

The right to education of children with an immigrant background in Slovenia¹

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I. Introduction

After the Second World War, and especially after the 1960s, large numbers of economic immigrants from the former Yugoslav republics moved to Slovenia. In spite of that, school policies as well as pedagogical professions did not form any necessary expert solutions or guidelines for the education of the multicultural population. It was the time of the 'brotherhood and unity' ideology, which took no account of and showed no respect for the differences among the cultures of the different nations united in the former Yugoslavia. However, the situation has changed considerably since 1991, when Slovenia gained independence. Not only did former fellow citizens become 'foreigners', but the beginning of the wars in the former Yugoslav republics brought up the issue of the refugees originating in these, once brotherly republics and now new states (Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo). This population was either included in the Slovenian school system (refugees from Croatia) or first included in a specific form of schooling, the so-called primary schools for temporary refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina, and then, after some years of schooling, the children were included in the Slovenian education system.² Slovenia, therefore, has experience in educating students with an immigrant background in the national education system. In spite of that, as we are about to demonstrate, the state has not yet succeeded in formulating any consistent solutions in the field of education which would reflect the increased multicultural nature of the population.

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When Slovenia gained independence, it either adopted or signed numerous international declarations and resolutions regulating the area of the education of students with an immigrant background. Whereas educational legislation started regulating the area of the education of persons with the foreigner status in the Republic of Slovenia in 1996³, it was only after Slovenia entered the European Union (2004) that the state began to pay more attention to regulating the normative framework of the education of persons with the asylum seeker status, persons under temporary protection and refugees, as well as EU citizens.⁴

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2 For more on that, see Hočevar 2003.

3 A foreigner is any person without the citizenship of the Republic of Slovenia (Aliens act 2011, Art. 2). On 1 January 2012 the population of Slovenia stood at 2,055,966 people, with 4.2% of them being foreign citizens (Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia 2012a).

4 The right to education of other EU citizens is not the topic of this contribution, as the regulation is in accordance with the Community *acquis* and EU practice.

Currently the area is regulated by several legal acts (e.g. Aliens act 2011, International protection act 2011, Rules on the rights of applicants for international protection 2011) and acts amending the acts in the area of education, regulating the issues in educational legislation. At the operational level the framework for regulating the field was to be provided by the Strategy for the inclusion of migrant children and students in the education system in the Republic of Slovenia, adopted in 2007 (hereafter referred to as Strategy).

As will be seen below, different acts, implementing regulations and the Strategy cover different target groups and their terminologies are not unified. They use terms like foreigners, migrant students, immigrant students, refugees, persons under subsidiary protection, persons under temporary protection, etc. We have decided to use the term 'students with an immigrant background'. By using it, we wish to emphasize the pedagogical principle of dealing with the population. The latter puts centre stage the individual who must have the same rights as all other students in the education system, regardless of any circumstances – including the legal status. Furthermore, these students possess specific life experiences and, thereby, specific identity positions, which much be taken into account when approaching them in the educational space. We have also opted to use the term, since it does not exclude or stigmatize anybody.

II. The general legislation which also regulates the issues of children, students (and adults) with an immigrant background

Article 105 of the Aliens act (2011) states that the Republic of Slovenia guarantees the conditions for the integration of the foreigners who are not EU citizens, but have a Slovenian residence permit or residence registration certificate into the cultural, economic and social life of the Republic of Slovenia. The next article of the same act stipulates that the foreigners who are not EU citizens (and have permanent residence in Slovenia as well as their family members with a temporary residence permit in Slovenia for the purpose of a family reunion) are entitled to assistance such as free programmes promoting faster integration into the cultural, economic and social life of the Republic of Slovenia:

- participation in the courses of the Slovenian language, history, culture and constitution;
- programmes of mutual acquaintance and understanding with Slovenian citizens;
- informative programmes about their integration into Slovenian society.⁵

When our text was being written, the Ministry of the Interior published on its website the proposal of the Regulation on the manners and scope of ensuring assistance programmes for the integration of the foreigners who are not EU citizens (the proposal – hereafter referred to as Regulation – was in public discussion until 9 July 2012). The title of the Regulation gives the impression of defining various assistance programmes, but it only regulates learning the Slovenian language (sic!) with the help two programmes: The programme of learning the Slovenian language and The programme of learning about Slovenian history, culture and constitution, which can be combined and provided as a single programme or offered separately.⁶ Article 3 of the Regulation specifies the programme participation times that individual 'categories' of the foreigners who are not EU citizens are entitled to: they are entitled to the programme of learning the Slovenian language or the combined programme from 60 to 180 hours.⁷

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid., Art. 2.

7 Ibid.

The International protection act (2011) regulates the questions concerning the individuals⁸ with the refugee status⁹ and the status of subsidiary protection¹⁰. Article 78 of the act defines the rights of the applicants for international protection¹¹ (hereafter referred to as applicants). Article 86 regulates the right to education in more detail. According to the legislation regulating compulsory primary-school education, applicants are recognized the right to primary-school education. Applicants are enabled and in case of minors ensured, in cooperation with their legal representatives, access to education at vocational and secondary schools under the same conditions obliging the citizens of the Republic of Slovenia. The applicants are enabled access to higher and university education under the same conditions as the citizens of the Republic of Slovenia.¹² It is interesting, however, that the act states that humanitarian aid, generally provided by non-governmental, intergovernmental and governmental organizations working in the humanitarian area, mostly includes material, cultural, psychosocial help, childcare and the education of children, teenagers and adults (sic!) as well as other forms of assisting applicants.¹³

In addition, the Rules on the rights of applicants for international protection (2011) stipulate that the funds needed to ensure the rights to education at primary, secondary, higher and university levels are provided by the ministry responsible for education and science.¹⁴ The Rules also state that additional funds to cover the expenses of educational materials and other costs related to providing primary- and secondary-school education (workbooks, notebooks, drawing materials, school excursions, ...) not covered by the ministry responsible for education or the local community, should be provided by the responsible body, given that applicants have no means of their own.¹⁵ Applicants are entitled to part of their school travelling and food expenses being covered under the same conditions as the citizens of the Republic of Slovenia.¹⁶

III. The legislation regulating the education of children with an immigrant background

Article 81 of the umbrella act – that is, the Organization and financing of education act (2008) – specifies that the state budget provides the funds for the materials for Slovenian courses for the foreigners

8 From 1995 to 31 December 2011 international protection in Slovenia was granted to 233 people (Migration and Integration Directorate 2012, p. 41).

9 The refugee status is granted to the third-country citizen who provides justifiable proof that he or she is in danger of being persecuted due to race, religion, nationality, political belief or affiliation to a special social group and is outside the country whose citizenship he or she has, and cannot or – due to fear – does not want to enjoy the protection of the country of origin, or the person without citizenship who is outside the country where he or she had residence and cannot or does not want to return to the country due to justified fear (*ibid.*).

10 The subsidiary protection status is granted to the third-country citizen or the person without citizenship who does not meet the conditions for the refugee status, if there are justifiable reasons that serious damage would be caused to him or her upon return to the country of origin or the country of the last residence in the case of the person without citizenship (*ibid.*, Art. 2).

11 The applicant for international protection is the third-country citizen or the person without citizenship who has filed a complete application for international protection in the Republic of Slovenia (*ibid.*, Art. 3).

12 In 2011 nine children with the international protection status were included in the education system, 14 students with the status attended primary school, 11 students with the status attended secondary school, three people with the status studied at the higher level, and eight such persons participated in the primary-school educational programme for adults (*ibid.*, p. 52). In 2011 93 children and underage applicants for international protection were accommodated in Slovenia – 38 children were under the age of 13 and 55 teenagers were from 14 to 17 years old. The applicants included 54 minors without accompaniment (*ibid.*, p. 31).

13 *Ibid.*, Art. 87.

14 *Ibid.*, Art. 28.

15 *Ibid.*, Art. 29.

16 Travelling to school subsidy can be received by the students whose place of permanent residence is five or more kilometres away from their school. In accordance with the existing legislation, the students fulfilling the condition – that is, weak economic status – are entitled to snack and lunch subsidies (Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs 2012).

attending regular primary- and secondary-school education, and the funds for mother tongue courses for the foreigners attending regular primary- and secondary-school education.¹⁷

The Preschool education act (2005) does not address the integration of children with an immigrant background, but it does state that, in contrast to other parents, the parents not liable to pay income tax in the Republic of Slovenia pay the full price of the programme their child attends.¹⁸

The children who are foreign citizens or persons without citizenship living in the Republic of Slovenia have the right to compulsory primary-school education under the same conditions as the citizens of the Republic of Slovenia.¹⁹ The Act amending the Primary school act (2007) stipulates that ‘for the children ... who need help when learning Slovenian ... a Slovenian language course shall be organized when they start attending primary school.’²⁰ The Act amending the Primary school act adopted in 2011 states that for the children who have residence in the Republic of Slovenia and whose mother tongue is not Slovenian, classes in the Slovenian language and culture and – in cooperation with their countries of origin – in their native languages and cultures shall be organized when they start attending primary school.

The Rules amending the Rules on norms and standards for performing the programme of primary school (2008, Article 43a) state that the minister responsible for education specifies the criteria for the provision of the financial means for foreign students’ additional expert assistance. The knowledge assessment of the population in primary schools is also normatively regulated. Article 19 of the Rules on knowledge assessment and students’ progression in primary school (2008) states that for the students who are foreign citizens or persons without citizenship and who live in the Republic of Slovenia the forms and terms of knowledge assessment, the number of grades, etc. can be adjusted in consultation with parents. The student’s knowledge may be assessed in terms of his or her progress in achieving the objectives or knowledge standards defined by syllabuses. The adjustments are decided on by the teaching personnel. Knowledge assessment adjustments are put in place for a maximum of two school years.²¹

The Gimnazije act (2008), Article 9, states that foreign citizens may attend *gimnazije* (general upper secondary education programmes) under the same conditions as the citizens of the Republic of Slovenia, if educated according to the reciprocity principle.

Article 7 of the Vocational education act (2006) lays down that foreign citizens may receive vocational and technical education in the Republic of Slovenia under the same conditions as the citizens of the Republic of Slovenia, if educated according to the reciprocity principle; if not, they must pay for their education.

The Rules on norms and standards for the implementation of educational programmes in secondary education (2010) state, in Article 16, that for the students who need and desire help due to their lack of knowledge of the Slovenian language, the school organizes a course in Slovenian on the basis of the teachers’ expert assessment of the level of their knowledge of the Slovenian language. The school organizes courses for the students the first two years of their education – which means that this right is limited to students who are considered foreigners, and not all students whose mother tongue is other than Slovenian. The criteria for group formation are the number of applying students and the teachers’ expert assessments of the level of their knowledge of the Slovenian language:

17 The exact procedure of providing the funds for mother tongues courses for the children with an immigrant background has not been specified yet, since experimental courses in at least the most common languages are still being prepared in collaboration with the non-governmental organizations working in the field and the immigrant associations and embassies of relevant countries (Unofficial conversation ... 2012).

18 In the school year 2010/11, 278 children, aged from 11 months to six years with the foreigner status, attended Slovenian preschools (Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia 2012b).

19 Primary school act 2006, Art. 10.

20 Ibid., Art. 3.

21 Rules on 2008.

- up to six students, regardless of their language knowledge: a mixed group – an intensive, 35-hour course,
- from seven to 12 students, regardless of their language knowledge: a mixed group – a 70-hour course,
- up to 16 students with the same (prior) language knowledge: a homogenous group – a 70-hour course.²²

The Rules on the code of conduct in secondary schools (2010), Article 11, state that the student coming from a foreign country can be provided with the adjustment of instruction by means of a pedagogical contract if it is likely to improve his or her school success.²³ Signing the pedagogical contract is decided on by the head teacher, having previously sought the opinion of the class teaching personnel and the school counsellors. The pedagogical contract, signed by the head teacher, parents and the student, specifies the student's and school's rights and duties, the forms and terms of the student's knowledge assessment, the period of the contract's duration and the grounds for the suspension or cancellation of the contract.

IV. The drawbacks of legislative solutions

Slovenia has regulated a number of issues related to the right to education of students with an immigrant background, but certain issues remain open. Firstly, the legislation is inharmonious – there are differences found when comparing the legislation in the area of education and the legislation in the area of the state's internal affairs. Interestingly, the acts and implementing regulations in the area of education (with the exception of primary school) formally only regulate the forms of learning the Slovenian language. The scope of rights is relatively limited, mainly restricted to a few additional lessons in the Slovenian language, and even those are not available for all the target populations of the children with an immigrant background.²⁴ But most of all, the legislation hardly ever attempts the formulation of such solutions which would enable educational institutions pedagogically to approach children with an immigrant background through the fact that these are children who may have different educational needs. This is especially true of the children who are second-generation immigrants to Slovenia. Some of the solutions can be found at the level of implementing regulations, but they are far from sufficient if intended to provide schools with adequate support for the formulation of specific solutions for dealing with the population. Hence, the question arises about how educational institutions find their way among all the acts and implementing regulations? What do they rely on when trying to ease the entry of children with an immigrant background into preschools and schools? And how many lessons in the Slovenian language do children with an immigrant background actually get? How are other aspects of multicultural education seen to? The answers to the questions are impossible to give, as there has been no study in Slovenia providing us with the answers to these dilemmas.

We find it sensible to investigate the possibility of including more specific norms for the education of the population in the legislation covering the area of education. The latter only briefly addresses children with the foreigner status, and it excludes the children who have the refugee status in Slovenia, the persons under temporary protection and second-generation immigrants to Slovenia. Granting equal rights to all target groups would strengthen the justice of the system and make it easier for schools and other educational institutions to enforce the rights. In our view, the existing solutions do

22 Incomplete data for the 2009/10 school year show that around 70% of foreign students came from the area of the former Yugoslavia, the majority of them from Macedonia, Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina, with students from China being second. The majority of the students attended the secondary schools providing programmes in the fields of civil engineering, catering, tourism and healthcare, and *gimnazija*. In the 2010/11 school year Slovenian language courses were provided by 46 secondary schools for 469 students with the foreigner status (Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport 2012).

23 The Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport does not collect data on the number of pedagogical contacts or the school success of foreign students.

24 The scope of additional expert assistance and additional lessons in Slovenian (with the exception of secondary vocational and technical education) is not specified in legislation, but by the responsible minister.

not enhance the justice of the education system; the right to extensive and quality Slovenian language learning support should be the minimum integration standard for all students who need it.

While Slovenian authorities were amending the legislation regulating the children with an immigrant background, educational authorities started on a broader strategy of integrating children with an immigrant background into the education system. The Strategy for the inclusion of migrant children and students in the education system in the Republic of Slovenia (hereinafter: The Strategy) was adopted in 2007.²⁵ The Strategy was prepared simultaneously with the modernisation of the relevant legislation. It is noteworthy because it explicitly demonstrates the very philosophy permeating the legislation itself. We are going to show how the Strategy – in spite of being more broadly conceived – is also largely limited to the issue of learning the Slovenian language.

V. Strategy for the inclusion of migrant children and students in the education system in the Republic of Slovenia

The readiness of Slovenian authorities to address more fully the issue of children with an immigrant background in education is, undoubtedly, to be commended. Its authors included certain positive aspects of addressing the issue, but their realization is hindered by some of its crucial, yet unconsidered or inappropriate foundations. In addition to the already mentioned drawbacks, the fact that it does not rely on any research findings is one of its manifest disadvantages. Explicitly it only relies on the results of a short survey conducted in 2006 for the purposes of the Strategy by the National Education Institute of the Republic of Slovenia. Although there is no comprehensive insight into the state of the affairs in the field, we do have the findings of some research studies that the Strategy does not take into account. Consequently, we are not familiar with all the reasons for the existing situation in the area of the education of population with an immigrant background.²⁶ Another problem, related to the previous one, is caused by the Slovenian Personal data protection act (2007), which proscribes gathering data about students (their mother tongues, parents' education, etc.). The Strategy proposes collecting only data about migrant students, which we deem questionable, since it opens the possibility of the additional stigmatization of the population. Incidentally, students with special needs are in a similar situation, being the only group of students for whom legislation allows collecting data, thereby putting them in an unequal position in comparison with the majority population.

Moreover, we find ourselves in a bit of a quandary when trying to establish who the Strategy is intended for. The Strategy defines its target group to be 'migrant children and students', who are subsequently defined as either the children who have lived in Slovenia for less than a year or the children who have Slovenian citizenship, but 'are not yet fully integrated into the Slovenian environment for a variety of reasons.'²⁷ The Strategy divides the group 'migrant children and students' into five subgroups:

- a. immigrants with Slovenian citizenship: persons living in Slovenia since birth or having Slovenian citizenship;
- b. 'typical' migrants: those with either permanent or temporary residence permits;
- c. forced migrants: persons under protection, asylum seekers, refugees;
- d. citizens of the EU member states, and

25 Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport 2007.

26 For instance, it is not clear at all to what degree the poor command of Slovenian of the students born in Slovenia whose mother tongue is not Slovenian may be a factor in their poor school success. On the one hand, there are data showing that, on average, their success is lower, but it is impossible to say what role other factors play, for instance negative attitudes and lower teachers' expectations. On a small sample of primary-school teachers and students Bilanović (2009) found out that almost 83% of the teachers believe that the students whose Slovenian is not their mother tongue achieve lower success because of their poor command of Slovenian. However, this conviction was confirmed by only 58.5% of the students themselves. It seems that inadequate knowledge of the language does not always have an impact on a lower school success of all students with an immigrant background. Yet we do not know what the other factors might be (a lower social and economic status, the feelings of being unaccepted, etc.).

27 Ibid., p. 8.

- e. the children of the Slovenian economic and political emigrants who have moved back to Slovenia²⁸ and who are 'assumed ... to have mastered Slovenian at least to some degree'.²⁹

The definition of 'migrant children and students' in the Strategy raises a number of questions:

1. How are we to understand that migrant students include the Slovenian citizens who 'are not yet fully integrated' into Slovenian society?
2. Are immigrants all the citizens whose knowledge of the Slovenian language is not good enough?
3. How are we seriously to rely on a strategy *assuming* that the children of the Slovenian emigrants who have moved back to Slovenia have mastered Slovenian at least to some degree?
4. How is it possible to address such a diverse population with different life experiences and needs without taking the differences into account?

What is the objective of the Strategy? The Strategy employs the notion of 'migrant children and students' to describe a very diverse population of children who find themselves in Slovenia for a variety of different reasons. Although it is clear that the definition refers to the population defined by psychological, social, cultural, linguistic and ethnical heterogeneity, the Strategy emphasizes only one supposedly shared characteristic: inadequate knowledge of the Slovenian language. Therefore, we can only conclude that the main goal of the Strategy is to solve the issue of the command of Slovenian of the children who immigrate to the country and attend the education system. The goal, then, does not seem to be the creation of the conditions for the development of the education system, based on the principle of interculturalism – the system which could respond to the broader identity specifics and problems of students with an immigrant background and which could be oriented towards the education of all students for active participation in a multicultural society according to the principles of plurality and coexistence.³⁰

As a matter of fact, the general objectives of integrating 'migrant children and students' into the education system are, at the declaratory level, stated more broadly in the Strategy; they include broader dimensions of integration and, in one section, refer to the entire learning population as well:

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1. Assisting migrant students in attaining adequate knowledge standards.
2. Successfully integrating migrant students into educational, social and vocational environments.
3. Developing possibilities of the presentation of one's own culture and achieving the goals of multicultural education.
4. Enabling learning Slovenian to the degree which guarantees successful integration into the education system.³¹

It is clear that most of the objectives aim at the five stated target groups, with the exception of part of the third objective, which has implications for the whole population at school. At the level of general objectives, the Strategy requires schools to establish intercultural school culture while simultaneously taking care of the migrant students' achievements. It emphasizes the importance of preserving their own cultures and fostering open intercultural relationships, interactions and exchanges, it expects schools to educate students in the spirit of recognizing that the world is co-dependent, that prejudices, ethnic stereotypes, etc. need to be overcome. There is also mention of the importance of multilingualism.³² However, if one of the objectives of the Strategy is to achieve 'accepting difference to overcome prejudices against other cultures, [...] educating for tolerance, preserving and developing one's own identity and culture',³³ would it not seem logical to make the whole learning population (which we desire to educate in the spirit of interculturalism) the target population of the Strategy, and not only the specific 'group' of the children who have moved to Slovenia for one reason or another?

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid., p. 9.

30 For more on that, see below and Ermenc 2010.

31 Ibid., p. 12.

32 Ibid., p. 14-15.

33 Ibid., p. 12.

In principle, the objectives of the Strategy would not be difficult to support if the basic starting point were not the integration of children with an immigrant background, but rather the development of intercultural and inclusively based education. Such a strategy would have to start from addressing everyone participating in the education system in any way and, at the same time, introduce the measures of positive discrimination in favour of the underprivileged, but not in a manner which would mould them in a separate category of the (helpless) users of additional services or persons with special needs defined by the degree of their deficit – in this case the degree of their (lack of) knowledge of the Slovenian language. As it is, this 'deficit' remains the basis for the measures proposed by the Strategy.

VI. The measures proposed by the Strategy

The basis for the proposed measures in the Strategy is establishing the migrants' first language and taking account of their age and social circumstances. 'The length of the integration process, the forms of teaching, knowledge assessment, children's socialization, cooperation with parents as well as the choice of materials, and the preparation and use of the existing ones' depends on that.³⁴ This starting point confirms our assumption that the fundamental criterion for determining the integration of the student, and therewith the key objective of the policy, is teaching the student Slovenian. All the other objectives are of secondary importance. This is systematically demonstrated throughout the entire document, from target groups to problem definition, objectives and proposed measures. The latter are divided into eight areas. To support our claim we quote the two measures that confirm it:

1. Defining the scope, forms and ways of curriculum adjustments for a faster and better-quality integration into the educational process.

The measure is divided into a range of activities, such as preparing an individual programme, specifying the number of lessons in Slovenian as a second language, selecting the relevant subjects or activities that the immigrant can participate in, preparing assessment (diagnostic, regular, final), preparing the child's portfolio, etc. From the aspect of the principle of the individualization of instruction there is nothing to hold against these measures. But: individualization must be a general pedagogical and didactic principle, not a special pedagogical principle for special groups of children. All children should be given a choice; except for the cases of pronounced developmental deviations, students' diversity has to be met with the provision of different, but equal knowledge, not compensatory programmes. Consequently, the syllabus for Slovenian as a second language should be developed. It should be designed so as to have the function of an equivalent alternative.

2. Encouraging intercultural learning and positive attitudes towards understanding and accepting difference in preschools and schools.

The measure plans on carrying out various intercultural activities, learning about children's cultures, getting to know best foreign practices, etc. Such activities – if systematic and thorough, planned together with children, parents and local communities – are welcome, being one of the distinguishing characteristics of intercultural preschools and schools. Nonetheless, a more decisive intervention in curricula and textbooks is called for gradually to eliminate their ethnocentrism (requiring adjustments at the level of schools is insufficient). We should enquire as to the value light in which Slovenian (western European) culture is presented, the degree to which other cultures are represented and the manners in which this is done. Do they enable those who do not have Slovenian background identification with preschool, school and knowledge? After all: what names do children in picture books and textbooks have?

34 Ibid., p. 16.

VII. Conclusion

At the declaratory level the contemporary national educational policies are committed to the principles of multiculturalism and the idea of two-way integration, that is, the citizen-oriented process based on the principles of justice and associated with the policies of near-equality treatment.³⁵ Two-way integration describes the process when both groups have to adjust to life together in changed circumstances – the citizens and individuals with an immigrant background. The actual execution, however, differs rather significantly from the ideas, being largely reduced to ensuring the possibilities of learning the Slovenian language. This, can lead to a problematic definition of specific target groups as students with special needs.

Our findings are also confirmed by the activities of Slovenian authorities since the Strategy was adopted: they started organizing systematically lessons in Slovenian for adults and children and programmes of learning about Slovenian history, culture and constitution.³⁶ In itself this is a very appropriate measure, but what is missing is support for and care of the preservation of the culture of children and adults with an immigrant background.³⁷ Learning Slovenian should be perceived as a basic minimum standard that the state has ignored for too long. The activity should undoubtedly receive sufficient means and conditions for learning Slovenian should be created. But this will not be enough to achieve the integration of everyone into schools and society.

What policies should be developed then? In our belief, the key condition is strengthening the egalitarian principles of the development of the education system, which already typifies Slovenian education system in a number of aspects where long comprehensive elementary education is provided, supported by individualization and short-term forms of separated learning. However, a more egalitarian education – if provided along one-way integration – can have a negative impact from the viewpoint of interculturalism: minority populations will only achieve better educational success as long as the majority school culture succeeds in assimilating them. Slovenian pedagogy has been arguing that they need to be amended in accordance with the policy of recognition (Kroflič, 2008; Vončina 2009). It argues that society should eliminate injustice by recognizing the equality of marginalized social identities and allowing them to shape their own and co-shape common destinies. From the aspect of the education system recognition means strengthening individualization in the sense of subject/content selection and their equality in educational programmes. It also implies curriculum reform aiming at the elimination of ethnocentrism and the stereotypization of specific social groups through the integration of minority contents and perspectives as well as the deconstruction of discriminatory practices. Therefore, the field should be addressed in its entirety, not through individual strategies. The main problem lies in the fact that adjusting to the needs and characteristics of individuals and groups can lead to their excessive separation and, consequently, segregation. Hence, the solutions need to be

35 The notion of near-equality treatment was developed in the Tampere programme, the first document outlining European integration policies. It refers to long-term and legal third-country immigrants whose rights must be guaranteed to be as equal as possible to the rights of EU citizens (Carrera 2008, pp. 8-9).

36 Centre for Slovene ... 2012; State Portal ... 2012.

37 For the time being the state provides no such support. Which does not mean that some primary schools do not give their students the opportunity. As an example we quote a primary school where Slovenian is not the mother tongue for 95% of the students. It is attended by 200 students. Most of them are immigrants from the former Yugoslav republics or else their parents immigrated from the former Yugoslav republics, whereas the students themselves were born in Slovenia. The school is also attended by students from the Asylum Centre, coming from different countries. The majority of the students are members of the second-generation immigrants, and 20 to 30 children enter the school each year who have recently moved to Slovenia. During breaks the students mostly use their mother tongues. For them Slovenian is a second/foreign language, whereas knowledge standards and textbooks are the same as those used by the students whose mother tongue is Slovenian. The teachers are not trained in teaching literacy in Slovenian as a second language. The school finds that additional Slovenian lessons are not enough for the children. Consequently, the teachers prepare special materials for them, which are multilingual. They also find that in Slovenia schools should devote more time to learning about the cultures of students with an immigrant background and pay more attention to integrating parents into various programmes, including literacy programmes. Schools should also facilitate preserving their cultures and systematically promote literacy in their mother tongues (Hanuš 2010).

found in the context of an inclusive, intercultural and postmodern pedagogical paradigm. In view of the above, a new strategy for educating persons with an immigrant background should be mapped out and the legal foundations for carrying out various pedagogical measures provided. These would make it easier for educational institutions to address the population, but most of all they would enable this population the best opportunities to be integrated into Slovenian society while also preserving and strengthening their cultural identities.

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