means to reach the aims?
• **Stakeholders’ involvement**: Does the initiative take stakeholders’ (incl. RASC’s/RASC parents’) opinions into account, or allow for active participation by and feedback from stakeholders?

**Policies versus Projects**

One way of classifying the best practices reviewed as part of the INTEGRACE project is to term them as either policies or projects. The former mobilise state resources while the latter rely more on civil society actors and short-term funding at lower levels. The first type is more sustainable, whereas the second illustrates the vitality of solidarity, the spirit of innovation, and of shared responsibility and civic participation. Of course, this dichotomy is not absolute as NGOs could have policies as well. In the Austrian/German context the report authors have made a distinction between longer-term, more sustainable programmes and short-term projects (or projects which are part of some umbrella programme).

The two main strengths of the policies are their sustainability and their capacity for anticipation. The former is illustrated by the finding that the structural features of the educational system could be very beneficial for RASC. Policies’ sustainability is expressed also by the capacity of governmental agencies to change and to back the new orientations by funding and personnel.

Projects compete with policies in anticipating probable future trends or even unexpected developments. Projects are more flexible and open to
imagination and creativity. They stem from the activity and participation of civil society actors and further endorse them. They suffer, however, from two major weaknesses: dependency on EU funding and lack of sustainability.

Policies and projects differ also in terms of transferability. Policies are much more path dependent, and they stem from national political cultures and traditions in governance and integration. Projects are smaller in scope and more focused on goals and target groups, which facilitates their transferability. This transferability is hampered by a major contradiction of EU funding schemes, which favour innovation rather than adaptation and adoption of established good practices.

**Best practice typologies**

There are many ways in which best practices can be classified beyond the policies vs. projects distinction. One way of typifying them is with reference to the stages of education, starting from pre-school/kindergarten integration up to higher secondary education, as these could have a significant impact on the employed approach. Another way to classify best practices is by reference to the aspect of RASC educational integration they address (access to education, quality of education, empowerment, etc), or the sort of obstacles on the path to successful integration that they try to overcome.

1) **Right and access to education**

The right to education translates into different national policies with varying proportions of universalism and multiculturalism. The practices form two clusters: the first offers equal access, the second – differentiated access.

The **first cluster** of national policies guarantees the same educational opportunities to immigrants as to nationals. The **second cluster** of policies grants differentiated access. The main argument and criteria for differentiating access to education is legal status. The authorities of most countries are reluctant to offer equal educational services for irregular migrant children.

Other countries differentiate access in financial or temporal terms. Immigrant children with irregular legal status are entitled to education in public schools on a commercial basis in Poland, while Hungary has introduced fees for irregular migrants and those who stay for less than a year.

2) **Language – a key vehicle of integration**

National language

All reports emphasise the crucial importance of the education in the national language. The good practices cover a large spectrum – from national programs for language immersion to summer camps, and from
introductory classes to advanced courses in reception centres. This type of best practices could be classified into three groups. The first group refers to educational policy: it concerns the political level and is expressed in guidelines, programs, and strategies. The second group forms the larger cluster with a variety of introductory language classes designed for RASC and incorporated in regular school programs. The third group of good practices comprises a variety of extracurricular activities, such as summer language camps, where children enjoy communication with other RASC and native children, as well as learn the language in a stimulating environment.

Mother tongue

Most reports agree on the importance of mother tongue for the children cultural identity, but differ in regards of which institution should assume the responsibility for the tuition. Two opposite visions can be identified. The first considers that the immigrant communities and their organisations rather than the state should offer the teaching of mother tongue. The second cluster of countries considers that the state should assume the education in both the national and the mother tongue languages.

3) Social and intercultural competences and acculturation

There is a rich gamut of extracurricular activities aimed at integrating RASC in stimulating, interactive and creative environments. Two types of good practices can be posited. One type which aims to develop creativity: a plethora of good practices illustrate the potential of art for building bridges, creating understanding and promoting dialogue. A second type has aimed at enhancing communicative skills in an intercultural environment. Indeed, the review of best practices of these two types has demonstrated that creativity and arts are among the most powerful instruments for integration and empowerment.

General findings and conclusions from the review of best practices

The concept of RASC should be deconstructed and distinct integration strategies should be identified and developed for asylum-seeking children on the one hand, and for refugee children on the other. Asylum-seeking children live in the separate world of the asylum seeker centres, and only some of them attend school in the local community. Children with refugee status are typically not distinguished from other children of migrant origin, and are the main target of integration policies. Policy makers should be aware of the differences in temporality of stay and sensitive to the peculiarities of integration of each group.

The State bears the main responsibility for drafting and implementing efficient policies of educational integration. A plethora of positive measures and practices were identified by the INTEGRACE project, all of which are promising but likely to succeed only if they are backed up by solid commitment and careful monitoring. Public authorities are not always able, capable, or willing to meet their obligations with regard to RASC educational integration. There are three main reasons
for this: lack of resources – financial or human (skills and institutional capacity); lack of responsibility – lack of political will and commitment to accept obligations; and lack of coordination between institutions and stakeholders.

An important conclusion that can be reached as a result of reviewing the reports is that actors of integration – teachers, volunteers, NGO activists – play a crucial role in conditions of more restrictive state policies. Most good practices are both initiated and implemented by active individuals, inspired by the values of tolerance, antidiscrimination, intercultural dialogue. Their motivation, energy, innovation, and activism are the extraordinary engines which foster dynamism and makes integration happen. A strong, vibrant civil society is the productive counterpoint to restrictive policies. Civil society’s good practices remedy the shortcomings of the state system.

Strategies and action plans have proven to be highly useful policy instruments, and the optimal institutional incentive structures to legitimise the importance of integration and to allow for a comprehensive approach. Project-driven activities should be replaced by programs with medium- and long-term funding by local and state authorities in order to avoid frequent staff changes and to allow the implementing partners to develop required capacities.

Furthermore, greater transparency in the educational system, as well as the establishment of a feedback culture at schools, would be necessary. A main criterion for transferability of good practices is the mechanisms of reliable evaluation. Through the feedback gathered through such mechanisms, it is possible to re-formulate and modify good practices according to perceived needs of the target population. It’s crucial to collect the feedback not only from the initiators of the good practices, i.e. teachers and NGOs activists, but also from RASC and their parents.

**EVALUATIONS AND IMPACT ASSESSMENTS**

Having reviewed numerous good practices, the project team was well aware that what may be a successful initiative in one environment may not be suitable or practicable under different circumstances. A key contribution of the INTEGRACE project was that it successfully tested a CSD-proposed methodology for “mirror” evaluations and impact assessments to aid the transfer of best practices. The techniques of program evaluation and social impact assessment were used to first assess the degree to which a good practice has been successful and the key factors for that success, and then to identify the conditions under which the transposition of the same best practice could be achieved successfully in a new environment and the best practice features that may need to be modified in order to make it more easily transferrable to new environments.

The project team first conducted program evaluations of already implemented best practices in two Western European countries (Sweden
and Italy), and then conducted mirror social impact assessments of their possible implementation in two Eastern European countries (Slovenia and Bulgaria). The idea was to conduct SIAs of the same practices for which an evaluation had already been conducted. The Austrian best practice selected by the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute team was not “mirrored” by an impact assessment in a CEE country but instead served as a general example of the “comprehensive approach model” for addressing educational integration. The best practice selected for evaluation by the Censis Foundation in Italy was selected by the CSD team for the impact assessment exercise in Bulgaria. It involved the implementation, in the municipality of San Pietro Veronico, of a project called “Land of Asylum” (Terra d’Asilo) which is nationally implemented in the framework of the Italian public sector system for the reception of asylum seekers and refugees (SPRAR). In the terms of the educational integration of RASC, Terra d’Asilo is based on school autonomy and on flexible and a highly individualised training approach. The Halmstad University team evaluated a best practice which involved the successful implementation of a regulation – “General recommendations for the education of newly arrived pupils” – approved by the Swedish Parliament in September 2008, and the successful implementation of the regulation in the schools of two Swedish cities: Bollnäs and Överkalix. The transferability of the Swedish best practice to Slovenia was assessed by the Peace Institute team.

The evaluations and impact assessments aimed to identify key transferability conditions and parameters to facilitate the replication of best practices in the area of educational integration of RASC in different contexts. Desk research, involving the collection and analysis of statistical data, related surveys, institutional reports as well as academic literature was followed by qualitative investigation based on expert interviews, focus group discussions and on-site study visits. The methodological sequence of the two types of studies included: description of the selected practice; stakeholder identification and analysis; development of indicators and specific questionnaires; data collection and assessment of outcomes, impacts and risks. The best practice description was based on analysis of the problem and the objectives of the intervention together with its historical, legal, policy and institutional context. The description also involved identification of intervention’s key parameters such as time period, institutional capacities and cooperation, etc. The stakeholder analysis involved identifying the interests of the main institutional actors, their role with respect to the (actual or, in CEE countries, proposed) intervention, and the impacts of the intervention on them. The goal of the SIAs was to arrive at positive and negative social impacts of the intervention; of successful strategies for the meaningful involvement of stakeholders and interested parties as well as of relevant implementation modifications and scenarios.

As the project research revealed, the national contexts of the five countries where the evaluations/SIAs were conducted display marked differences with regard to local refugee groups and trends, general refugee integration approaches and RASC educational integration mechanisms. There is a clear distinction between the countries where best practices
in the field of RASC educational integration were identified and those where the same best practices were to be transferred. In general Austria, Italy and Sweden are characterised by high refugee inflows, with refugees dispersed throughout the country, and decentralised systems of migrant and refugee integration that render significant authority and responsibility to the local level (municipalities and provinces).

In addition, the three countries promote RASC educational integration policies that rely on the autonomy of the school in taking educational development decisions. The educational systems and programs of the three countries favour and secure an individualised and flexible approach with regard to integrating asylum seeking and refugee children into their schools; of course, whether this occurred based on intended policies or whether it was just a consequence of the lack of centralised guidance and commitment to deal with the issues, leading to the need to improvise on the local level, is a matter of dispute. Bulgaria and Slovenia, on the other hand, are characterised by small refugee inflows, with refugees concentrated in specific areas, and have developed migrant and refugee integration measures within centralised systems where municipalities have little authority and insignificant experience in this realm. Moreover, the two countries render no autonomy to their schools with RASC being expected to follow mainstream school integration paths and curricula.

Local municipal authorities in Sweden and Italy are key player in the process of reception, integration and education of newly arrived asylum seeking and refugee children. An important feature of the RASC educational integration approach in Sweden and Italy is the significant decision making freedom rendered to local schools. In both Slovenia and Bulgaria assistance and integration services targeting refugees and asylum seekers are being provided on a centralised principle. Municipalities in both countries have little power in this realm in terms of prerogatives and resources. Moreover, schools do not enjoy the autonomy to conduct knowledge assessments, to issue enrolment decisions and to design schooling schemes. Thirdly, the educational

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3. National contexts in comparison: centralised versus decentralised approaches</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Austria, Italy and Sweden</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decentralised systems for refugee integration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significant authority is rendered to local authorities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy is rendered to the school in taking educational development decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualised and flexible approach in integrating RASC in schools</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
systems in both countries appear inflexible in that they do not provide targeted educational schemes, meeting the specific needs of RASC.

Given these differences in national contexts, it is obvious that the best practices transfer to Slovenia and Bulgaria could not occur automatically. The transferability analysis that was conducted in the two reception contexts involved two different approaches. While the study conducted in Bulgaria employed analysis of the potential social effects (intended and unintended/ positive and negative) to be propelled by the introduction of the Italian best practice, the study conducted in Slovenia employed a process assessment of the steps involved in the introduction of the Swedish best practice. Respectively the two studies lead to two different types of results both valuable in allowing informed decision making with regard to the transferability of the two best practices in the Slovenian and the Bulgarian context.

The social impact assessment conducted in Bulgaria points to a number of possible implementation scenarios that take into account the differences between the contexts of Italy and Bulgaria. The study demonstrates that differences in target groups, institutional settings and stakeholder frameworks should not prevent transfer of best practices from one context to another. The assessment conducted in Slovenia provided an exhaustive analysis of the process of implementation of the Swedish best practice and the regulative, institutional and financial resources it requires. It is very useful in that it gives clear picture of the general implementation process and the resources, capacities and timeframe it requires.

The transferability conditions identified in the context of the Swedish and Italian best practices, and indeed in the context of the Austrian Dynamo programme as well, are related to the realm of funding, organisational set up, freedom for local adaptations of centrally stipulated guidelines as well as relevant qualifications of school staff. They include:

- marked degree of freedom for local adaptations of integration policies and initiatives drafted at central level;
- relevant trainings for teachers and education officials to ensure solid knowledge of existing procedures, the opportunities they offer, and the responsibilities they require;
- ample financial resources to secure continuity of implemented activities;
- decentralisation of implementation and involvement of local areas and communities;
- central co-ordination, training and evaluation of the local projects.

The transferability conditions, identified in view of the local contexts in the countries of transfer – Slovenia and Bulgaria – demonstrate that the conditions in question could be enacted in the new contexts by way of certain legal and policy changes. Those changes include:

- decentralisation of the general RASC integration approach and involvement of municipalities as actors;
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- decentralisation in the management of RASC integration funds at the local level;
- decentralisation of the educational system and rendering autonomy to public schools;
- capacity building activities and trainings for staff at local municipalities, teachers, and cultural mediators.

A number of conclusions can be drawn from the evaluation/SIA exercises that the INTEGRACE partners conducted. First, it is highly recommended that such studies should analyse five specific parameters: stakeholder frameworks, legal frameworks, local target groups, schools and teacher training. These parameters should be investigated in the country of origin of the best practise first to guide consequent examination of the same parameters in the country of transfer. Second, the careful study of the five context parameters should be guided by the objective of identifying adaptable implementation scenarios to ensure the achievement of needed positive social effects within the realistic framework of local institutional setting, regulations and capacities. Third, social impact assessments in contexts of transfer could be undertaken only after the careful evaluation of best practices in the contexts of their original implementation. The evaluations and social impact assessments conducted by the INTEGRACE project demonstrated that differences in target groups, institutional and stakeholder settings, even if significant, should not be treated as a hindrance to the meaningful transfer of best practices. Such differences however, need to be carefully analysed in order to provide the most relevant adaptation models. In this context, the design and development of alternative implementation scenarios should be considered a core goal of the SIA exercise.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Though it is extremely difficult to summarise all national specificities, based on the analyses and conclusions provided in the country reports and the evaluation and social impact assessment reports, several key policy recommendations could be outlined:

The state should assume primary responsibility for an adequate framework with comprehensive policies for educational integration of RASC. Based on well-established and international human rights and refugee law obligations, the establishment of the appropriate legal framework and the setting up of dedicated educational policies, strategies and programmes is firmly a task of each national government. Both top-down and bottom-up approaches should be applied in a complementary manner. Governments should cooperate with all stakeholders – NGOs, social foundations, church-based organisations, teachers’ networks, researchers as well as local initiatives and private bodies.

There is a need for more sustainable integration measures in RASC education. Governments should assume primary responsibility to secure the sustainability of RASC educational integration. Project-driven activities
should rather be developed into long term programmes funded by local and state governments to allow development of stakeholder capacities and avoid frequent staff changes in a given program team. Governments should take on the responsibility for compensating and overcoming the strong dependency on EU funding for the variety of NGO initiatives, activities, and programmes, which makes them difficult to maintain following the termination of EU funding.

Free and equal access to education, independent of legal status and in accordance with human rights standards, should be secured for all RASC. Legal obstacles and restrictions, such as on freedom of movement, temporary or conditional residence permits (or “tolerated” stay), detention pending deportation for children and young persons, and age limits reduced to sixteen in asylum matters, etc, should be reconsidered and abolished in line with the standards mandated by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and other well-established international and European human rights treaties.

There is a strong need for diversity training for teachers and training on intercultural approaches and skills. Preparation for dealing with the new RASC groups at school should be an important component of teacher training in EU Member States. Teachers should be trained to develop skills and confidence in dealing with classes of diverse cultural backgrounds, as well as skills in intercultural learning and communication. The integration of RASC into schools could be facilitated by trained school assistants or support teachers of migrant or refugee backgrounds who would act directly on schools premises and in the classrooms. Integration assistance should be provided not only by the employees of social assistance services and non-governmental organisations, but also by already integrated individuals who share refugees’ own ethnic backgrounds.

Training in the language of the receiving country is of crucial importance for the successful integration and academic performance of RASC and should be a central part of pre-school and school education. RASC should obtain full command of the language of the host country as early as possible. The development of strategies, guidelines and programs for language training should be a priority for educational authorities that deal with RASC pupils in their school. Mother tongue training is of central importance as well and should be supported. Good knowledge of the mother tongue is a precondition for learning another language, e.g. the host country language.

Language training initiatives must be carefully weighed against practical considerations in transit countries. Rather than spend scarce resources on extensive language training of RASC in the language of the host country, in many situations basic training would be sufficient while RASC should be allowed, where possible, to attend classes in languages that they already understand. Similarly, if information is available regarding the intent of RASC or their families to move to another state in the near future, attempts should be made to educate the RASC in question in the language of that country where the child
already has sufficient knowledge of the language, or to train the child in the language of the country to which he/she is planning to move.

The “teachers – pupils – parents” nexus is crucial for achieving integration in a sustainable and successful manner. The trust and confidence of parents and children in teachers and schools are paramount for the sustainable integration of RASC in the educational system. Improving parents’ integration into the host society is an important precondition for the integration of their children.

The mechanism of reliable evaluation is the main precondition for the successful transfer of good practices. The transfer of good practices is not an easy and automatic process – a lot of specific factors and obstacles should be taken into account when trying to replicate a good practice. The rationale behind the evaluation and social impact assessment (SIA) exercises lies in their potential to explore the possibility and conditions for transferring good practices in the educational integration of RASC from one specific national/local environment to another. By taking into account the feedback gathered, it is possible to re-formulate and modify good practices according to the perceived needs of the target group. The differences in target groups, institutional settings and stakeholder frameworks should not prevent the transfer of best practices from one context to another. However, the similarities and divergences between origin and reception contexts should be carefully analysed in order to identify the most appropriate (feasible and effective) implementation scenarios.
The right to education is a basic right endorsed by the Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989 and the Refugee Convention of 1951. At the same time, UNHCR’s Global Strategic Priorities recognise that access to free primary education remains elusive for many refugee and asylum-seeking children. In 2007, out of 2.6 million refugee children at school-age globally, only an estimated 67 per cent were enrolled in primary and secondary schools, leaving a third (around 900,000 children) without access to education. According to UNHCR policy documents, even when access to education is secured, the educational integration of children is marred by obstacles such as extra fees, language barriers and lack of training for teaching personnel. At the same time, special attention needs to be given to refugee children from vulnerable groups, and educational programs need to take into account their specific needs.

The EU has provided the basic legal foundation for granting access to education of these children under Council Directive 2004/83/EC, yet further progress is needed in identifying and disseminating practical initiatives. Indeed, the performance of migrant pupils of the same origin varies between countries with similar patterns of migration, which suggests that educational policies, the structure of the educational system, and the interaction of stakeholders can have a significant impact on RASC educational attainment. For instance, a NESSE Analytical report found that the extent to which migrant vs. native students’ achievements are related to social origin greatly depends on the national context, with migrant students’ attainment being comparatively high in countries with a well developed system of preschool education and late selection of students to different ability tracks.

Clearly, EU Member States have varying levels of success with and experience of accepting and integrating refugees in their societies. Old Member States are traditional destinations for refugees and host the

1 UNHCR, Draft Global Strategic Priorities, April 2009, p. 13.
3 Ibid., p. 19.
7 Heckman, F. (2008), NESSE Analytical Report 1 for EC DG Education and Culture, Education and the Integration of Migrants: Challenges for European Education Systems Arising from Immigration and Strategies for the Successful Integration of Migrant Children in European Schools and Societies.
largest share of such populations in Europe, while the New Member States of Central and Eastern Europe have only recently started experiencing greater migration pressures on their territory than they are accustomed to; according to UNHCR, 20,000 refugees enter the EU via CEE each year.\(^8\) While Old Member States have experimented with various integration programs in the field of education, housing and employment, New Member States have yet to develop effective policy responses.

Indeed, a variety of EC-funded projects and initiatives have sought to promote and showcase best practices in the educational integration of immigrant and refugee and asylum-seeking children. Examples include projects\(^9\) led by the Pharos Foundation aiming to identify good practices in mental health and social care for refugee children at school and transfer those to other countries; the 2001 – 2004 CHICAM project\(^10\) aiming to identify the potential of new media technologies to promote social inclusion at schools, with the specific needs of migrant/refugee children taken into account. Another EC-funded project – EMILIE – reviewed the educational challenges posed by cultural diversity and migration in several EU Member States, yet just as with previous initiatives those were mostly Western European countries.\(^11\)

It is important to note that integration policies and initiatives in the field of education rarely target refugee and asylum-seeking children specifically, and instead the latter are subsumed under the category of “newcomer” or “immigrant” children. This is the case with the handbook entitled Educating immigrant children,\(^12\) in which refugee and asylum-seeking children are not the main focus of attention. Moreover, while this publication reviews policies, practices and initiatives in a comparative manner and in a wide array of countries, it has a thematic focus rather than review the situation and/or initiatives in individual countries. On the other hand, the OECD itself has recently produced high quality country reports on migrant education, yet again those are limited to just a limited number of OECD members in Western Europe,\(^13\) and refugee and asylum-seeking children are again rarely the focus of discussion.

Having identified the gap in relevant initiatives in Central and Eastern Europe and building on the experience of the project partners in promoting the rights of vulnerable groups, the INTEGRACE project team has aimed to identify and assess best practices in developing educational

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\(^8\) UNHCR, Protecting Refugees in Central Europe, 2008.


\(^10\) See http://www.chicam.org/index.html

\(^11\) It must be noted that unlike previous projects, EMILIE research did include two CEE countries: namely, Poland and Latvia (see the country reports here: http://emilie.elamep.gr/emilie-reports-on-education-and-cultural-diversity-in-europe/).


\(^13\) Namely, Austria, Denmark, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden (see http://www.oecd.org/document/53/0,3746,en_2649_39263231_44870901_1_1_1_1,00.html).
integration programs in all EU Member States. The project team has sought to build upon many of the previous initiatives in this field, in which a number of INTEGRACE experts and partners have in fact taken part. The project’s review of best practices in the integration of refugee minors at school has encompassed an unprecedented number of MSs, which has also enabled the project team to generalise regarding overall developments in policy in practice in the EU and regarding the types of policies may work under various conditions, or at least to develop a methodology for testing whether and under what conditions a specific good practice may be transposed into new environments or other countries. The CSD-proposed methodology for “mirror” evaluations and impact assessments consisted of first conducting program evaluations of already implemented best practices in Western European countries, and then conducting mirror social impact assessments of their possible implementation in two Eastern European countries (Slovenia and Bulgaria). The goal of this methodology is to identify, on the one hand, the key factors that have led to the success of a best practice in one environment, and on the other, features that may need to be modified in order to make the practice more easily transferrable to new environments.

Another innovative feature of the INTEGRACE project relates to the cooperation, with respect to the integration of refugee children, of NGOs universities and experts from Western Europe with non-governmental organisations and researchers from Eastern Europe. In this manner, the experience of Western partners in researching and promoting policies aiming to integrate refugee children was imparted to their CEE counterparts, thus improving the coordination between Member States and consolidating the approach for addressing common issues with respect to the social integration of refugees, and quality of EU initiatives aimed at refugee children specifically. The Handbook Integrating Refugee and Asylum-seeking Children in the Educational Systems of EU Member States will thus hopefully be a stepping stone towards improvements in two main areas of EU policy making – the consolidation and standardisation of norms and policies concerning child protection and education, and the further development and improved implementation of the common EU asylum policy in Central and Eastern Europe as well as throughout the Union.

The large number of countries where project research was conducted made it possible to generalise about common themes, typologies, developments and challenges in the integration of refugee and asylum-seeking children in Europe. This is the main focus of the comparative country report by Professor Anna Krasteva, Member of the Project Advisory Board and one of Bulgaria’s leading experts on migration research. Chapter I of the Handbook also contains the reports for all countries where the project team conducted research, and which are the subject of Professor Krasteva’s comparative analysis.

Out of consideration for the environment, given the rather large volume of the Handbook, the paper edition only contains select country reports and evaluation/social impact assessment reports, while the rest are
contained on a CD included with the hard copy. An electronic version is freely available for download on the web sites of all project partners, both as a single volume and as a collection of individual reports. The paper edition contains all country reports prepared by the project partners, followed by select country reports; the attempt was made for those select reports to be as representative as possible of Europe various regions.

The country reports, while retaining the characteristic style of the respective author(s), have followed a standard format in presenting each country’s key migration-related issues, policies (including as they relate to migrant/refugee education), and progress in or experience with integrating minors of refugee background. The reports’ main focus is on showcasing successful best practices in the educational integration of refugee and asylum-seeking children in each country, or, where those are lacking, in presenting an overview of the status quo. In all cases, attempts have been made to suggest areas for improvement. A detailed outline of the structure of the country reports and various methodological considerations are contained within the Methodological guidelines for good practices identification (Appendix 1). Notably, the guidelines contain an extensive discussion of what sort of policies, procedures, practices and initiatives were considered to constitute good or best practices for the purposes of the INTEGRACE project. They also contain suggestions for desktop as well as primary research, i.e. interviewing stakeholders, conducting field visits, etc. It is hoped that these guidelines would continue to inform future research in the field by the project team as well as others.

Having reviewed, discussed and analysed numerous good practices, the project team was very cognisant of the fact that what may be a successful initiative in one environment may not be suitable or practicable under different circumstances, or at least that either the practice itself or those circumstances may need to be modified. This is of course no novel observation, yet the specific contribution of the INTEGRACE project was to successfully test a methodology for making such conditionalities explicit via primary as well as secondary research techniques. Perhaps for the first time in the history of social science, the techniques of program evaluation and social impact assessment were used to first assess the degree to which a good practice has been successful and the key factors for that success, and then to assess the conditions under which the transposition of the same best practice could be achieved successfully in a new environment. Chapter II of the Handbook starts with a comparative evaluation and impact assessment report which provides a summary and analysis of the INTEGRACE evaluation and SIA exercises. The chapter also contains three evaluations of best practices in RASC educational integration from three Western European Member States (Austria, Italy and Sweden), and two impact assessments of their transposition into new environments in two Eastern European countries (namely, Slovenia and Bulgaria). Chapter II only contains the evaluation of the Italian good practice and the impact assessment of its transfer to Bulgaria in the paper version, while the other evaluation/SIA reports are included in the CD.
and impact assessments, including guidelines on stakeholder identification and primary research (i.e. interviews) is presented in Appendix 2.

Finally, the CD attached to the paper edition of the Handbook contains standardised outlines of select best practices in most of the countries where best practices were identified and described. The format of these “inventory tables”, as the project team termed them, facilitates the identification of the main features of the good practices, as well as comparison. The project team hopes that they too can aid future research in the field of RASC educational integration by forming a sort of mental map and basic point of reference in the comparative analysis of best practices.