



# Improving Access to Education

for Asylum-seeker, Refugee Children  
and Adolescents in Central Europe





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United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees  
Regional Representation for Central Europe  
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**UNHCR**

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees  
Haut Commissariat des Nations Unies pour les réfugiés



# Foreword

This report is a compilation of research and interviews undertaken in Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, and the Slovak Republic as well as an additional collection of reports from the Czech Republic focusing on improving access to quality education for refugee and asylum-seeker children.

UNHCR has observed that integration of refugees is a dynamic and multifaceted two way process requiring efforts of all parties concerned. The starting point of this journey is in the 1951 Convention, which enumerates a range of social and economic rights focused on the process of integration. Among these rights is access to education, as outlined in UNHCR's Agenda for the Integration of Refugees in Central Europe. Stemming from the needs identified on the ground, one of the key regional operational goals of UNHCR in Central Europe is improving access to quality education for refugee and asylum-seeker children.

Education is critical in facilitating refugee participation in the economic, cultural, and social life of the receiving country. For refugee children, it not only brings the fundamental sense of normality and routine into their lives, but it is also an investment into future.

Access to education is a fundamental human right and states have an undisputed obligation to provide access to education for all children. In addition, states should do their utmost to ensure that education is of the highest quality, and meets the needs of all learners. At the same time, states have to support teachers in their delivery of quality education.

As the research carried out in the Central European region was dedicated to improving access to quality education in the region, we spared no effort to ensure that the compilation and drafting of this report was reflective of the inputs and voices of stakeholders, including UNHCR persons of concern, throughout the educational systems in the countries under study. The key challenges in the provision of quality education are identified alongside both regional and country specific recommendations. The overarching aim is to provide guidance and support along the path towards the improvement of access to education, as well as an improved understanding of the needs of refugee and asylum-seeker children.

As Ariadne's golden thread permeating the path towards integration, education is a dynamic process demanding commitment and long-term engagement of all key stakeholders. We are encouraged by the participation of the government and civil society stakeholders in the Central European region at the first Regional Education Conference held in Budapest, which was a platform for discussing challenges of quality education in the region. Recommendations and commitments by regional counterparts in addressing the needs of refugee and asylum-seeker children, and improving access to quality education, were developed and agreed in this forum to ensure a better educational future for refugee and asylum-seeker children in the Central European region.

**Gottfried Koefner**

Regional Representative for Central Europe

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Particular thanks goes to staff in the UNHCR Offices in the Central European Region, who were instrumental in facilitating contact with respondents of the research and in providing valuable inputs to country specific recommendations. We are greatly indebted to Marketa Bacáková, who conducted similar research in the Czech Republic in 2009 and 2010. This research was used throughout this report, and Ms. Bacakova's availability to provide additional inputs into this report was most appreciated.

The final report benefited from a collaborative and consultative process at the Regional Conference on Improving Access to Education, which took place on June 29 – 30, 2011 in Budapest Hungary. Participants were encouraged to share good practices from their fields, as well as recommendations on ways of overcoming challenges. Gratitude is expressed to all participants of this conference.

A final note of thanks is warmly extended to government officials, NGO representatives, school directors, teachers, social workers, parents and children throughout the Central European region, who offered their time and shared candid insights. Their contributions are the foundation and the material of this research.



# Acronyms

ALP	Accelerated Learning Programme
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
ECCD	Early Childhood Care and Development
ECE	Early Childhood Education
ECRE	the European Council on Refugees and Exiles
ERF	European Refugee Fund
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
IET	Integration Evaluation Tool
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOI	Ministry of Interior
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
OIN	Office of Immigration and Nationality
RIO	Romanian Immigration Office
RRCE	Regional Representation for Central Europe
SAR	State Agency for Refugees
SIP	State Integration Programme
UAM	Unaccompanied Minor
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

# Glossary

The following glossary was compiled primarily using the UNHCR Master Glossary of Terms.<sup>1</sup>

**Accelerated Learning Programme (ALP):** An ALP is an alternative programme provided within a mainstream school or at another facility, which enables older students to complete an academic course in an abbreviated duration of time.

**Asylum:** The granting, by a State, of protection on its territory to persons from another State who are fleeing persecution or serious danger. Asylum encompasses a variety of elements, including non-refoulement, permission to remain on the territory of the asylum country, and humane standards of treatment.

**Asylum-Seeker:** An asylum-seeker is an individual who is seeking international protection. In countries with individualized procedures, an asylum-seeker is someone whose claim has not yet been finally decided on by the country in which he or she has submitted it. Not every asylum-seeker will ultimately be recognized as a refugee, but every refugee is initially an asylum-seeker.

**Children:** The Convention of the Rights of the Child defines children up to the age of 18.  
(Source: UNICEF [http://www.unicef.org/crc/index\\_30229.html](http://www.unicef.org/crc/index_30229.html) retrieved 16 June 2011)

**Age range for children in each country:**

**Bulgaria:** minor: 0-14 years of age and under age of majority: 14-18 years of age.

**The Czech Republic:** children: 0-18 years of age.

**Hungary:** children: 0-18 years of age.

**Poland:** children: 0-18 years of age.

**Romania:** children: 0-18 years of age.

**Slovakia:** children: 0-18 years of age.

**Slovenia:** children: 0-18 years of age.

**Conventions:** Formal international agreements among nations (to which states become party), which create binding legal obligations. Such agreements may have different names: treaty, convention, covenant, or pact. Conventions are one of two main types of UN human rights instruments, the other being UN standards.

**Durable Solutions:** Any means by which the situation of refugees can be satisfactorily and permanently resolved to enable them to live normal lives. UNHCR traditionally pursues the durable solutions of voluntary repatriation, local integration and resettlement.

**Good Practice:** An innovative, interesting and inspiring practice that has the potential to be transferred in whole or in part to other national contexts.

**Human Rights:** Agreed international standards that recognize and protect the dignity and integrity of every individual, without any distinction. Human rights form part of customary international law and are stipulated in a variety of national, regional and international legal documents generally referred to as human rights instruments.

**In-service Teacher Training** occurs after graduation when teachers are in the service of teaching. This is often characterized as professional development to improve the skills and competencies of teachers in their practice.

<sup>1</sup> UNHCR Master Glossary of Terms, June 2006, Rev.1, available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/42ce7d444.html> (Retrieved 7 July 2011)



**Migrants (Economic):** Persons who leave their countries of origin purely for economic reasons not in any way related to the refugee definition, or in order to seek material improvements in their livelihood. Economic migrants do not fall within the criteria for refugee status and are therefore not entitled to benefit from international protection as refugees.

**National:** A person recognized to have the status of a legal bond with a State as provided for under law. Some States use the word “nationality” to refer to this legal bond, while other States use the word “citizenship”.

**Non-Governmental Organization (NGO):** An organized entity that is functionally independent of, and does not represent, a government or State. This term is normally applied to organizations devoted to humanitarian and human rights causes, many of which implement their refugee-related programmes in partnership with UNHCR and other agencies.

**Reception Centre:** A location with facilities for receiving, processing and attending to the immediate needs of refugees or asylum-seekers as they arrive in a country of asylum.

**Refugee:** A person who meets the eligibility criteria under the applicable refugee definition, as provided for in international or regional refugee instruments, under UNHCR’s mandate, and/or in national legislation.

**Pre-service Teacher Training:** This is training that takes place at university when a student has declared education as a major but has not yet completed his/her studies. This is the academic study of education and the formal preparation necessary to be employed as a teacher.

**School age:** The years during which attendance at school is required or customary.

**Unaccompanied Minors:** Persons below the legal age of majority who are not in the company of an adult who, by law or custom, is responsible to do so, such as parents, guardians or primary care-givers.

# Executive Summary

The UNHCR Regional Representation for Central Europe has undertaken an initiative aimed at improving access to quality education for refugee and asylum-seeking children and adolescents in Central Europe. The methodology and approach taken in this initiative involved field research in countries in the region to provide an overview of key challenges to education provision, followed by a regional conference that produced both regional and country specific recommendations, as well as strengthening policy development and implementation through networking activities and facilitation of regional discussion fora.

Education rights are guaranteed in international instruments including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR); the 1960 Convention against Discrimination in Education, the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC); 1950 European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms; and the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees with its 1967 Protocol regarding the education rights of refugees. Specialized UNHCR documents, including the Education Strategy 2010-2012, the Note on Refugee Integration and the Agenda for the Integration of Refugees in Central Europe provide focused orientation to guide education provision for refugees and asylum seekers.

The Report centres on the provision of quality education, emphasizing the cognitive development of the learner (in the classroom environment) and the role of education in promoting values of responsible citizenship both within the school context and in the wider social environment. The value of early investment for impact and cost-effectiveness is outlined.

The core part of the report discusses access to quality education in Central Europe focusing on eight main areas for intervention: Legislation on Access to Education; Data Management; Language Learning; Grade Placement; Teacher Training; Support in School; Funding; and Early Childhood Education.

The research focused on each of the key areas and was undertaken in the participating countries (Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia) in April and May 2011. The methodology included interviews with a total of 81 respondents, including government and NGO representatives, school directors, teachers and social workers, as well as parents, children and young people concerned. Relevant information on the situation in the Czech Republic was drawn from previous work on the subject conducted in 2009 and 2010.

The background of each of the areas of concern is explained, country specific challenges identified and respective recommendations formulated. Additional recommendations are presented to address structural cross-regional issues.

Challenges identified include:

- the lack of comprehensive and clear data management regarding the enrolment and retention rates of refugee and asylum-seeking students
- the limited opportunities for non-native speakers to acquire the host-country language, as well as a shortage of available training for national language teachers
- the significant dependency of any available opportunities on legal status, and the ensuing exclusion of many refugees and asylum seekers
- the availability of volunteers to teach

- the trend to evaluate and place students in class grades without a formal methodology of assessing language proficiency
- insufficient training and guidance for teachers to better address the educational needs of refugee and asylum-seeker students in mainstream classrooms
- gaps in the administration of available funding, funding used with restrictions and lack of information about rules and regulations attached to available funds.

The research was presented and discussed in the course of a two-day regional education conference organized in June 2011 in Budapest, attended by UNHCR personnel, government stakeholders and NGO partners. A detailed summary of the conference is attached to the report. The emphasis was placed on highlighting good practices in the region that were identified through the research and on ways to mainstream and replicate those practices. Country participants identified short- and long-term actions relevant to their situation and developed implementation plans.

A comprehensive overview of good practices is presented in the report, organized by thematic areas. Examples include:

- language learning support through specialized textbooks for teaching the national language to refugee and asylum-seeking children
- strengthening the intercultural communication capacity of education personnel – mainly teachers - through courses aimed at developing intercultural skills
- making additional teaching support available through teaching assistants speaking the refugee children's language and serving as a liaison between schools and parents as well as intercultural mediators and facilitators of integration
- additional tutoring after school hours
- provision of information welcome packages and brochures, and
- direct financial support for school supplies and/or lunches.

The Report concludes with a focus on the way forward. While country participants have agreed to follow up on action points and work-plans upon their return to their capitals further research and analysis is needed to formulate comprehensive, effective and responsive policy in each country, linked to national education systems and programming, due to the early stage of development of targeted education programmes for refugees and asylum seekers in most countries in question. Particular areas which would benefit from further examination include: the education of students with disabilities; the particular needs of unaccompanied minors and practical support provided to them; areas of education other than primary and secondary education that are not covered comprehensively in this report, including early childhood education, vocational training, tertiary education, adult education, and non-formal education; support provided to parents/caregivers and their engagement in the education of their children.

The regional dimension and common background of many aspects of education provision in the Central European countries presents an opportunity that can be capitalised on for moving forward. Collaborative activities, e.g. through inter-ministerial Committees or expert working groups with key participation and involvement of UNHCR, should facilitate putting country specific recommendations elaborated on in this report into action including the development of common indicators to establish benchmarks that will ensure the effective monitoring and measuring of achievements towards providing access to quality education.

# Part 1: Methodology

## 1.1 Objective and Rationale

The Report on Improving Access to Education among Asylum-Seeker and Refugee Children and Adolescents in Central Europe incorporates results of research on access to education for refugee and asylum-seeker children in Central Europe, as well as conclusions from the first Regional Education Conference on access to Education, held in Budapest on June 29-30, 2011.

The objective of this report is to support countries in Central Europe in enhancing their capacities to deliver quality education to refugee and asylum-seeker children. The Report aims to:

- I. Present an overview of the key challenges encountered in the provision of education;
- II. Provide regional and country specific recommendations with the goal of improving the quality of education for these students; and
- III. Strengthen the development and implementation of relevant policy.

This report is designed to create a body of knowledge grounded in good practices relevant to policy makers and implementers in the provision of quality education for refugee and asylum-seeker children. It is comprehensive, but not exhaustive.

The research on access to education for refugee and asylum-seeker children in Central Europe took place from April to June 2011. The key challenges were identified in interviews with 81 respondents from Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia. Information about access to quality education in the Czech Republic was drawn from two reports written by M. Bacáková: “Access to Education of Refugee Children in the Czech Republic” (2009) and “Education of Resettled Refugee Children in Primary and Secondary Schools in the Czech Republic” (2010).

Respondents belonged to the following seven categories:

- Government (Ministry of Education or equivalent; Ministry of Immigration or equivalent; or Ministry of Interior or equivalent);
- NGO representatives;
- School directors;
- Teachers;
- Social workers assigned to schools or reception centres;
- Parents, and
- Children.

Respondents were asked to report on education opportunities, barriers and good practices relating to primary and secondary education from their own perspectives. This information was expanded with contributions from policy makers and stakeholders at the Regional Education Conference in Budapest in June 2011. The conference report and detailed information about discussions and outcomes of activities are in Annex 4. Representatives from each country committed at the conference to short- and long-term actions to improve access to quality education. These

action points are described in detail in Section 3.3 Short- and Long-term Commitments. They may not address all the challenges presented, but they are a key stepping stone in achieving access to quality education in the region.

The aim of this research was to capture trends in the region, to identify both gaps and good practices. Though the spectrum of respondents of the research was broad, it is prudent to note limitations of the data. A sample of the population engaged in the education systems of each country in the region contributed to the results of this research.

Further work is needed to understand the practical implications of implementing the thematic recommendations presented herein. Detailed research and public programming is fundamental if recommendations in this document are to become an effective policy and practice.

## 1.2 Structure

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This document is divided into two parts. Part 1 describes the methodology of the research undertaken in the Central European region on access to education for refugee and asylum-seeker children. Research objective and rationale are followed by the report. A brief section explores the unique characteristics and needs of refugees as compared to migrants, pertaining to education.

Part 2 discusses the general issue of quality of education. A separate section is devoted to the discussion in eight thematic areas, where intervention is necessary if access to quality education is to be improved. Within each section, there is a presentation of a brief overview of the theme. This is followed by challenges reported in the region relating to access to quality education. For each section, except 2.2.1 Legislation on Access to Education, regional recommendations are proposed broadly as to be applicable to all countries under study. Where there are country specific recommendations, these should be considered as an addition to the regional recommendations.

Part 3 presents practical steps developed towards improvement of access to education in Central Europe. A short discussion on the Regional Education Conference is followed by a list of good practices reported in the thematic areas. Section 3.2 presents short- and long-term commitments agreed during the Regional Education Conference. The full conference report can be found in Annex 4.

## 1.3 Distinction between refugees and migrants

Although refugees and migrants share certain integration needs and challenges, refugees and asylum-seekers were forced to flee their country due to a well founded fear of persecution, or a generalized violence.<sup>2</sup> They have specific needs compared to migrants who by reasons of their own accord, be they economic, social or other, moved at their own volition and choice and voluntarily took up residence in another country. Refugees did not share this liberty and never had that choice. Most refugees would have never left their country if they did not have to.

Refugees often experience physical and psychological effects of the factors which prompted their flight (e.g. persecution, intimidation, torture), from the circumstances of their flight and the conditions they encounter in the host countries.<sup>3</sup> These circumstances have acute impact on children and their education. At their destination, education a valuable tool for the children's and their parents' integration and future participation in society; it can have profound effects in other areas of their lives. In the case of refugee children, education reinforces a sense of normalcy and routine in their lives,<sup>4</sup> and is crucial for restoring social and emotional healing.<sup>5</sup>

Moreover, what has been noticed in the region, refugee and asylum-seeker children may be forced to move multiple times during the asylum process, and again after asylum is granted. In some countries, refugees are required to move after they have been granted asylum to another reception centre,<sup>6</sup> only to be forced to move again after the six months or one-year at the second reception centre has expired. Furthermore, securing accommodation outside reception centres can be challenging and may require families to move in order to find affordable housing. Multiple moves have profound effects on students' achievement in school. Frequent changes of place of residence, such as it happens during the asylum process, can foster insecurity and hinder active participation of children in school.<sup>7</sup> These circumstances, compounded with other barriers, such as lack of fluency in the national language and a lack of proof of previous academic achievements, create an extraordinarily challenging learning environment. As a consequence of the multiple transitions, children may have experienced gaps in schooling, which can have implications on their enrolment in school in the country of asylum.

These unique characteristics should affect the development and implementation of policies and programmes dealing with the distinct needs of refugee and asylum-seeker children. UNHCR notes the imperative for targeted specialist services for refugees addressing their specific situations and complement mainstream support services.<sup>8</sup> This call for action has implications for delivery and programming for all educational interventions.

2 Article 1 of the 1951 Refugee Convention defines a refugee as "A person who is outside his/her country of nationality or habitual residence; has a well-founded fear of persecution because of his/her race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion; and is unable or unwilling to avail himself/herself of the protection of that country, or to return there, for fear of persecution."

3 Hannah, J. 2007, *ibid.*

4 UNHCR. *Agenda for the Integration of Refugees in Central Europe*. Budapest, 2009.

5 Eisenbruch, M. The Mental Health of refugee children and their cultural development. *International Migration Review* (1988) 22, 282-300.

6 The terminology to describe residences where asylum-seekers reside while awaiting decision from the state and the residence for those who have been granted asylum will be "reception centre". It was noted that some countries refer to such facilities as integration centres. For consistency throughout this paper only one term will be used.

7 UNHCR. *Note on Refugee Integration in Central Europe*. Budapest, 2009.

8 UNHCR. *Note on Refugee Integration in Central Europe*, 2009, *ibid.*





# Part 2: Access to Quality Education

## 2.1 What is Quality Education

Access to quality education is a fundamental right for all, including refugee and asylum-seeker children<sup>9</sup> in Central Europe. Since 2005, certain improvements have been achieved with regard to access to primary and secondary education. Notwithstanding, a number of key problems and challenges remain. Improving access to quality education is proven to support integration, academic achievement while enhancing protection and fulfilling the right to education. Both the UNHCR Note on Refugee Integration and the UNHCR Agenda for the Integration of Refugees in Central Europe provide a framework of activities related to integration of persons in need of international protection. Excerpts from both documents relating to improving access to education can be found in Annexes 1 and 2.

A child's right to education is enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), 1960 Convention against Discrimination in Education and the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The Statute of the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol to assist and protect refugees dictates that hosting states should accord to refugees the same treatment as to nationals with respect to primary education. Furthermore, the 1950 European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms integrates all education types and levels as a right.<sup>10</sup> States that have ratified the Convention are bound by the commitments within it.

Access to education alone is not enough to improve the lives of refugees and asylum-seekers. Access to quality education is a fundamental human right instrumental to the integration process.<sup>11</sup> The right to education and the quality of it are interconnected and should be mutually supportive.<sup>12</sup> Education, apart from its general undeniable benefit, also plays a vital role in integration by providing the opportunity to learn the language of the country of asylum, ever so instrumental in the integration process. This process is further reinforced through the school environment; this extra-curricular element is a key for the host and incoming populations to learn with and about each other.<sup>13</sup> The UNHCR Education strategy focuses on increasing access to education, improving quality of education and enhancing protection pertaining to education.<sup>14</sup> UNHCR supports education from early childhood to post-primary education, including vocational training, adult- and non-formal education, with special focus on girls, urban and protracted situations. The key principles underlying UNHCR's operational guidance on education can be found in Annex 3.

9 The Convention of the Rights of the Child defines children up to the age of 18. (Source: UNICEF [http://www.unicef.org/crc/index\\_30229.html](http://www.unicef.org/crc/index_30229.html) retrieved 16 June, 2011)

10 United Nations Human Rights Council, 14th session. A/HRC/14/25 The Right to Education of migrants, refugees and asylum-seeker – Report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to education, Vernor Muñoz (16 April 2010). Agenda item 3 (A/HRC/14/25). Official Record. New York 2010.

11 UNHCR's Executive Committee has affirmed the particular importance of the legal dimension of integration. This is interpreted to mean that receiving States grant refugees a secure legal status and a wide range of civil, political, economical, social and cultural rights and entitlements that are commensurate to those enjoyed by their citizens.

12 United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). *A Human Rights-Based Approach to Education For All*. New York, 2007.

13 Hannah, J. The Role of Education and Training in the Empowerment and Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees. *Education and Society* (2007) 25(1): 5-23.

14 UNHCR, Education Strategy 2010-2012, 2009, Op.cit.

Access to education alone is insufficient to guarantee educational fulfilment and success. Ensuring access to education which would meet the needs of all learners and empowers teachers facilitates this success.

Although there is no universal definition of quality education, there are two common components:

- I. An emphasis on the cognitive development of the learner
- II. The role of education in promoting the values of responsible citizenship.<sup>15</sup>

UNHCR interprets the first component as referring to the classroom environment and the second component as the wider context of the school system and social context in which learning is embedded.<sup>16</sup>

The well-being of children is affected by the classrooms environment, and teachers play an instrumental role in providing quality education. The quality of the education as experienced by students is directly linked to the quality of teaching. The quality of teaching in turn is directly linked to the demands placed on these teachers, the resources and training, and the roles they fulfil.<sup>17</sup> Teachers alone are not responsible for ensuring quality education for their students. Rather, it is a holistic process which puts the learner first while requiring action at all levels of the system. Understanding learners' needs, circumstances, strengths and capacities should underpin the development and implementation of all education programmes. Education which disregards these key elements is unlikely to bring or sustain improvements in learning quality.<sup>18</sup> States have both the power and responsibility to provide quality education to all; factual data about the unique composition and needs of the student population, including school-aged children who are not attending school, is necessary to fulfil this obligation.

The investment of quality education brings an amazing return. Early investment in the capacities and skills of students can pay dividends in the development and stability of a society. The UNESCO Education for All Monitoring Report 2010, specifies that “in an increasingly knowledge-based world, prosperity, employment and poverty reduction – for countries and individuals – depend increasingly on skills and capabilities delivered in the classroom.”<sup>19</sup>

15 UNESCO. *Education For All Global Monitoring Report 2005: The Quality Imperative*. UNESCO, Paris, 2005.

16 UNHCR. *Education Strategy 2010-2012*, 2009, Op cit.

17 European Commission. *Handbook on Integration for policy-makers and practitioners*. France, 2010.

18 UNESCO, 2005, Op.cit.

19 UNESCO. *Education For All Global Monitoring Report 2010: Reaching the Marginalized*. UNESCO, Paris, 2010.

## 2.2 Improving Access to Education: Areas for Intervention

This section is divided into eight themes:

- Legislation on Access to Education
- Data Management
- Language Learning
- Grade Placement
- Teacher Training
- Supports in School
- Funding
- Early Childhood Education

This section presents a brief overview of particular themes related to access to education, followed by identified challenges relating to access to quality education as reported in the region. Regional recommendations are suggested for each theme, except for 2.1.1 Legislation on Access to Education. Where country specific recommendations exist, these are intended to address a specific situation within a given country and are intended to accompany the regional recommendations. Collected examples of good practice can be found in Section 3.2.

### 2.2.1 Legislation on Access to Education

The Legislative Framework relating to access to mainstream education for refugee and asylum-seeker children is formulated in a unique manner in each country. Within the national legislations contain stipulations to ensure that refugees and asylum-seekers enjoy the same rights relating to education as nationals. This right is extended to students with disabilities. All of the countries included in this project, with the exception of Bulgaria, recognize the right to education for refugees and asylum-seekers in their National Education Acts.

The current National Education Act in Bulgaria does not explicitly state that students who are refugees and/or asylum-seekers are entitled to education. However, the Law on Asylum and Refugees<sup>20</sup> regulates the right to education of asylum-seeker and refugee children. At the time of the interviews in Bulgaria, it was reported that amendments to the legislation were being drafted to include provisions clearly delineating the right to education for this population.

<sup>20</sup> Article 26. (Am., SG, issue 52 of 2007) and Ordinance No 3 of 27 July 200 Laying down the Procedure for Enrolment of Refugees in State and Municipal School in the Republic of Bulgaria.

## Country Specific Recommendation

### Bulgaria

- For UNHCR to work with the Ministry of Education and Science in Bulgaria during the revision process to incorporate provisions on the right to education in state and municipal schools.

### 2.2.2 Data Collection and Management

Determining the enrolment and retention rates for the entire school population in addition to subsets within this population is a fundamental step in understanding the demographic needs for the education sector. This data is imperative to inform policy, programming, budgeting and to understand how many children are accessing education. Calculating the enrolment rate requires the knowledge of the number of students enrolled in school and the total number of school aged children in the country. The MOE and MOI can work together to bring both elements of this equation. The information needed to calculate retention rate would come from the MOE since the number of students enrolled at the beginning of the school year and those who complete their studies at the end of the school year is fully within their purview.

Detailed information about the target population can be instrumental in designing responsive, effective and relevant policies. The 2000 edition of the World Bank in the World Development Indicators states that “statistics are the evidence on which policies are built. They help to identify needs, set goals and monitor progress. Without good statistics, the development process is blind; policy-makers cannot learn from their mistakes, and the public cannot hold them accountable.”<sup>21</sup>

Based on evidence, governments are responsible for making policy decisions to improve the quality of life and well-being for both individuals and the greater population. When it comes to access to education, this evidence partly depends on the knowledge of the enrolment and retention rates of the target population.

## Challenge: Enrolment rates for refugee and asylum-seeker children are unknown

Little information, with exception of some information gathered in the UNHCR Annual Standards and Indicators report, is recorded about enrolment and retention rates of school-aged refugee and asylum-seekers in Central Europe. It is unclear what percentage of this population has access to education. For example, in Romania the legislation states that children should not stay out of the education system for more than three months. However, reports indicate that students can be out of school for more than one year in some cases. Without transparent and accurate data, the nature and scope of this challenge is unclear.

Many countries in the region do record the gross enrolment and retention rates of the entire school population; however it is necessary to disaggregate this information. The risk of using gross data is that it can “too easily disguise hidden pockets of inequality and render discriminatory patterns of access invisible.”<sup>22</sup> The first step to ensuring access to education is to know how many refugee and asylum-seeker children are attending school – and more specifically, how many of the students complete their education.

MOE (or equivalent) in Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland and Slovenia shared information regarding the number of students enrolled during the academic year 2010-2011. Information about the number of students enrolled at each level of school was provided by Poland and Slovenia. Enrolment data, disaggregated by sex was available from Slovenia. While data about the number of refugees and asylum-seekers enrolled in school is useful, the total number of refugees and asylum-seekers in each country is needed to determine enrolment rates.

One country, Poland, did share the total number of school-aged children. The Ministry of Interior and Administration provided this data along with the total number of children attending school. Unfortunately, the reported number of students enrolled by both ministries did not match. The data provided by the Ministry of Interior and Administration only considered students who were receiving benefits from the Office of Interior. Thus, the enrolment rate was not calculated for the purpose of this report.

<sup>21</sup> World Bank, *World Development Indicators*. Washington, DC, 2000.

<sup>22</sup> UNICEF and UNESCO. 2007, Op.cit.



## Regional Recommendations

- Uniform data collection should be conducted by the MOE (or equivalent) and the MOI (or equivalent) and openly shared to calculate enrolment and retention rates of refugee and asylum-seeker students. Agreement about the definition of variables and the time frame of data collection should be determined in advance. It is desirable to have this information easily available online on both of the ministries' websites. Consideration could be given to engage the National Statistics Bureau in the collection and analysis of data related to enrolment and retention rates of students.
- Establish an Inter-ministerial Committee or expert working group to coordinate data collection along with other activities relevant to access to quality education for refugee and asylum-seeker children.
- Data collected on enrolment and retention rates should be used to create targeted interventions based on evidence to guarantee access to education.
- The findings and data collected during the piloting of the Integration Evaluation Tool (IET) by UNHCR can be used to streamline data collection.

## Country Specific Recommendations

### Bulgaria

- The MOE to work with local school authorities to collect information on the number of refugee and asylum-seeker students enrolled in school. This information should be disaggregated by sex and grade level.
- The SAR to work with UNHCR to disaggregate data collected on refugee and asylum-seekers in country, by age in order to know the number of school aged children in the country. This data will assist in calculating school enrolment rates.

### The Czech Republic

- The MOE to work with local school authorities to collect information on the number of refugee and asylum-seeker students enrolled in school. This information should be disaggregated by sex and grade level.
- The MOI to disaggregate data collected on refugee and asylum-seekers in country by age in order to know the number of school aged children in the country. This data will assist in calculating school enrolment rates.

### Hungary

- The MOE to work with local school authorities to collect information on the number of refugee and asylum-seeker students enrolled in school disaggregated by sex and grade level.
- The Office of Immigration and Nationality (OIN) to disaggregate data collected on refugee and asylum-seekers in country by age in order to know the total number of school aged children in the country. The OIN and the MOE to collect and share information regarding the number of refugee and asylum-seekers in country who are of school age. This data will assist in calculating school enrolment rates.

### Poland

- The Office for Foreigners to work with the MOE and local school authorities to collect information regarding the number of refugee and asylum-seeker students enrolled in school, disaggregated by sex.

### Romania

- The MOI to collect and share information among institutions involved in integration (Central Government Institutions and Ministries, Local School Inspectorates, Local Child Protection Agencies, municipalities and county councils) regarding the number of refugee and asylum-seekers in country who are of school and pre-school age.
- MOE and local school inspectorates to collect and provide detailed information on enrolment rates of refugee and asylum-seeker students. This information should be disaggregated by grade level and sex.
- As accuracy in data collection is improved, the MOI and MOE must remain prepared to, in turn, improve their coordination measures and policies (the Ministry of Labour should be included on certain aspects concerning access and enrolment in vocational training).

### Slovakia

- The MOE to work with local school authorities to collect information on the number of refugee and asylum-seeker students enrolled in school. This information should be disaggregated by sex and grade level.
- The Statistical Office, Bureau of Border and Alien Police of the Ministry of Interior, Migration Office of the MOI and the Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family to work with the MOE to collect and share information regarding the number of refugee and asylum-seekers in country who are of school age.

### Slovenia

- The MOI to collect and share information regarding the number of refugee and asylum-seekers in country who are of school age.

## Challenge: Duration

In all instances respondents indicated that language courses are generally insufficient. It was reported that there were inconsistencies in the amount of language training students received before being enrolled in school. These inconsistencies were reported to arise depending on when children arrived to reception centres. Language courses are predominantly offered at reception centres and not in mainstream schools. Thus, access to language courses tends to correspond with the length of stay at reception centres. The maximum support tends to last one year, which given the research and evidence, programming of this length will be insufficient for students to achieve fluency.

## Challenge: Availability

The availability of language classes depends on legal status, location and the disposition of volunteers to teach. Access to language classes differs in the countries under study for asylum-seekers awaiting decisions regarding their status. Asylum-seekers in Hungary, for example, can take language classes when volunteers offer them. Permission is required from the OIN for volunteers to conduct classes. As this is offered on a voluntary basis, no standard programme was reported. Volunteers are not required to teach asylum-seekers the Hungarian language and in some cases they teach other, non-national languages. Pending decisions from the state, this population is missing a valuable opportunity to learn the national language.

In Poland, a student reported that despite living at a reception centre, he could not access the language classes or homework support services. He was attending a mainstream school close to the reception centre, but by the time he was home from school, the teacher offering the supplemental classes had usually left for the day.

Furthermore, it was reported that the classes to learn the national language are not offered during summer holidays. Thus children are losing out on opportunities to start or continue learning the national language, depending on the date of their arrival.

## 2.2.3 Language Learning

Competency in the language of the asylum country is a vital first step towards integration. It is the foundation upon which all elements of integration are built. Language is not only a precondition for successful participation in societal institutions of the host country, but also for developing positive relations with the host population.<sup>23</sup>

Education is, at its core, learning and growing through communication; it is understanding and connecting ideas to express knowledge. Without the ability to understand and to express oneself, “sitting in a school classroom listening to a teacher providing instruction in a language [the learner] does not understand is a short route to marginalization.”<sup>24</sup> Successfully learning another language takes time and investment. Estimates set the time to develop oral language proficiency at three to five years, in optimum circumstances.<sup>25</sup>

In addition, regardless of the country, the most commonly reported educational need was the acquisition of the national language of the country of asylum. Opportunities for children to learn the national language tend to be limited to classes only offered at reception centres. Once children leave reception centres, language-learning supports vary widely – from classes during school hours, tutoring after school, to no support at all. In mainstream schools, support for these children, when available, tends to be limited to tutoring programmes that take place outside regular school hours.

## Regional Recommendations

- Establish clear guidelines for language learning relating to eligibility, hours provided, composition of classes, increasing the different levels and duration of the programme with age sensitive approach and consideration.
- Enrol children in language programmes and in school as quickly as possible upon their arrival.
- Provide opportunities for students to continue learning the national language while they attend mainstream school until they no longer require this sup-

23 Heckmann, F. Education and the Integration of Migrants. Bamberg: EFMS, 2008.

24 UNESCO. 2010, Op.cit.

25 Hakuta, K., Butler, G.Y., & Witt, D. How long does it take English learners to attain proficiency? *University of California, Linguistic Minority Research Institute, Policy Report*. 2000-1.



port. This includes formal language learning classes at school in addition to non-formal learning activities, for example homework clubs, extra-curricular activities, community-based events, etc. This recommendation is in line with recommendations in Section 2.2.6 Support in School.

- Make available curricula, teaching resources and textbooks to teach the national language to refugees and asylum-seekers.
- Continue language classes during holidays, especially through summer holidays.
- Schedule language classes outside regular school hours at reception centres to permit students to capitalize on this learning opportunity. This has the potential to be a cost-effective measure that would not create any additional burden on the system and would maximize opportunities to learn the national language.
- Include a quality assurance element into language courses to evaluate the efficacy of training provided.

## Country Specific Recommendations

### Bulgaria

- Develop a national curriculum to accompany the textbook to teach Bulgarian to refugee and asylum-seeker children. Consider revising textbook to include support to teach Bulgarian using interactive and innovative teaching methods. Once the curriculum is developed, give information sessions and trainings for teachers about the curriculum.
- The MOE to provide opportunities for students to continue learning Bulgarian at school until they no longer require this support. This includes formal language learning classes at school in addition to non-formal learning activities, for example homework clubs and extra-curricular activities. Guidelines should be established and distributed to all schools to clearly define number of classes/hours per week students can attend, how schools can access funding, regulations for teacher qualifications to teach the national language, etc.

## Challenge: Quality

Reported education barriers throughout the region often related to the lack of quality in language courses.

- Teachers do not consistently have access to professional development opportunities for teaching the national language. It was reported that teachers lack the appropriate training to teach the national language, this is further explored in section 2.2.5 Teacher Training.
- Children were reported to be placed in language classes with adults or placed in inappropriate grade levels upon arrival based on their fluency in the national language.

Existing language training does not adequately prepare children for school. Having 16-year-old refugee students sharing classrooms with 10-year-olds carries obvious risks for the self-respect, motivation, social development and academic achievement of the older children. This will be further explored in Section 2.2.4 Grade Placement.

## Challenge: Teaching resources

Another commonly reported challenge was the prevailing scarcity of resources for teachers to teach the national language to refugees and asylum-seekers. Respondents reported the lack of teaching materials, both to teach the national language as well as teaching resources to support students in mainstream classes in other subjects.

## The Czech Republic

- Develop a national curriculum to teach Czech to refugee and asylum-seeker children. Once the curriculum is developed, give information sessions and trainings for teachers about the curriculum.
- The MOE should be engaged in the State Integration Programme (SIP) in the area of language training to provide opportunities for students to continue learning Czech at school until they no longer require this support. This includes formal language learning classes at school in addition to non-formal learning activities, for example homework clubs, extra-curricular activities, etc. Guidelines should be established and distributed to all schools that clearly define number of classes/hours per week students can attend, how schools can access funding, regulations for teacher qualifications to teach the national language, etc.

## Hungary

- Develop a national curriculum and textbooks to teach Hungarian to refugee and asylum-seeker children. Once the curriculum is developed, give information sessions and trainings for teachers about the curriculum.
- The MOE to provide consistent opportunities for students to continue learning Hungarian at school until they no longer require this support. All schools that enrol refugee and asylum-seeker students should receive funds from the 'Intercultural Education Programme' to deliver language classes at school in addition to other cultural activities in line with the regulations of this funding. Language learning must include formal language learning classes at school in addition to non-formal learning activities, for example homework clubs, extra-curricular activities, etc.

## Poland

- Develop a national curriculum and textbooks to teach Polish to refugee and asylum-seeker children. Once the curriculum is developed, give information sessions and trainings for teachers about the curriculum.
- The MOE to provide consistent opportunities for students to continue learning Polish at school until they no longer require this support. All schools that enrol refugee and asylum-seeker students should have access to funds to offer language classes to students. Language learning must include formal language learning

classes at school in addition to non-formal learning activities, for example homework clubs, extra-curricular activities, etc. School administrators should be required to inform all parents of language classes that are available to students.

## Romania

- Consider revising textbook to teach Romanian to refugee and asylum-seeker children to include supports to teach Romanian using interactive and innovative teaching methods. Once the curriculum is developed, give information sessions and training for teachers about the curriculum.
- The MOE to provide opportunities for students to continue learning Romanian at school until they no longer require this support. Language learning must include formal language learning classes at school in addition to non-formal learning activities, for example homework clubs, extra-curricular activities, etc. Guidelines should be established and distributed to all schools to clearly set out the number of classes/hours per week students can attend, composition of groups by age and language progress, how schools can access funding, regulations for teacher qualifications to teach the national language to non-native speakers, etc.
- Language learning activities should be correlated with the cultural/social orientation sessions, in order to increase the impact of both. Better coordination between MOE and MOI on such activities is paramount, especially along the duration of the integration programme, with emphasis on its first 6 months.
- The Integration Programme coordinated by the Romanian Immigration Office (RIO) should increase the number of Romanian language classes to more than 20 hours per month.
- In cases of illiteracy, especially for young students, language training should be linked with an intensive program of teaching reading and writing, for which schools should make available special tutors, or liaise with NGOs providing such services at the local level.
- Language courses taught by NGOs should follow the same national curricula and manuals agreed upon by ministries. Partnerships with the MOE are encouraged in order for NGOs to follow the standards in language learning, provide consistent information and feedback about the progress observed and the efficiency of the language learning programmes.

## Slovakia

- The MOE to provide opportunities for students to continue learning the Slovak language at school until they no longer require this support. This includes formal language learning classes at school in addition to non-formal learning activities, for example homework clubs, extra-curricular activities, etc. Guidelines should be established and distributed to all schools. They should clearly define number of classes/hours per week students can attend, how schools can access funding, regulations for teacher qualifications to teach the national language, etc.

## Slovenia

- The MOE to provide opportunities for students to continue learning Slovenian at school until they no longer require this support. This includes formal language learning classes at school in addition to non-formal learning activities, for example homework clubs, extra-curricular activities, etc. Guidelines should be established and distributed to all schools to clearly define number of classes/hours per week students can attend, how schools can access funding, regulations for teacher qualifications to teach the national language, etc.

### 2.2.4 Grade Placement

The manner in which students are placed in grades upon enrolling in school can have profound and lasting consequences throughout their academic studies and into their adult lives. Ensuring that students are placed in appropriate grades through the implementation of standard methodology is crucial to educational success.<sup>26</sup> Standardized evaluations that consider the skills and capabilities of students, holistically, are imperative. The European Commission (2010) calls on education institutions to properly assess previous level of school in their country of origin or habitual stay.<sup>27</sup> Formal guidance for education institutions to assess these documents must originate from the MOE.

## Challenge: Lack of standardized methodology to place students in grades

A systematic and standard method to place students in grades was not reported in the region. Placement of students tends to be determined by an ad hoc committee. These committees are usually composed of personnel from the school, a teacher(s), director, and the teacher responsible for national language classes. They are convened either when the student enrolls in the school or when examinations are possible at the end of the school semester. Some respondents reported that certificates from previous education, if available, could be considered. Formal guidance regarding diploma recognition is absent. Though some respondents expressed the desire for a more formalised assessment, no such mechanism was reported to exist in the region.

## Challenge: Current trend of student placement is primarily based on knowledge of national language

It was reported that students tend to be evaluated based on their ability to speak the national language to determine the grade in which they will be placed. If students have a sufficiently advanced command of the language, they can be tested in other subject areas. Respondents reported that students frequently tested well in mathematics, since competencies in that field rely much less on linguistic proficiency. It was also reported that the time students have to learn the national language before they are tested and placed in school is inconsistent. This time frame can vary depending the time of arrival of the student and the testing schedule.

Placing students based solely on their ability to communicate the national language is problematic and ignores the situation of refugees and asylum-seekers. Frequently, migration for refugees is an arduous journey to the country of asylum and families may not have evidence of past studies for their children or gaps in their education. The requirement for national documentation discriminates against refugees who fled their homes.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, when students have their diplomas, there is a lack of bi-lateral agreements between countries in order for host countries to recognize foreign diplomas. ►►

<sup>26</sup> Wilkinson. L. Factors influencing Academic Success of Refugee Youth in Canada. *Journal of Youth Studies* (2002), 5(2): 173-193.

<sup>27</sup> European Commission, 2010, Op.cit.

<sup>28</sup> United Nations Human Rights Commission. 2010, Op.cit.

Research revealed reports of students in the Czech Republic being placed in schools designed for students with special cognitive needs in spite of the fact that these refugee students do not have any known cognitive or physical impairments. This was described as a persistent problem.<sup>29</sup>

Not only is this practice problematic for the student, it can place schools in a difficult situation. Unless financial resources to support the school in providing quality education are available, this can pose problems for the teachers in being able to meet the unique academic needs of these students.

### Challenge: Older students can be placed at a disadvantage by current practices

It was reported that younger students tend to be placed either in the same grade as students of their own age or a grade or two lower. The consequences of placing students in classes apart from their age peers are particularly serious for older students who are placed far below their grade level. One student in the Czech Republic described being uncomfortable in the company of classmates, “it tears at my heart.”<sup>30</sup>

Some potentially negative consequences of this practice include:

- Segregation from peers;
- Interference with integration;
- Implications for future academic achievement;
- Disincentive to learn and drop-out from school;
- Lowered self-esteem, and/or
- Future employability.

Students have a finite time frame within the education system throughout their lives. If a student is 17 years old and placed in a primary class with no options to obtain a school diploma in the last year of free compulsory education, their integration into the host society is compromised along with future academic achievements.

Based on reported trends, the decision to place students is left to the discretion of school officials. Students are generally placed based on their ability to speak the national language, without the use of a formal assessment methodology or guidance. The evaluations tend not to consider past academic experience; and in majority of cases bilateral agreements are required to recognize diplomas and/or completed years of schooling. Only two countries under study – Poland and Romania – reported the possibility for school officials to consider previous school diplomas. Reliance primarily on the informal assessment of students’ ability to speak the national language ignores other academic competencies and puts their success in school at risk; this has implications for their future employability.

When students have missed years of schooling, Accelerated Learning Programmes (ALPs) are an ideal alternative to placing students in grades below their age. An ALP is an alternative programme provided within a mainstream school or at another facility. It enables older students to complete an academic course in a shorter length of time. For example, an ALP could offer students the opportunity to complete the primary school curriculum in half the time that it takes to attend primary school. The students could then have the option to join mainstream secondary school. ALP students receive the same certification as regular students. ALPs are often intended for at-risk youth and adults who have experienced difficulty completing primary or secondary education, or who have missed out on education and are older than the standard school age. These programmes can offer a second chance for children and adolescents in addition to facilitating their re-entry into school and can provide an opportunity to formal schooling for older refugee students. Please refer to Section 3.2 for good practices reported in the region in the provision of ALPs.

<sup>29</sup> Bacáková, M, 2010, Op.cit.

<sup>30</sup> Bacáková, M. 2010, Op.cit.

## Regional Recommendations

- The MOE to establish clear guidelines and methodology, to be implemented uniformly, for placing students in school. This should examine language skills, academic competency and past academic studies, including recognition of diplomas and academic reports from other countries and consider the age of the student. Evaluations should be based on more factors than only the student's ability to speak the national language. This guidance should exist in writing and be distributed to all schools.
- Train all teachers and relevant staff involved in the assessment process and school directors in how to conduct assessments based on newly established methodology and guidance.
- Evaluate students in their mother tongue and/or in a language they understand fluently to most accurately capture academic experience.

## Country Specific Recommendations

### Bulgaria

- Offer opportunities for students to participate in an ALP with the option to rejoin peers in mainstream school once they have caught up.

### The Czech Republic

- Offer consistent and widespread opportunities for students to participate in an ALP with the option to rejoin peers in mainstream school once they have caught up.
- Undertake an evaluation of enrolment in ALPs at a national level to identify gaps and develop programmes accordingly.
- Develop an advocacy strategy for the Czech Republic to ensure that students are placed in regular schools and not in special institutions, and monitor progress.

### Hungary

- Offer opportunities for students to participate in an ALP with the option to re-join peers in mainstream school once they have caught up.

### Poland

- Offer opportunities for students to participate in an ALP with the option to re-join peers in mainstream school once they have caught up.

### Slovakia

- Offer opportunities for students to participate in an ALP with the option to re-join peers in mainstream school once they have caught up.

## 2.2.5 Teacher Training

There is a distinction between what students learn and how they are taught. Both form the complex process where students gain knowledge, skills, values and beliefs.<sup>31</sup> How students are welcomed, engaged and taught in learning environments, have profound implications on their educational experiences. Teachers are at the forefront of students' engagement with this process and in shaping their educational experiences. The training and professional development opportunities available to teachers have an effect on teachers' ability to guide this process in a constructive and inclusive manner.

Qualified and well-trained teachers are instrumental to providing quality education for all students. Training opportunities for teachers can take the form of pre-service or in-service teacher training. Schools and teachers are influential in providing normalcy and in attending to the children's physical, cognitive and psychosocial health.<sup>32</sup> Effective teacher training can provide them with the skills, knowledge and expertise to create inclusive classrooms where students' growth and development is fostered. Effective training can also equip teachers to deal with traumatized learners who require psychosocial support.<sup>33</sup> Good practices reported in the region relating to teacher training can be found in Section 3.2.

31 UNESCO, 2005, Op.cit.

32 Kirk, J. and Winthrop, R. "Promoting Quality Education in Refugee Contexts." *International Review of Education* (2007) 53, 715-723.

33 United Nations Human Rights Council, 2010, Op.cit.

## Challenge: Lack of teacher training in teaching the national language to refugees and asylum-seekers

Pre-service education tends to be the only option for qualification to teach the national language to refugees and asylum-seekers. Thus, a teacher must have made the early commitment to teach this subject before even entering the profession. It was reported that in Poland, in-service training in teaching Polish is available as postgraduate study at many universities.

## Challenge: Lack of teacher training in teaching refugee and asylum-seekers

In-service training to teach foreign students was offered by NGOs in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia but was subject to the availability of funds. The MOE in Poland reported offering training in Krakow for teachers who teach foreign students in 2010. In Romania, the MOE, the school administration and local organizations provided a workshop to 20 teachers in the city of Timisoara.

One teacher in Romania reported having no information about the 5 refugee students in her classroom. She expressed dismay at the lack of resources to teach the students in addition to her own lack of understanding of issues that pertain to refugees.

Asylum-seeker or refugee students carry the burden of often coming from countries rife with social and/or political unrest. As a result, students may have been the victims of trauma. Without adequate background and training, it is difficult for the teacher to provide appropriate learning support.<sup>34</sup>

## Regional Recommendations

- Expand the availability and scope of training offered to teachers in line with their needs to teach students the national language and to teach refugee and asylum-seekers in the classroom.
- Introduce university programmes for future teachers of national languages and for teaching refugee and asylum-seeker students.
- Establish qualification regulations for teachers of the national language to teach this subject to refugees and asylum teachers.
- The MOE and local education authorities should collaborate with NGOs and universities to deliver training to teachers to ensure training meets state requirements for accreditation.
- Conduct information awareness campaigns to sensitize teachers and school directors about refugee and asylum-seeker issues.
- Explore innovative approaches for teacher training through distance learning or information and communication technologies (ICT).

### 2.2.6 Support in School

Additional support in school is essential in providing quality education to students. Effective interventions increase the likelihood for students to be successful in school. Many refugees require special attention in order to be successful – to allow them to reach their academic potential.<sup>35</sup> Targeted interventions that meet the assessed needs of students can range from academic and language support to providing psychosocial support.

Secondary support is imperative to providing access to quality education that meets the needs of all learners. One fundamental support that is most often lacking is the opportunity for students to learn the national language at school in targeted classes for non-native speakers. The predominant practice in the region is to provide language classes only at reception centres. This

<sup>34</sup> Kirk, J. and Winthrop, R. 2005. Teacher Development and Student Well-being: IRC's Healing Classrooms Initiative. Forced Migration Review 22. Jan 2005. Retrieved 15 May 2011 (<http://www.fmreview.org/FMRpdfs/FMR22/FMR2209.pdf>).

<sup>35</sup> Kapreilian-Churchill, I. Refugees and education in Canadian schools, *International Review of Education*, (1996) 42 (4), 349–365.

is problematic because teachers are not equipped to balance the needs of national students and refugee and asylum-seeker students in learning the national language.

Interventions can be extended to reach out to parents to engage them in their child's education in the country of asylum. Many of the parents interviewed for this study reported not being engaged in the process of enrolling their child in school; that staff at reception centres undertook this task and took children to school without participation of parents. Involving parents in the enrolment process is an easy first step in integrating parents into the host community and paving the way for them to be engaged in their child's education.

An array of interventions to further support refugees and asylum-seeker students in mainstream school was reported. Further information on good practices relating to the interventions listed below is presented in Section 3.2.

### Regional Recommendations

- The MOE to provide standard and formalized classes for students to continue learning the national language at school until it is no longer needed. This includes formal language learning classes to learn the national language as a foreign language at school in addition to non-formal learning activities, for example homework clubs, extra-curricular activities, community-based events, etc. This recommendation is in line with recommendations in Section 2.2.3 Language Learning.
- Provide additional academic support based on assessed need rather than a fixed time frame.
- Establish intercultural activities at school to promote intercultural understanding and dialogue.
- Create a partner system at school where a new student can be linked with a national classmate who assists in facilitating the integration of the new student into the school culture.
- Ensure students have access to psychosocial support if it is needed.
- Create opportunities for parents to be involved at school, in their child's education.

<sup>36</sup> United Nations Human Rights Council. 2010, Op.cit.

### Challenge: When offered, support is provided for a limited duration

In all reported cases, additional support (besides the Intercultural Education Programme in Hungary and tutoring in Bulgaria) language classes and tutoring last, at maximum, one year.

### Challenge: Limited opportunities to learn the national language at school

The possibility to continue learning the national language while attending mainstream school is limited. In Hungary and Poland, it was reported that students can take targeted classes to learn the national language either during school hours or after school, on school property. Targeted interventions to support children to learn the national language while attending school were not reported in other countries under study. Thus, students are only able to access classes to learn the national language while residing at reception centres. This is problematic because the length of stay at centres is limited and is insufficient time to learn a language. This was explored in more detail in Section 2.2.3 Language Learning.

### Challenge: Lack of psychosocial support

Notwithstanding the scope of additional support reported in schools, only one example of psychosocial support was reportedly active – a social worker is present in a secondary school in Hungary. As previously noted, it is not uncommon for refugees to have experienced some trauma and require psychosocial support.<sup>36</sup>

### Challenge: Lack of information about available support

There is a fundamental challenge in that there is a lack of awareness of what support is available and how to access it. This affects multiple levels of the system such that schools and administrators are not accessing structural support that is available and parents are not duly informed about extra academic opportunities for their child.

In Romania, one school director was surprised to learn that children attending the school while awaiting their grade placement evaluation were not accessing language courses that took place at the school despite being eligible to benefit from this resource.

## Country Specific Recommendations

### Bulgaria

- The MOE to provide opportunities for students to continue learning Bulgarian at school until they no longer require this support. As with the regional recommendation, opportunities should be both formal language classes designed for students learning Bulgarian and non-formal education. Guidelines should be established and distributed to all schools that clearly define number of classes/hours per week students can attend, how schools can access funding, regulations for teacher qualifications to teach the national language, etc.
- All schools should provide parents with detailed information about school in the form of a 'Welcome Package', and their rights to access additional support in school in multiple languages, including Bulgarian. Consideration should be given to parents who are illiterate and this information should be conveyed orally, in a language they understand.
- Establish intercultural education programmes to promote intercultural dialogue and understanding.

### The Czech Republic

- The MOE should be engaged in the State Integration Programme (SIP) in the area of language training to provide opportunities for students to continue learning Czech at school until they no longer require this support. As with the regional recommendation, opportunities should be both formal language classes designed for students learning Czech and non-formal education. Guidelines should be established and distributed to all schools that clearly define number of classes/hours per week students can attend, how schools can access funding, regulations for teacher qualifications to teach the national language, etc.
- All schools should give parents and care-givers detailed information, in the form of a 'Welcome Package', about school and their rights to access additional support in school in multiple languages, including Czech. Consideration should be given to parents who are illiterate and this information should be conveyed orally, in a language they understand.
- Establish intercultural education programmes to promote intercultural dialogue and understanding.

### Hungary

- The MOE to provide consistent opportunities for students to continue learning Hungarian at school until they no longer require this support. All schools that enrol refugee and asylum-seeker students should receive funds from the 'Intercultural Education Programme' to deliver language classes at school in addition to other cultural activities in line with the regulations of this funding. Language learning should include formal language learning classes at school designed for students learning Hungarian, in addition to non-formal learning activities, for example homework clubs, extra-curricular activities, etc.
- All schools should give parents and care-givers detailed information, in the form of a 'Welcome Package', about school and their rights to access additional support in school in multiple languages, including Hungarian. Consideration should be given to parents who are illiterate and this information should be conveyed orally, in a language they understand.

### Poland

- The MOE to provide consistent opportunities for students to continue learning Polish at school until they no longer require this support. All schools that enrol refugee and asylum-seeker students should have access to funds to offer language classes to students. Language learning must include formal language learning classes at school in addition to non-formal learning activities, for example homework clubs, extra-curricular activities, etc. School administrators should be required to inform all parents of language classes that are available to students.
- The MOE to create clear guidelines on employment of teacher assistants and distribute guidelines to all schools so that school administrators are well informed regarding regulations.
- The MOE to establish detailed and clear instructions regarding how schools can apply for additional support (teaching assistants and tutoring).



## Romania

- The MOE to provide opportunities for students to continue learning Romanian at school until they no longer require this support. As with the regional recommendation, opportunities should be both formal language classes to learn Romanian as a foreign language and non-formal education. Guidelines should be established and distributed to all schools that clearly define number of classes/hours per week students can attend, how schools can access funding, regulations for teacher qualifications to teach the national language, etc.
- All schools should give parents and care-givers detailed information, in the form of a 'Welcome Package', on school and their rights to access additional support in school in multiple languages, including Romanian. Consideration should be given to parents who are illiterate and this information should be conveyed orally, in a language they understand.
- Local schools to liaise with local authorities and with the community actors active in child protection, in order to provide better support for the integration of students. Partnerships or coordination boards should be established between Reception Centre authorities, schools/high-schools/universities, Directorates of Child Protection, Municipality/County authorities, local NGOs, in order for their actions to concur and to monitor progress.
- Schoolmasters and professors observing students should be consulted in the elaboration of the Individual Integration Plans and their observations should be shared officially with the representatives of the MOI (Integration Officers of the MOI) at the local level (Centres or local branch of RIO).

## Slovakia

- The MOE to provide opportunities for students to continue learning the Slovak language at school until they no longer require this support. As with the regional recommendation, opportunities should be both formal language classes designed to teach the Slovak language as a foreign language and non-formal education. Guidelines should be established and distributed to all schools that clearly define number of classes/hours per week students can attend, how schools can access funding, regulations for teacher qualifications to teach the national language, etc.
- All schools should give parents and care-givers detailed information, in the form of a 'Welcome Package', about school and their rights to access additional support in school in multiple languages, including the Slovak language. Consideration should be given to parents who are illiterate and this information should be conveyed orally, in a language they understand.
- Establish intercultural education programmes to promote intercultural dialogue and understanding.

## Slovenia

- The MOE to provide opportunities for students to continue learning Slovenian at school until they no longer require this support. As with the regional recommendation, opportunities should be both formal language classes designed to teach Slovenian as a foreign language and non-formal education. Guidelines should be established and distributed to all schools that clearly define number of classes/hours per week students can attend, how schools can access funding, regulations for teacher qualifications to teach the national language, etc.
- All schools should give parents and care-givers detailed information, in the form of a 'Welcome Package', about school and their rights to access additional support in school in multiple languages, including Slovenian. Consideration should be given to parents who are illiterate and this information should be conveyed orally, in a language they understand.
- Establish intercultural education programmes to promote intercultural dialogue and understanding.



## 2.2.7 Funding

Throughout the region, NGOs fill an important gap in service for asylum-seekers and refugees and complement services offered by government. NGOs rely exclusively on external funding. The manner in which NGOs can apply for and access this funding has proven to be inconsistent and thus creates difficulties for continuity and sustainability of programmes and services. UNHCR's Note on Refugee Integration in Central Europe (2009) provides additional guidance and recommendations in funding for integration for governments.<sup>37</sup>

Schools share a similar problem relating to the provision of supplemental programmes outside of their normal, annual budget. When schools have the option to provide support to students, they rely on external sources and are subject to delays and disruptions.

Furthermore, a lack of information was reported on available funds. This applies to funds issued by the MOE to permit schools to offer additional programmes outside of their regular budget and ERF. Information on the rules and regulations for funding was reported to be unclear or lacking in addition to requisite skills to successfully apply for available resources.

<sup>37</sup> UNHCR, Note on Refugee Integration in Central Europe, 2009, Op.cit.

## Regional Recommendations

- Donors should institute funding mechanisms to allow for continuity in service provision in the immediate term for NGOs until funds are received from other sources.
- The MOE to expedite the process for schools to receive funds to implement supplemental support programmes for students and allow for flexible transfer of funds from one school to the next, as students move. This would prevent disruption in secondary support.
- Relevant Government authorities to deliver training on how to apply for relevant funding sources.
- Relevant Government authorities to conduct information campaigns to communicate availability of funds and conditions for applying.

### 2.2.8 Early Childhood Education (ECE)

The early years of life are critical and the learning that takes place during this time influences a child for the rest of their life. Learning is not restricted to children of school age nor does learning take place only within the confines of a school environment. Rather, it begins at birth and lays the foundation for later learning.<sup>38</sup> What takes place during this time – or does not take place – affects immediate and future well-being and development.<sup>39</sup> Not only is early childhood a time of remarkable brain development that paves the way for later learning, participation in early childhood education facilitates primary school enrolment and leads to better results, most significantly for disadvantaged children.<sup>40</sup>

Providing quality early childhood education is an elemental step in the process of providing access to quality education. It is also a fundamental human right enshrined in the CRC. The basis of quality education at this level is the same as at other levels within the education system; to ensure that education is a holistic process that puts the learner first and ensures that teachers are well trained and well equipped with the resources and

## Challenge: Lack of access to funds for NGOs to maintain programmes

The Reformed Church in Hungary is presently relying on private donations to pay the salaries of three staff that work in a secondary school in Budapest (two Hungarian language teachers and one social worker). At the time of the interview, representatives of this NGO were unsure what would happen in the upcoming school year because current donations will not last.

In Romania, Save the Children was notified that they would receive European Refugee Fund (ERF) funds to run Romanian language classes in five reception centres but they were awaiting funds from ERF. The delay in funding was reported to be due to an appeal that was submitted to the ERF from another NGO. At the time of the interview, it was not known when the appeal process would be completed and Save the Children would receive funding.

## Challenge: Time lag for funding to be issued to schools

When additional funds are available to schools, restrictions are reported to persist:

- Applications for programmes are accepted at specific times in the year;
- Local authorities have limited budgets and the school must make difficult decisions about what type of funding it should seek;
- Between applying for and receiving funds, students and teachers can be left without requisite support, and
- Mid-session enrolment is not unusual nor is movement of refugee students during the school year. When a child moves, the services that were set up in the previous school do not tend to follow them to their new school.

<sup>38</sup> UNESCO. *Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2006: Strong Foundations: Early Childhood Care and Education*. UNESCO, Paris, 2006.

<sup>39</sup> UNICEF. *What We Do: Early Childhood - Introduction*. Retrieved 7 July 2011 ([http://www.unicef.org/earlychildhood/index\\_3870.html](http://www.unicef.org/earlychildhood/index_3870.html))

<sup>40</sup> UNESCO, 2007, Op cit.

## Challenge: Lack of information

The following constraints were reported:

- Lack of information on available resources: who can apply, the conditions for submitting applications, etc;
- Insufficient skills on the part of service providers to successfully apply for and/or access funds available to them, and
- Lack of information regarding time frames for funds, schedules of Calls for Proposals, etc.

## Challenge: Access to early childhood education

ECE classes were not reported to be available at reception centres. The opportunities that were available took place outside the reception centres. Specific challenges reported related to this include:

- Lack of transportation to and from facilities offering ECE;
- Lack of information about education opportunities;
- Families are in detention and thus not eligible to access education;
- Fees to access ECE programmes;
- Migration from centres creates disruption and discontinuity of education services, and
- Lack of absorption capacity of pre-schools.

skills they require to effectively teach their students. UNESCO's Planning Policies for Early Childhood Development: Guidelines for Action (2005) recommends embedding ECE programmes within early childhood care and development (ECCD) programmes and services that begin before birth as part of an integrated approach.<sup>41</sup>

The benefits of investing in ECE are innumerable and have the potential to offer advantages to parents as well. ECE programmes engage parents and caregivers in informal education and provide indirect support to parents to learn the language with their children. It is important for integration that early childhood services show sensitivity about language and cultural practices.<sup>42</sup> As with formal primary and secondary education, access to ECE can pave the way for integration in the host community, not only for the students but for the parents and caregivers, by providing targeted interventions to engage them in their child's education.

The research carried out by M. Bacáková (2009, 2010) on access to education in the Czech Republic and the research conducted in 2011 in Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia did not explore access to ECE. However, given the importance of ECE and the benefits it can impart, it was included within the programme of the Regional Education Conference in Budapest in June 2011. The challenges presented below are the result of group discussions as are the recommendations that follow.

## Regional Recommendations

- Ensure refugee and asylum-seeker parents and caregivers have the same access to early childhood education opportunities as are available to nationals and that information about these education opportunities is provided in a language that parents and caregivers can understand.
- Provide informal ECE opportunities in reception centres.
- When ECE opportunities are offered at mainstream school, provide transportation to parents or caregivers and students.

41 Vargas-Barón, E. Planning Policies for Early Childhood Development: Guidelines for Action. UNESCO, 2005.

42 UNESCO. *Early Childhood Care and Education Regional Report: Europe and North America, Draft*. UNESCO, 27 August 2010.



C - - - t m i e d

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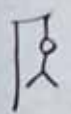
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# Part 3: Improving access to Education in Central Europe

## 3.1 Education Conference

The first Regional Conference on Education was organized by the UNHCR Regional Representation in Central Europe on June 29-30, 2011 in Budapest, Hungary. The aim of the conference was to bring together government stakeholders, civil society and UNHCR partners to discuss policy guidelines to improve access to education for refugee and asylum-seeker children. 28 participants from the Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia attended the conference.

Participants learned about the main challenges and obstacles related to access to education for refugee and asylum-seeker children, areas of increasing priorities, as well as integration policies in the region. Several presentations were delivered on the topics of *UNHCR Education Policy and Strategy*, *Access to Education for Refugee Children in the Context Integration Evaluation Tool* and *UNHCR Integration Strategy in Central Europe*. An NGO representative from the Reformed Church of Hungary presented their work on access to education for asylum-seeker and refugee children.

The presentation of the results of the regional study on access to education entitled *Challenges and Good Practices in Access to Education for Refugee and Asylum-seeker Children in Central Europe*, formed the basis of the conference discussions. The research comprised the seven key areas that were determined as fundamental for access to education: Legislation, Data Management, Language Learning, Grade Placement, Teacher Training, Supports in School and Funding. However other areas of interest were also highlighted: access to early childhood education, education for vulnerable groups and schools' preparedness and willingness to deal with trauma cases, issues covering diploma recognition and competence evaluation.

Challenges and good practices on data management, language learning, grade placement, supports in school, teacher training, and funding and early childhood education were elaborated to formulate sustainable, time bound, attainable and realistic recommendations. Throughout the conference, participants shared good practice on improving access to quality education such as Accelerated Learning Programmes (ALPs), amendments to legal frameworks, providing psychosocial support and community engagement.

The Conference was the first step in building relationships with government counterparts who are confronted with similar challenges, with the opportunity to exchange experiences in improving access to education for refugee and asylum-seeker children. The full conference report is available at Annex 4.

## 3.2 Good Practices in the Region

The good practices listed below were collected during the research in Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia and two research reports about access to education in the Czech Republic.

Thematic Area	Good Practices	Category	Country
Language Learning	<p>In both Bulgaria and Romania, textbooks exist to teach the national language to refugee and asylum-seeker children. The first edition of the text in Bulgaria was published in 2000. This text was part of a joint effort with the State Agency for Refugees<sup>43</sup> and the MOE. UNHCR contributed funds to this project.</p> <p>The MOE<sup>44</sup> in Romania created a text for teaching Romanian to refugee and asylum-seeker children in 2004. Three separate curricula were developed to accompany the text for students to correspond with their ages; for students between 6-10 years old, 11-14 years old, and for students aged 15-18.</p> <p>In Slovenia, a resource created by the Centre for Slovene as a Second/Foreign Language<sup>45</sup> is forthcoming to assist teachers to teach the Slovene language to refugee or migrant children. This resource has not yet been officially adopted by the MOE.</p>	Textbooks and curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bulgaria</li> <li>• Romania</li> <li>• Slovenia</li> </ul>
Grade Placement	<p>In 2010, Romania offered the 'Second Chance Programme' in 267 schools. Although this programme is offered extensively, no information was provided on how many refugee or asylum-seekers benefited from the 'Second Chance Programme'. Both Slovenia and the Czech Republic reported offering ALP opportunities for students. One drawback of the programme reported in both Romania and Slovenia is that students are expected to have a reasonable level of the national language to complete the studies. In Slovenia a local NGO, Slovenska Filantropija,<sup>46</sup> provides a solution by connecting students who require additional support in academic studies including learning Slovenian with volunteer tutors to provide one-to-one support. The Slovene Jesuit Refugee<sup>47</sup> Service in Ljubljana also provides tutoring.</p>	ALP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Czech Republic</li> <li>• Romania</li> <li>• Slovenia</li> </ul>

43 <http://www.aref.government.bg/?cat=2>

44 <http://www.edu.ro/index.php/articles/c262/>

45 <http://www.centerslo.net/index.asp?LANG=eng>

46 <http://www.filantropija.org/en/>

47 <http://www.rkc.si/jrs/>

Thematic Area	Good Practices	Category	Country
Teacher Training	<p>In autumn 2010, an NGO in Bratislava, Milan Simecka Foundation,<sup>48</sup> began a training course designed for teachers of students from other countries as a part of their Intercultural Programme. Although the course was not specifically designed for teachers of refugees and asylum-seekers, sections of the training have been dedicated to understanding their distinct needs.</p> <p>Recognizing the value for teachers to attend trainings that are accredited, the Milan Simecka Foundation ensured the training met the Ministry of Education standards for accreditation. This training is not only addressing the need of teachers to be better equipped to teach their students, it is also addressing another need – the scarcity of teaching resources. At the end of the 2011 course, Milan Simecka Foundation intends to compile all the resources (lesson plans, activities, etc.) created by teachers as part of the course and make this available to the public.</p>	Training and teaching resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Slovakia</li> </ul>
Support in School	<p><b>Language Learning</b></p> <p>In Hungary, schools can apply for funding as part of the “Intercultural Educational Programme”.<sup>49</sup> Schools must first develop the programme then apply. Activities should centre on learning the Hungarian language and culture and last at least two years. At least one secondary school in Budapest accessed this funding in 2010-2011.</p> <p>In Poland,<sup>50</sup> students have the right to attend Polish language classes after school. These classes are available for a minimum of two hours up to a maximum of five hours per week. If students are attending tutoring classes (see Tutoring below), the total number of hours for additional classes cannot exceed five hours per week. Students can take the additional classes for a maximum of one year.</p>	Language Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hungary</li> <li>• Poland</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Teaching Assistants</b></p> <p>Research (Bacáková 2009, 2010) conducted in the Czech Republic revealed examples of good practice in two mainstream schools educating refugee children who hired teaching assistants to provide the pupils with adequate support. Funding for the assistants was acquired through special grants administered by the MOE.<sup>51</sup></p> <p>In 2010, Poland amended the Education Act of 1991<sup>52</sup> to permit schools to apply for funding to hire teaching assistants. They must speak the refugees’ language and work in the schools to assist students in all areas of their studies. They serve as a liaison between schools and parents, intercultural mediators, facilitators of integration and assist in communication with families and caregivers.</p>	Teaching Assistants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Czech Republic</li> <li>• Poland</li> </ul>

48 <http://www.nadaciamilanasimecku.sk/>

49 <http://www.nefmi.gov.hu/nemzetkozi-kapcsolatok/english/legal-regulations>

50 <http://www.men.gov.pl/index.php>

51 <http://www.msmt.cz/index.php?lang=2>

52 <http://www.men.gov.pl/index.php>



Thematic Area	Good Practices	Category	Country
Support in School	<p><b>Tutoring</b></p> <p>In Bulgaria,<sup>53</sup> additional tutoring is available to students after school hours. This is offered to all students in academic subjects where additional help is required. The teacher of the academic subject in question is responsible for providing the extra class. A time limit on the duration of tutoring was not reported.</p> <p>Students in Poland<sup>54</sup> can request support in the form of tutoring in academic subjects after school. One-hour lesson for each subject is available to students up to a maximum of five hours per week. If students are receiving Polish language classes (see Language Learning above) the total number of hours for additional classes cannot exceed five hours per week. Tutoring is available for a maximum of one year.</p> <p>Since 2008, foreign students can benefit from individual support for up to one year in Slovakia.<sup>55</sup> The support is individualized and is at the discretion of local schools how the programme is developed and implemented.</p>	Tutoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bulgaria</li> <li>• Poland</li> <li>• Slovakia</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Intercultural Education Programmes</b></p> <p>Hungary<sup>56</sup> has the option for schools to implement an Intercultural Education Programme. One secondary school that has received funding as part of this programme has incorporated an intercultural curriculum to foster understanding between Hungarian and non-Hungarian students.</p> <p>UNICEF<sup>57</sup> in Bratislava, Slovakia, in cooperation with UNHCR, has involved two refugee representatives to participate as youth volunteers. These students participate in the school campaigns and conduct informal education activities such as presentations and activities about human rights, CRC, climate change, intercultural dialogue and refugees. Students have placed an emphasis on intercultural dialogue and understanding.</p> <p>In Slovenia, an integration toolkit for teachers is due to be published at the end of this school year by the National Institute of Education.<sup>58</sup> The toolkit will provide resources and strategies for integration of migrant children in school. Although the toolkit does not focus specifically on refugees and asylum-seekers, it was reported as being useful for teachers teaching these students.</p>	Intercultural Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hungary</li> <li>• Slovakia</li> <li>• Slovenia</li> </ul>

53 <http://www.minedu.government.bg/news-home/>

54 <http://www.men.gov.pl/index.php>

55 <http://www.minedu.sk/index.php?lang=en&rootId=33&col=true>

56 <http://www.nefmi.gov.hu/nemzetkozi-kapcsolatok/english/legal-regulations>

57 <http://www.unicef.sk/sk/>

58 <http://www.zrss.si/default.asp?link=ang>

Thematic Area	Good Practices	Category	Country
Support in School	<p><b>Financial Resources for School Supplies</b></p> <p>In many countries, parents and caregivers receive assistance to purchase school supplies and lunches and support for transportation to school. These supports come from either government ministries (Office of Immigration and Nationality, Hungary;<sup>59</sup> Office for Foreigners, Poland;<sup>60</sup> MOE, Slovenia<sup>61</sup>) or NGOs (Bulgarian Red Cross, Bulgaria;<sup>62</sup> Save the Children, Romania;<sup>63</sup> Goodwill Society<sup>64</sup> and Slovak Humanitarian Council<sup>65</sup> for asylum-seekers in reception centres, and Slovak Humanitarian Council and ETP Slovakia<sup>66</sup> provide this to refugee children).</p>	Financial Resources for School Supplies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bulgaria</li> <li>• Hungary</li> <li>• Poland</li> <li>• Romania</li> <li>• Slovakia</li> <li>• Slovenia</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Information Sharing Mechanisms</b></p> <p>Two schools in the Czech Republic were reported to provide a package of information to students on basic school vocabulary; a map of the school and community; public transport timetables and the class timetable. These schools were part of a study conducted in 2009 and 2010.<sup>67</sup></p> <p>The UNHCR Representation in Bulgaria published “The Short Handbook on the Rights and Obligations of Aliens Who are Refugees or Humanitarian Status Holders in the Republic of Bulgaria” in collaboration with the government and NGOs. This is available in many languages and provides a summary of the rights of refugees or humanitarian status holders in Bulgaria, including information on access to education. A more comprehensive version is available for Governmental officials in Bulgarian and English.</p> <p>In Poland, the Education Department in the city of Warsaw compiled a “Welcome Pack for Pupils and Parents”.<sup>68</sup> The Welcome Pack is supplied to parents and students upon enrolment in school in Warsaw and is written in various languages in an easy-to-read format. Topics include: The School Calendar; Daily Timetable; Things You Need At School; Your Pupil’s Daybook; Extra-curricular Activities; What To Do If; How to Make Friends With Other Pupils at School; Our School’s System of Grades; and School Forms Templates and a Mini-Dictionary. One section provides information about attending extra Polish lessons and academic support.</p> <p>Parents can receive a bilingual brochure in Slovenia<sup>69</sup> about enrolment, school schedule and transportation. This is available in Slovenian and 5 other languages.</p>	Information Sharing Mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Czech Republic</li> <li>• Bulgaria</li> <li>• Poland</li> <li>• Slovenia</li> </ul>

59 [http://www.bmbah.hu/a\\_bah\\_ismertetese.php](http://www.bmbah.hu/a_bah_ismertetese.php)

60 <http://www.udsc.gov.pl/MAIN.PAGE.264.html>

61 <http://www.mss.gov.si/en/>

62 <http://en.redcross.bg/>

63 [http://www.savethechildren.net/romania\\_en/](http://www.savethechildren.net/romania_en/)

64 <http://www.cassovia.sk/sldv/>

65 <http://www.shr.sk>

66 <http://www.etp.sk/en>

67 Bacáková, 2009 and 2010, Op.cit.

68 [www.uchodzczydoszkoly.pl/files/Podst-ang-druk-m.pdf](http://www.uchodzczydoszkoly.pl/files/Podst-ang-druk-m.pdf)

69 <http://www.zrss.si/pdf/Slovensko%20angle%C5%A1ka%20ina%C4%8Dica%20z%20gibanke%20-%20informacija%20za%20star%C5%A1e.pdf>

### 3.3 Short- and Long-term Commitments

During the Regional Education Conference in Budapest in June 2011, the final session was dedicated to mapping out next steps on how to begin to improve access to quality education in the region. Participants were asked to reflect on the proceedings of the conference and to come together with colleagues from the same country to establish short- and long-term actions to which they could commit. These commitments may not address all of the challenges presented, however they are a key stepping stone in achieving access to quality education. The conference report and detailed information about discussions and outcomes of activities can be found in detail in Annex 4.

Country	Short-term Actions	Long-term Actions
Bulgaria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue joint work by UNHCR and asylum authorities to amend the legislation, re-stating provisions about refugees and asylum-seekers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With the joint efforts of the SAR and the MOE, develop a special programme to teach the Bulgarian language to refugee and asylum-seeker children. The program aims at 3 months and 250 hours of teaching.</li> <li>• Update the current textbooks for refugee and asylum-seeker children.</li> <li>• Use ERF 2012 funding for these activities.</li> </ul>
The Czech Republic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reconsider the legislation concerning the co-funding scheme of the ERF projects in the Czech Republic. Currently the law does not allow the government to be a co-founder for the funded ERF projects.</li> <li>• The goal is to allow the central administration bodies to provide partial funding for the ERF projects.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish cooperation between the UNHCR, the MOI and the MOE.</li> </ul>
Hungary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish a working group among representatives of the Ministries and NGOs to talk through the major problems in the education field and find solutions for them. The group should meet quarterly.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update university requirements for refugee and asylum-seeker children to expand an opportunity to receive university education.</li> <li>• Continue working on the recognition of diplomas.</li> <li>• Rethink the chances for refugee and asylum-seeker children to get scholarships to be able to study in the universities.</li> </ul>
Poland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support and expand teacher's assistance programme, which was introduced 1 year ago.</li> <li>• Run an awareness campaign near the reception centres to raise the awareness of the role of teacher assistants.</li> <li>• Show parents and directors of the schools that employing teacher assistance is a great opportunity to help the refugee and asylum-seeker children to develop.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure an obligation, imposed on schools, to hire teacher assistants.</li> </ul>

Country	Short-term Actions	Long-term Actions
Romania	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Run activities for raising awareness about refugee issues.</li> <li>• Co-organize meeting with decision-makers on the local level.</li> <li>• Conduct training both on the central level and in five local places, where refugee centres are situated. Highlight what are the rights of the refugees, and the differences between migrants and refugees.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop an accredited training course for teachers in language teaching for refugees and asylum-seekers. The course should be accredited to motivate teachers to take classes for their professional development.</li> <li>• Continue lobbying at the Ministerial level with regards to refugee issues.</li> </ul>
Slovakia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organize a workshop for Ministries, NGOs, municipalities, international agencies to share the concerns about the education, develop a strategy, action plan to fulfil the education strategy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce education as a separate section for the ERF funding.</li> </ul>
Slovenia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure data collection by the existing Board of Foreigners.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Start a dialog with the Ministry of Education and develop an evaluation methodology to allow refugees/asylum-seekers who do not have certificates/diplomas about their education, to continue their education on a higher level and in universities.</li> </ul>



# Conclusions and Way Forward

Challenges undoubtedly persist in ensuring access to quality education for refugee and asylum-seeker children. Quality education is a summary of a holistic process which puts the learner first, and is affected both by the classroom curriculum and by the school environment. Teachers are instrumental in providing quality education and they are affected by the demands placed on them, and the resources available to them. Currently, refugee and asylum-seeker children are not benefiting from a spectrum of services and support which would facilitate their full academic achievement and integration into the country of asylum. Work remains to be done to ensure that relevant programmes are put in effect and that the target population accesses them easily. Requisite interventions, for example, ensuring sustained opportunities to learn the national language and opportunities to access ALPs, must be created and maintained to meet the needs of refugee and asylum-seeker children. These learning opportunities should guarantee opportunities equal to those of their national counterparts.

This project was a first step in exploring areas for intervention within national education and integration systems with the aim of improving access to quality education. Areas requiring intervention span broadly throughout both of these systems. Such interventions will require detailed research and analysis to formulate comprehensive, effective and responsive policy in each country. Targeted education programmes are at an early stage in most countries and would benefit from assessment aimed at improving programme quality.

The following areas were not investigated, but offer most relevant material for further examination:

- It was reported that students with disabilities have the same rights as nationals, however more research into the nature of access is needed.
- Equally, unaccompanied minors (UAMs) were described as benefiting from the same rights as nationals, however, more detailed research delving into the distinct needs and vulnerabilities of this population is merited.
- This study covered primary and secondary education. Research into other areas of education warrants investigation including, but not limited to ECE, vocational training, access to university education, access to education for adults and non-formal education.
- Further investigation into the support to and engagement with parents and caregivers in the education of their children.

As evidenced from the accounts presented in this paper, promising practices do exist within the region. Although the good practices identified are not universal in their applicability, they can form the basis of a unified package of solutions for improving access to quality education. A great deal of work remains to be done to ensure that all refugee and asylum-seeker children have access education that fully meets their needs.

Regional stakeholders are encouraged to maintain the momentum and collaborative spirit developed during the conference to maintain a professional network of mutual support. As countries in the region face similar challenges related to providing access to quality education, working together with UNHCR to create durable solutions could provide the basis for efficient and effective programmes. The Report on Improving Access to Education among Asylum-Seeker and Refugee Children and Adolescents in Central Europe contains a number of regional and country specific recommendations that are important in their own right. The establishment of an Inter-ministerial Committee or expert working group to coordinate activities relevant to access to quality education for refugee and asylum-seeker children can be instrumental in putting these recommendations into action. The responsibility to provide access to quality education resides with both the MOI and MOE together with stakeholders. Once working groups are established, consideration should be given to developing common indicators to establish benchmarks that will assist in monitoring and measuring achievements towards providing access to quality education. With the combined efforts of all stakeholders, durable solutions can be found to ensure the right to quality education is fulfilled for refugee and asylum-seeker children.

# Annex 1: Excerpts from UNHCR Agenda on Refugee Integration in Central Europe

Excerpts from this document pertaining to participation through education and language learning are presented below. The full report can be found at [www.unhcr-centraleurope.org/](http://www.unhcr-centraleurope.org/)

## Participation through Education

Education is critical in facilitating refugee participation in the economic, social and cultural life of the refugee receiving country. In the case of refugee children and adolescents, it reinforces a sense of normality and routine into their lives while also being essential to their intellectual and psychological development.

UNHCR strongly recommends that governments review the conditions for the reception of asylum-seekers to ensure age sensitivity. Targeted and specialized support should be provided to asylum seeking and refugee children and their families as early as possible upon arrival in the receiving countries. This should be geared towards helping refugee children to adjust to the educational system of the host country, acquire language skills and start redressing some of the effects of potentially disrupted education or intellectual or developmental delay due to past experiences of flight and exile. For refugees who have not completed a basic education, UNHCR underlines the importance of literacy programs by specialist educational institutions given the role of literacy as a necessary skill in itself as well as a foundation of other life skills.

## Language Learning as a Path to Independence and Self-Reliance

Learning the language and having some knowledge of the receiving country are basic requirements for achieving independence and self-sufficiency as well as becoming part of the local community. They are also means for refugees to regain a sense of security, dignity and self worth.

UNHCR recommends that governments and other stakeholders involve refugees in the planning, implementation and evaluation of learning activities that are of relevance to their everyday lives and needs as parents, consumers, citizens, or employees. They should also provide refugees with ongoing opportunities for language learning beyond the first year from status recognition including inter alia in conjunction with other activities such as vocational training, work placements or volunteering. The Office stresses the importance of adopting a flexible, age, gender and diversity sensitive approach to language training and cultural orientation that responds to individual needs.



# Annex 2: Excerpts from UNHCR Note on Refugee Integration in Central Europe

Excerpts from this document pertaining to education; language learning and cultural orientation, and funding for integration are presented below. The full report can be found at [www.unhcr-centraleurope.org/](http://www.unhcr-centraleurope.org/)

## Education for Refugee Children and Adults

Education is both a right in itself and an indispensable means of realizing other human rights. As an empowerment right, it can be a primary vehicle for refugees, whether adults or children, to escape from poverty and have the means to participate fully in the community of the country of asylum.<sup>70</sup> UNHCR's Conclusion on Local Integration notes the role of education and skills development in facilitating refugee participation in the economic life of the receiving country. It further recognizes the link between education and durable solutions in the context of calling for access to educational opportunities for refugee children.<sup>71</sup> UNHCR's Education Strategy further stresses the very important role of educational and recreational activities in helping to reintroduce a sense of normality and routine into the lives of refugee children and adolescents.<sup>72</sup>

The Common Basic Principle 5 for Immigrant Integration refers to efforts in education being critical to preparing immigrants and their descendants "to be more successful and more active participants in society". The measures proposed include the introduction of diversity in the school curriculum, measures to prevent underachievement and early school leaving of young people, participation in higher education and measures to address youth delinquency.<sup>73</sup>

Refugees can face many difficulties with regard to access to education in Central Europe. In the case of adult refugees, some might have not received or completed primary education in their country of origin, they therefore lack the basic skills and qualifications that are necessary for participation in vocational training or further education programs and for employment in certain sectors. Those lacking basic literacy skills, usually have serious problems learning the language of the receiving country or acquiring other skills necessary for independent living. As for refugees with higher education qualifications, these might not be recognized because of loss or lack of documentary proof, lack of procedures to enable the competent educational authorities to make appropriate assessments or because of a requirement for verification of documentary evidence by the educational authorities of the country of origin - an option that is not available to refugees.

Regarding refugee children and young persons, many face serious problems at school. Frequent changes of place of residence during the asylum procedure and upon status recognition can lead to and foster insecurity and hinder the active participation of children in education. Problems securing a school place for refugee children in the vicinity of reception or accommodation facilities have often been reported to UNHCR and attributed to discriminatory attitudes by school management or teaching staff or difficulties with providing documentary evidence of past educational achievements. In some countries, teachers might lack the expertise necessary to teach ethnically diverse groups of

70 See UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, General Comment No.13, The Right to Education (Article 13 of ICESCR), Twenty-first Session, 1999.

71 Op. cit., note 1, para. n(iii).

72 UNHCR, Education Strategy 2007-2009, Policy Challenges and Objectives, Technical Support Section, Division of Operational Services, June 2007. See also, EXCOM Conclusion on Refugee Children, No. 59, (XL) - 1989, para. (f).

73 Op. cit. note 41, Chapter 2.5.

pupils or children with a different mother tongue to that spoken in the country. In cases where experienced teachers are employed, the school might have no access to specialized educational resources or additional financial support to facilitate refugee children's engagement in school activities or introduce diversity as an important part of the school curriculum. While in some countries, provision is made for the delivery of preparatory language courses, this might not be of sufficient intensity or duration to enable children and young people to get the skills required to take part in mainstream education, including higher education. Without the required knowledge of the receiving country's language, older children are often required to attend school at a lower grade to that corresponding to their age, intellectual development or needs - a situation that fosters stigmatization and their further marginalization.<sup>74</sup>

UNHCR's Agenda for Protection calls upon States to accord importance to refugee primary and secondary education.<sup>75</sup> At a first instance, we urge governments in Central Europe to review their reception arrangements to ensure age sensitivity.<sup>76</sup> In order to foster some stability and predictability in children's lives, government authorities are advised to refrain from changing the places of residence of asylum seeking families with school age children unless absolutely necessary. Targeted and specialized support should be provided to refugee children and their families as early as possible during the process of examination of asylum seeking children's claims or that of their family as well as thereafter. This should aim at addressing educational, psychological, recreational and other special needs. It should be geared towards helping refugee children to adjust to the educational system of the receiving country, acquire language skills and start redressing some of the effects of potentially disrupted education or intellectual or developmental delay due to past experiences of flight and exile.<sup>77</sup>

To that end, the provision of additional funding - in the form of special grants - should be considered for schools where asylum seeking and refugee children and young people are enrolled. Where such provision is available, relevant authorities should establish a system of monitoring the effective use of funding by all educational establishments with a mixed pupil population. Given the central role of families in supporting children and young people with their integration, efforts should be made to engage refugee families in supporting their children and young people at school through *inter alia* the provision of information on the educational system of the receiving country, child rearing practices relating to discipline and supervision, bullying and racism and peer pressure.

UNHCR's *Refugee Resettlement: An International Handbook to Guide Reception and Integration*, outlines a series of steps to be undertaken in connection with the education of refugee children and youth.<sup>78</sup> Where indicated, governments and other stakeholders are encouraged to *inter alia* consider:

### a) Child-Centred Reception and Integration Services

- reviewing reception arrangements with the aim of addressing in particular the educational, psychological, recreational and other special needs of refugee children;<sup>79</sup>
- refraining from frequently moving asylum seeking families with school age children unless proven absolutely necessary.

74 *Op. cit.*, note 6.

75 UNHCR, *Agenda for Protection*, Goal 6, Section 2: Measures to improve the framework for the protection of refugee children, Department of International Protection, October 2003

76 *Op. cit.*, note 10, para. (b) iii.

77 *Op. cit.* note 4, Chapter 3.3: Investing in the Future: Refugee Children and Young People.

78 Many of the recommendations below are drawn from Chapter 3.3 on refugee children and young people of UNHCR's *Integration Handbook*. See also UNHCR's *Strategy and Activities concerning Refugee Children*, Priority Issues 4 & 5 on Education and Specific Concerns of Adolescents, Geneva, October 2005, UNHCR Executive Committee, *Children at Risk*, Stranding Committee, 38th meeting, EC/58/SC/CRP 7, 22 February 2007 and UNHCR EXCOM Conclusion No 107 (LVIII) - 2007 on Children at Risk.

79 *Op. cit.* note 10 para. (b) iii.

## b) Access to Education for Refugee Children and Young People

- setting up special language and orientation programs to prepare refugee or asylum seeking children and young people for full time entry into the general educational system of the receiving country and introduce them to the culture and social structures of that country.<sup>80</sup> Such programs should be made available upon arrival in the country of asylum. Pending on specific circumstances, they could be set up separately from mainstream provision or be part of a flexible arrangement enabling refugee children and young people to initially divide their time between general and targeted school activities;
- using flexible criteria for determining the level at which to enrol refugee children or young persons based on their educational development and needs rather than availability of school certificates;
- providing supplementary assistance to refugee children and young people in the classroom to prevent early drop out and meet specific educational needs through the use of bi-lingual teaching professionals, bilingual instruction and other initiatives;
- ensuring access to pre-school or kindergarten facilities for young children as early as possible after arrival or submission of an asylum application by their parents;
- supporting the development of recreational, sports, play and cultural activities for all asylum seeking and refugee children and youth outside of school hours including the formation of youth groups;<sup>81</sup>
- making targeted educational and training arrangements for young refugees approaching or over the age of majority including access to grants and scholarships towards the completion of their studies or acquisition of necessary certification;
- in the case of young refugees who have not completed their basic education, providing special support or facilitated access to adult literacy classes, training courses, apprenticeships and non-formal education that facilitate the acquisition of basic literacy and other skills;
- develop procedures designed to assess fairly and expeditiously whether refugees fulfil all relevant requirements for access to higher education and further higher education programs even in cases in which the qualifications obtained cannot be proven through documentary evidence.<sup>82</sup>

## c) Capacity Building for Educational Providers

- organizing specialized training for teaching staff working with diverse pupil populations and developing culturally inclusive curricula and teaching resources;
- putting in place a system to support ongoing pedagogical research on refugee children's education and monitor the implementation of inter-cultural pedagogical programs including the take up of funding for this purpose by all educational establishments with a diverse pupil population.

<sup>80</sup> *Op. cit.*, note 28, para. (h) xvii.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid*, para. (h) viii.

<sup>82</sup> See Council of Europe/Unesco *Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region*, adopted in Lisbon on 11 April 1997 (ETS No. 165) Art. VII. See further *Explanatory Report to the Lisbon Convention and Recommendation on Criteria and Procedures for the Assessment of Foreign Qualifications* adopted by the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee on 6 June 2001 in Riga. Also, para 30 of *UNHCR Note on the Integration of Refugees in the European Union*.



#### d) Other Issues

- pending on parental consent, developing individual integration plans for children and young people to identify their educational and social support needs and link them with educational, leisure, recreational or child support services.

As for adult refugees who have not completed a basic education, UNHCR wishes to underline the importance of inter alia:

- promoting the development of literacy programs by specialist educational institutions for adult refugees without basic education given the role of literacy as a necessary skill in itself as well as the foundation of other life skills;<sup>83</sup>
- addressing other basic learning needs of young and adult refugees through the provision of vocational and other forms of training, the development of volunteering or job placement opportunities, non-formal education or orientation programs in health, the environment, family life and other issues, or through apprenticeships;
- making flexible arrangements, including women only classes, that foster the participation of refugee women without basic education in educational or training activities promoting basic life skills' development including literacy skills;
- organizing specialized training for teaching or other staff working with adult refugees and developing culturally inclusive curricula and teaching or training resources.
- treating adult refugees as favourably as possible with respect to academic fees, other educational charges or the award of scholarships for higher or further education.

<sup>83</sup> World Conference on Education for All, *World Declaration on Education for All*, (Thailand, March 1990), Article 5.

## Language Learning and Cultural Orientation

Learning the language and having a basic knowledge of the receiving country are basic requirements for achieving independence and self-sufficiency as well as becoming part of the local community. They are also means for refugees to regain a sense of security, dignity and self worth.<sup>84</sup> There are a number of factors that may affect the ability of refugees to learn the language or culture of the receiving country including their educational background and familiarity with a classroom environment, age, gender, physical and mental health condition, experiences of past trauma or torture, family responsibilities and economic or housing circumstances. External factors might relate to the availability of qualified staff, the extent to which the curriculum caters for the needs of refugees with special educational requirements and the availability of support systems that enable people to participate in language and cultural orientation training including childcare, travel costs or adequate income support.

While cultural orientation and the acquisition of the receiving country's language are central elements of government integration policies and programs in Central Europe, a number of concerns exist about the adequacy and effectiveness of current arrangements. In terms of language learning, in some countries, classes might only be available for a limited number of hours that are not sufficient for either acquiring basic skills or for obtaining advanced understanding of the receiving country's language. In most cases, the length of time refugees can follow free language classes is restricted to one year from status recognition. As a result, those who are unable for health, family or other reasons to attend classes during the first year from being recognized as a refugee, cannot avail themselves of another opportunity to learn the language and culture of the receiving country. Furthermore, language tuition might only be offered at basic level. Many refugees therefore cannot develop the linguistic skills necessary for further education or employment in positions where advanced language skills are a prerequisite. As for cultural orientation classes, some are reported to have little relation to real life experiences or needs of refugees.

Additional concerns relate to shortages of qualified teaching staff and the absence of specialized language and cultural orientation support for those with special needs such as the elderly, torture and trauma survivors, people lacking basic education or women with childcare/dependent responsibilities. The lack of flexible arrangements enabling those in employment to attend language or cultural orientation classes after hours or during the weekend is a further concern. In countries where participation is obligatory and income support payments are not sufficient to meet basic needs, refugees and their families are faced with little option but to forfeit the opportunity to learn the language or participate in cultural orientation programs so that they can work to survive. The lack of special measures to foster the participation of refugee women in training and orientation activities is also a matter requiring urgent consideration. In the absence of women-only classes, refugee women coming from gender-segregated societies might have little option but to forfeit acquiring language or other skills. This might also be the case for women with family/dependent responsibilities unless childcare or other support is provided.

UNHCR's *Refugee Resettlement: An International Handbook to Guide Reception and Integration*, outlines a series of steps to be undertaken in connection with planning for and supporting language learning for refugees.<sup>85</sup> Where indicated, governments and other stakeholders are encouraged to *inter alia* consider:

- involving refugees in the planning, implementation and evaluation of learning activities that are of relevance to their everyday lives and needs as parents, consumers, citizens, employees and so on;
- providing ongoing opportunities for language learning beyond the first year from status recognition including *inter alia* in conjunction with other activities such as vocational training, work placements, volunteering and so on;
- piloting flexible and culturally responsive language training arrangements such as women-only or other special group based programs, work or home based schemes, and after working hours' instruction or tutoring programs by paid or trained volunteer teachers;

<sup>84</sup> *Op. cit.*, note 4, Chapter 2.6: Fostering Independent Communication: Language Training Programmes for Adult Resettled Refugees.

<sup>85</sup> These recommendations are drawn from Chapter 2.6 on language training for adult resettled refugees of the UNHCR Integration Handbook.

- providing options for advanced language training and further education to interested refugees in cooperation with mainstream educational providers;
- developing specialized educational resources including a curriculum for the teaching of national language(s) to refugees, training and professional development programs for teachers and language learning tools that make use of interactive methods of learning and involve a range of media such as printed form or audio-visual material.

Cultural orientation courses can be effective in imparting essential skills and knowledge about the culture and values of a receiving society if they:

- during the early phases of integration programs, are provided in a language that is understood by the refugee or with the support of skilled interpreters as a last resort;
- focus on fostering participants' skills in addressing day to day needs and challenges;
- involve learning through showing and doing;
- make use of interactive methods of learning such as discussions, group work and role play;
- involve a range of media and provide varied learning experiences that take into account cultural approaches to learning, literacy and educational levels and special needs;
- are confined to issues relevant to refugees' specific stage of integration;
- take as a starting point for learning, the refugees' country of origin experiences and involve as appropriate, established refugee community members in the delivery of cultural orientation programs.<sup>86</sup>

In developing cultural orientation courses, UNHCR proposes that governments and other stakeholders consider:

- structuring cultural orientation courses as an integral part of language learning or integration programs. Under such schemes, language learning and case management through individual integration programs would serve as the base for continually reinforcing and expanding upon information provided through cultural orientation courses.
- engaging volunteers and mainstream service providers, including front-line staff, in the delivery of cultural orientation activities. Not only would such an engagement facilitate the orientation of refugees to specific services and community settings. It might also contribute to increasing awareness among service providers and local communities of the profile and characteristics of refugees therefore promoting mutual understanding and acceptance.
- developing resources, information manuals and training courses that enhance the capacity of volunteers and personnel in mainstream services to contribute to orientation courses but also provide orientation support to refugees outside the framework of tailored programs;
- developing resources that enable refugees to experience "hands on" the values, culture and public services available in the receiving country through fostering interaction with service providers and community members in various settings (schools, religious institutions, community centres, public offices etc) and promoting refugee participation in mentoring or volunteering schemes.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 144-145.

## Funding for Integration

In a number of countries in the region under the responsibility of the Regional Representation for Central Europe, funding provided through domestic sources does not cover most basic services. As a result, some countries rely extensively on the European Refugee Fund (ERF) to support the running of fundamental aspects of the asylum system including refugee integration services. This has proven to be very problematic for a number of reasons.

ERF is calculated in proportion to the number of asylum-seekers or refugees admitted or registered over the previous three years. In the case of the 2008 national envelop for individual EU Members States, this is based on statistics for the years 2004-2005 and 2006. If there is a considerable increase in the number of people applying for asylum from one year to the next, (as has been the case in some countries during 2007) unless additional national resources can be made available, ERF expenditure on a per capita basis has to be reduced accordingly in the year this increase takes place. The same applies in the case of an increase in the recognition rate of refugees or persons with subsidiary protection.

In view of the EU cycle of funding approval under ERF,<sup>87</sup> it can take a minimum of a year before any changes in asylum arrivals or the recognition rate are registered and the level of ERF funding is adjusted by the Commission to reflect increases from one year to the next. Due to the length of the national administrative process for ERF grant approval, an additional period of nine to twelve months might pass before the volume of services funded under ERF can be adjusted to reflect actual demand for reception and integration services. Until such time, under current arrangements, the risk is of a reduction in essential services on a per capita basis unless national resources are made available to compensate for any increase in service demand or address the effects of inflationary trends. In the absence of sufficient resources to meet basic needs and live in dignity, many refugees are reportedly forced to engage in onward movement to other European countries in search of a future.

Beyond ERF, the European Integration Fund (EIF) can potentially provide a source of funding for the development of an integration-focused infrastructure in Central Europe. While refugees and persons with subsidiary protection are excluded from the Fund's scope (therefore no specific services for refugees could be funded under this fund) the implementation of a number of the Fund's objectives, if done with a view to mainstreaming refugee integration into broader integration debates, could contribute to the development of country specific institutional frameworks that are conducive to the integration of all third country nationals including refugees and persons with subsidiary protection. Furthermore, the European Social Fund (ESF) should be proactively considered as a useful source of funding for integration-related activities that fall within the objectives of the fund. These include raising participation in the labour force to support economic growth, improving labour market opportunities for disadvantaged groups and modernisation of education and training system.

In light of the aforementioned analysis, UNHCR encourages governments in Central Europe that have not done so to:

- ensure the allocation of sufficient domestic budgetary resources as per identified need for the integration of refugees in addition to EU resources under the European Refugee Fund or other funds;
- ensure that a balanced/needs-based approach underpins the allocation of resources for infrastructural development and “soft services” in the form of social work support and social or educational activities;
- consider using resources under EIF towards the development of an integration infrastructure including a policy and law on integration, the establishment of a Standing Inter-Ministerial Committee on Integration involving UNHCR and the development of a strategy that includes the use of other EC funds to support the development of refugee integration services;
- develop employment, education and social inclusion programmes for refugees to be funded under the European Social Fund, in a complementary fashion to the ERF.

<sup>87</sup> Article 20 of the *Decision Establishing the European Refugee Fund* provides that the Commission “shall adopt the financing decision approving the annual programme by 1 March of the year in question”.

# Annex 3: Key Principles Underlying UNHCR's Operational Guidance on Education<sup>88</sup>

These principles are derived from UNHCR's policy on refugee protection and solutions in urban areas<sup>89</sup> and from existing education guiding principles<sup>90</sup> and referral documents that have been adapted to the urban context.

## 1. Access.

Ensure that refugees have access to all education services in the same way and at similar or lower cost to that of nationals. UNHCR may draw on partners to temporarily provide education services where there are significant gaps in service provision.

## 2. Integration.

Advocate for sustainable education services for refugees integrated within the national public system when and wherever feasible.

## 3. Quality.

Ensure that the education offered to refugees conforms to national and international standards and provides a safe and child-friendly learning environment, well educated teachers with a sound knowledge of child-centred pedagogy and sufficient well-equipped infrastructure and facilities.

## 4. Protection.

Provide protection and special assistance to the most vulnerable groups and individuals among refugee communities so they can access education equitably, including separated and orphaned children, girls and women at risk, the elderly, persons with disabilities and refugees in need of special education. Ensure education is free from protection risks, with a particular focus on gender and protection.

## 5. Partnerships.

Partner with a wide range of actors, especially Governments, local authorities, other UN agencies, international agencies, NGOs, civil society and community organizations, academic institutions and the private sector to ensure the availability of quality education services for refugees.

## 6. Participation.

Ensure that community members participate actively, transparently and without discrimination in assessment, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of education programmes in urban settings.

## 7. Monitoring and evaluation.

Establish and utilize efficient monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems to improve programme implementation, prioritization and impact.

88 UNHCR. Ensuring Access to Education. Operational Guidance on Refugee Protection and Solutions in Urban Areas. UNHCR, Geneva, 2011.

89 UNHCR. Policy on Refugee Protection and Solutions in Urban Areas. UNHCR, Geneva, 2009.

90 Education Guidelines, incorporating Education in Urban Settings, revised early 2011, [www.unhcr.org](http://www.unhcr.org)



# Annex 4: Conference Report

## Opening Remarks

By Mr. Golam Abbas  
UNHCR Deputy Regional Representative for Central Europe

Dear Participants,

On behalf of UNHCR/RRCE, I would like to warmly welcome you to this 1st Regional Education Conference in Budapest on “Access to Quality Education for Refugee and Asylum-seeker Children in Central Europe”.

Your presence here indicates the interest and commitments you and your respective organizations have placed on education, which is an important tool for successful integration leading towards durable solution, a goal we jointly pursue for refugees and asylum-seekers.

I would like to urge everyone to discuss in an open and frank manner the challenges and opportunities with an aim to find practical and appropriate ways to find solutions. It will be equally important to share and exchange good practices and learn from each other. Your experience and expertise will invigorate the presentations and discussions in the next day and a half.

As the Chinese proverb says: “Do not give fish, but teach how to fish”. In an attempt to ensure sustainability of integration, access to education will be crucial. We must do everything possible on our part to assist refugees and asylum-seekers to have access to the right education, so they could contribute to the society and no longer be burden in their new home.

As hosts of refugees and asylum-seekers, it is the responsibility of the respective government to ensure that the children and youth are given the possibility to stand on their own feet and not to dependent on assistance in the long run. UNHCR will continue to play catalyst role in assisting host governments to achieve this goal.

Thank you once again for your participation and contribution to make the conference motivating and fruitful.

## Introduction



On 29-30 June 2011 the UNHCR Regional Representation for Central Europe organized in Budapest the first Regional Conference on Access to Education for Refugee and Asylum-seeker Children and Youth.

The general aim of the conference was to bring together UNHCR representatives, government stakeholders, and an NGO partner to discuss policy guidelines to improve access to education for refugee and asylum-seeker children. The participants came from Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia.

The overall objective of the conference was to share good practices and develop sustainable, time bound, attainable and realistic recommendations in the key areas of refugee education. The conference offered a great opportunity for the participants to identify the main integration challenges in Central Europe focusing on education of refugee and asylum-seeker children and youth.

Presentations by government stakeholders, an NGO partner and UNHCR representatives addressed the main topics of the conference including legislation on access to education, language learning, grade placement, teacher qualifications, data management, and funding.

After the introduction, the conference continued with more specific presentations. The overview of the UNHCR education policy and strategy and introduction of the integration evaluation tool and UNHCR integration strategy in Central Europe, were followed by the presentation of the conference paper that detailed the major challenges and overview of the good practices in access to education for refugee and asylum-seeker children in Central Europe. The first part of the conference concluded with a presentation by a Hungarian NGO that shared the current practices regarding refugee children education.

Participants had the opportunity to discuss and interact in the framework of six working groups and make recommendations for countries in the region on the topics of: early childhood education, language learning, grade placement, teacher qualifications, data management and funding.

The conference served as a platform to initiate a dialogue between government stakeholders, civil society, and UNHCR. Participants had several opportunities for networking, information-sharing and planning future joint activities. The group exercises helped to elaborate the next steps to improve access to education in the region. Organizers and participants of the conference proposed to use the results of the discussions to improve the access education for refugee and asylum-seeker children in the framework of jointly agreed short term and long term projects between the UNHCR, government authorities and NGOs.

The Access to Education for Refugee and Asylum-seeker Children and Youth was the first regional conference involving representatives from respective Ministries state from Central Europe with various expertises in the area of education, which shows the importance of this initiative.

This report on the conference is being published in an effort to continue the cooperation and information-sharing on access to education for refugee and asylum-seeker children in Central Europe.

## Summary: Day 1

The conference was opened by Mr. Golam Abbas, Deputy Regional Representative for Central Europe. In his opening speech Mr. Abbas spoke about the importance of having access to education for refugees and asylum-seekers and emphasized the need for assessing the current practice in education, the differences on the regional level and developing recommendations to improve the process would be beneficial to all persons of concern in Central European countries.

Mr. Abbas mentioned that this first conference on education in the region aims to bring together government stakeholders, civil society and UNHCR partners to exchange good practices and lessons learned; understand realities of education policies in the region, as well as the UNHCR guidelines and the EU expectations on the matter.

Ms. Robyn Fysh, UNHCR Education Consultant, introduced the house rules and agenda of the day, briefed participants on the materials to be discussed over the course of the conference and clarified the subsequent group work. After the short introduction of the participants, conference expectations were collected. The main categories of problems of concern were related to:

- Sharing good practice in the region
- Initiating the fundamental steps of the interplay between education and integration
- Understanding the regional context and UNHCR's perspective over the issue of education
- Addressing the main challenges identified, planning the next steps to be taken
- Exchanging good practices, sharing experiences and situations in the countries of the region.

Facilitators have introduced the “parking lot” designated area to collect questions and issues participants would like to address over the course of the conference, including: a glossary of terms, ways of collaboration, and additional funding available in the region.

The opening presentation on *UNHCR Education Policy and Strategy* delivered by Ms. Annika Sjoberg, Education Officer, UNHCR Headquarters, Geneva, started with the overview of the global education situation. She stated that Central Europe is indeed only a small part in the global education strategy. Ms. Sjoberg highlighted UNHCR's main education objectives for 2010-2012: to increase access to education, to improve quality of education, and to enhance protection related to education.

Participants also learned the main challenges and obstacles related to access, such as restrictive national policies for refugees, interruption in cycles of education, high drop-out rates, school related fees, coupled with girls' education (as a result of the harmful practices girls are subjected to, to early marriages etc); *quality*, insufficient number of schools, lack of recognition of diplomas, insufficient teaching and learning materials; and *protection*, unsafe learning environments, gender inequality, child labour and recruitment, trauma and SGBV, large numbers of out of school youth resulting in vulnerability, destructive behaviour and drugs. The language barrier is another constraint both to access and to quality in education. It can be extrapolated as well in the Central European context.

One of the most problematic issues observed is the lack of certified and qualified teachers (in camp settings up to 100 pupils for one teacher). In this regard the Ms. Sjoberg also highlighted that education should become a part of each country's protection strategy. Unfortunately, lots of times education related projects or activities are implemented by programme officers or protection officers, who are not experts in the field of education.

Ms. Annika Sjöberg spoke about areas of increasing priorities, including quality of education, girl's education, post-primary education of youth, early childhood education, literacy, as well as data management, staff capacity, and introduction of innovative approaches including ICT.

The speaker raised the concern for introducing inclusive education practices that would allow children with special needs to be integrated in the educational systems to pursue education, despite their vulnerable condition.

The presentation by Ms. Nancy Polutan, Regional Integration Officer at RRCE, entitled Access to Education for Refugee Children in the Context Integration Evaluation Tool and UNHCR Integration Strategy in Central Europe started with the overview of the dimensions of local integration and integration in general as a dynamic and multi-faceted two way process. The Speaker referred to the 1957 Refugee Convention and discussed integration aspects, aimed at improving access to education and provision of education related programmes in the region, with relation to the European Refugee Fund (ERF) and the European Integration Fund (EIF). Participants learned about the progress in refugee integration in Central Europe and the effects of adopted integration policies.

Ms. Polutan introduced the UNHCR Integration Evaluation Tool (IET) that analyzes the integration policies in the region based on relevant indicators for government authorities, UNHCR and other stakeholders. The IET builds upon UNHCR standards and 2009 Stockholm Programme. It aims to serve as a framework to compare and benchmark the integration progress among the piloting countries in Central Europe. In addition to general conditions of integration, the indicators evaluate legal, socio-economic and socio-cultural integration. The IET is scheduled to begin piloting before the end of 2011.

The short Q&A session followed Ms. Polutan's presentation. Many participants asked questions about the implementation of the European Refugee Fund (ERF)/European Integration Fund (EIF) funded programmes, their sustainability after the first year and timely absorption of the ERF funds. A representative from Slovenia raised a concern about the difficulties in spending the money due to lack of information on the part of refugees and asylum-seekers, despite the availability of the funds.

The presentation by Ms. Robyn Fysh, Education Consultant at UNHCR RRCE, on Challenges and Good Practices in Access to Education for Refugee and Asylum-seeker Children in Central Europe summarized findings of the regional study on access to education carried out from April to May 2011 in the six countries (Bulgaria, Hungary, Slovenia, Slovakia, Romania, and Poland covered by the Regional Representation in Central Europe. The research comprised the seven key areas that were determined as fundamental for access to education: Legislation, Data Management, Language Learning, Grade Placement, Teacher Training, Supports in School and Funding. However other areas of interest were also highlighted: access to early childhood education, education for vulnerable groups and schools' preparedness and willingness to deal with trauma cases, issues covering diploma recognition and competence evaluation. Ms. Fysh presented a number of challenges and good practices identified by respondents from the region. To facilitate access to quality education, a number of recommendations were presented to correspond to reported challenges.

The presentation laid out the foundation for subsequent discussions during the conference. Ms. Fysh highlighted that each country team is expected to come up with suggestions and feasible solutions to address the current challenges in access to education in their countries, as well as on the regional level.

The plenary part of the conference was concluded by the presentation of Ms. Dora Kanizsai-Nagy from the Reformed Church of Hungary (RCH). Ms. Kanizsai-Nagy explained that due to the lack of existing policy guidelines for education of refugee and asylum-seeker children, youth and adults, the RCH for the last five years has taken its own initiative and developed school programmes for refugee children in 5 partnering schools, employed teachers, language teachers, social workers, and social counsellors.

One of the good practices developed by the RCH staff includes daily classes in a small setting of no more than 5 pupils about the same age. In order to facilitate cultural integration, the NGO employed an ex-refugee from Iraq to

serve as a social worker. Being aware about the shortcomings in learning materials, the RCH organized a library for refugee university students.

After the lunch break participants proceeded to the practical part of the conference. The emphasis of several practical exercises was placed on finding practical solutions to the issues tackled in the conference paper by Ms. Fysh. All participants were split into six working groups and were invited to brainstorm about additional challenges and obstacles, as well as good practices in one of the policy areas:

- Data Management
- Language Learning
- Grade Placement
- Teacher Training
- Funding
- Pre-school education

Afterwards, members of each team presented results of their discussion in a series of small group exercises. An activity Ideas Market allowed participants to discuss their challenges and recommendations with a broader audience, learn about experiences in the region, and engage in the consultations with government authorities, NGO and UNHCR partners. The rest of the day was dedicated to the preparation of the group work presentation the next morning.

The day has concluded with the summary of the first working day made by rapporteurs Ms. Corina Popa, Integration Associate from UNHCR Representation in Romania and Ms. Ms. Katarzyna Oyrzanowska, Integration Associate, UNHCR National Office in Poland.

## Summary: Day 2

The second day of the conference opened with the agenda overview by Mr. William Ejalu, Regional Protection Associate, UNHCR RRCE.

Afterwards, each working group presented three main challenges and three recommendations on the policy area they have been assigned to. A brief discussion followed each of the presentations. Results of the group work are summarized in the Key Areas of Concern section of this report.

The next activity *Next Steps / The Way Forward*, presented by Ms. Polutan, required representatives of each country to devise one short-term and one long term actions they could commit to pertaining to access to education. The goal of the activity was to develop reasonable, attainable and time-bound actions and to form sustainable partnerships between government stakeholders, NGO representatives and UNHCR. The conference proceeded with the presentation of each country group and a short Q&A session. Results of the countries' short-term and long-term plans are summarized in the *Next Steps* section of this report.

During the next section the facilitators raised the issues which were raised/highlighted on the "parking lot". Several suggestions have been made to the problem of diploma recognition. One participant proposed not to leave this decision to individual countries, but to make an effort to solve this problem on the EU level. Another participant brought an idea to recognize refugees' and asylum-seekers' diplomas within the Common European Asylum System. Yet another voice proposed to develop a mechanism of knowledge evaluation in case when no diplomas are available and no bilateral agreements are in place.

The next question concerned uniform data on refugees. Since countries in their legislation use difference terminologies and definitions, it was proposed to create a uniform annex of terms.

One of the participants has raised a suggestion to use cell phone language tools and software for smart phones to accelerate language learning among refugees and asylum-seekers.

The last question concerned the DAFI programme. Ms. Annika Sjoberg, Education Officer, from UNHCR Headquarters in Geneva, explained that this is a German government sponsored annual Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative (DAFI) to support education for refugees around the world. Last year more than 1900 students in 37 countries have received scholarships to access education in their countries of asylum. One of the main strategies of the program is to increase university participation among refugee and asylum-seeker youth. The plan for the next year foresees increase in the number of students under the program and involvement of private donors and community.

In the final section of the conference participants reviewed whether their expectations were addressed over the course of the conference. Participants highlighted that they learned new information about integration and its evaluation, became more knowledgeable about situation in the region, and decided on concrete action points to address current challenges. Activities on sharing good practices were marked out as particularly useful. Participants were asked to fill an evaluation form and return it to facilitators.

The conference concluded with the final remarks by Ms. Nadia Jbour, Senior Regional Protection Officer, UNHCR RRCE. Ms. Jbour pointed that the conference has been an eye-opener; a lot of good practices have been learned, as well as awareness about existing challenges in the region has been raised. One of the main conclusions of the conference is that there is an urgent need for more cooperation, especially among partners from the governments and NGOs.

The first Regional Conference on Improving Access to Education for Refugee and Asylum-seeker Children and Youth in Central Europe is not an end, but rather the beginning. There is a necessity to cooperate among government stakeholders, NGO representatives and UNHCR, and proceed with the follow-up concrete actions all the participants have committed to. Ms. Jbour emphasized the necessity to create/re-create/mainstream working groups on access to education for refugee and asylum-seeker children in all countries of the region.

## Group Exercise 1: Key Areas of Concern

### Early Childhood Education

#### Challenges

- Transit migration
- Low absorption capacity of pre-schools (vis-à-vis migrant trends)
- Non-camp based placement of refugees which complicates the reach-out and information distribution
- Holding families in detention without access to education
- Migration from camp to camp and, as a result, disruption of the education process

#### Recommendations

- To provide transportation to and from schools
- To provide additional financial and transportation support for parents
- To provide informal education to develop skills (artistic, playful), possibly in non-school setting
- To enhance role of volunteers in skills development
- To ensure access to information

### Language Learning

#### Challenges

- Language classes are not obligatory (legislation + implementation)
- Mixed groups: adults and children (inflexible language training)
- Timing of enrolment
- No access due to financial constraints
- Availability only in Reception Centres
- Maximum time of support - 1 year
- Lack of social support
- Interruption during summer holidays
- Lack of teaching assistants (lack of teacher training)
- Unclear funding mechanism
- Lack of collaboration between schools and local authorities
- Decentralization/centralization of funding allocation
- Lack of legislation on language training
- Insufficient information for refugees about their rights

#### Recommendations

- To develop national methodology and legislation
- To develop/make available curricula and textbooks for refugees' learning available and free of charge
- To provide separate trainings for children and adults (separated by age 6-9, 10-15, adults)
- To provide teacher trainings
- To enhance cooperation with NGOs
- To introduce teaching assistants to help refugee and asylum-seeker children in faster and more efficient language learning
- To develop and make available guidelines for language learning
- To provide at least 10 hours of language learning per week
- To carry out grade placement by age, rather than language knowledge with a subsequent evaluation of language knowledge after 1 year
- To make available opportunities for distance learning

### Grade Placement

#### Challenges

- Level of language learning
- Excessive weight on assessment of local language, instead of neutral subject(s)
- Lack of bilateral agreements to recognize diplomas and other educational certificates
- Lack of diplomas
- Lack of correspondence between age and grade level
- Lack of periodical assessments
- Necessity to conduct a review of cultural sensitivity (both sides: from family as well as teachers/students)
- Lack of UAMs/awareness of guardians or legal representative on the educational system
- Lack of parents involved in the issue, lack of encouragement (with teachers, in school)

#### Recommendations

- Regarding UAMs, to ensure that the legal guardian or legal representative is aware that the UAMs are enrolled in school (advocates in case not), i.e. interests of UAMs are in place

- To establish an expert working group to develop standards and methodology of grade placement
- To improve the information and coordination mechanisms between to government stakeholders
- Through internal regulations MoE should recognize diplomas in order for refugees to enrol in the next level of school system
- To increase provision of language training and provide support to teachers, schools, students and families (with funds)

## Teacher Qualifications

### Challenges

- Lack of specialized training for teachers of national language who work with refugee/migrant children

### Recommendations

- Introduce pre-service training as a part of university programmes for future teachers of national languages to migrants/refugees
- To introduce in-service training for teachers of national language as a second language
- To establish an incentive for teachers to actively participate in the professional development activities (e.g. credit system)
- To improve the effectiveness of the existing professional development seminars

## Data Management

### Challenges

- Lack of interest (lack of information gathering) in gathering statistics from different ministries = lack of responsible bodies
- Lack of cooperation among stakeholders (“tending own garden”)
- Lack of short-term and long-term planning
- Lack of critical mass
- Lack of specific data
- Lack of coordination

### Recommendations

- To establish inter-ministry/expert working groups (including UNHCR and NGOs)
- To collect data uniformly and to openly share it

- To formulate policy development based on comprehensive data
- To ensure sources of funding for appropriate data management

## Funding

### Challenges

- Insufficient funding resources
- Lack of information on available resources.
- Insufficient skills to apply for funding
- Lack of information on time frames for funds, schedules of calls for proposals
- Lack of co-financing opportunities for ERF funding (as in the example of the Czech Republic and Slovenia)
- Lack of financial mechanisms to support sustainability of the already implemented projects
- Lack of mechanism for sharing good practices and learned lessons

### Recommendations

- To establish dialogue among stakeholders involved in the access to education for refugee and asylum-seeker children to assure sustainability of the already implemented and planned for the future projects
- To introduce workshops and trainings on how to apply for funding and how to manage the acquired funds
- To compile a list of resources with possible donors and requirements for application



## Group Exercise 2: Next Steps/The Way Forward

### Short-term and Long-term Country Commitments

#### Bulgaria

##### Short term

- UNHCR, MoE and asylum authorities continue joint efforts to amend the legislation to include provisions on the right to education for refugee and asylum-seeker children.

##### Long term

- With the joint efforts of the State Agency of Refugees and the Ministry of Education, to develop a special Bulgarian language program for refugee and asylum-seeker children. The program aims at 3 months and 250 hours of teaching.
- To update the current text books for refugee and asylum-seeker children
- To use ERF 2012 funding for these activities.

#### The Czech Republic

##### Short term

- To reconsider the legislation concerning the co-funding scheme of the ERF projects in the Czech Republic to allow government or central administration bodies to be a co-founder for the funded ERF projects.

##### Long term

- To establish cooperation between UNHCR, the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Education.

#### Hungary

##### Short term

- To establish a working group among representatives of the Ministries and NGOs to discuss the major problems in the education field and find solutions for them. The group should meet quarterly.

##### Long term

- To update university requirements for refugee and asylum-seeker children to expand an opportunity to receive university education.
- To continue working on diplomas recognition.
- To explore opportunities for refugee and asylum-seeker children to get scholarships to be able to study in the universities.

#### Poland

##### Short term

- To support and expand teacher's assistance programme, which was introduced 1 year ago.
- To run an awareness campaign near reception centres to raise the awareness of the role of teacher assistants.
- To show parents and directors of the schools that employing teacher assistant is a great opportunity to help refugee and asylum-seeker children to develop.

##### Long term

- To ensure an obligation for schools to hire teacher assistants to help refugee and asylum-seeker children.

## Romania

### Short term

- To run activities for raising awareness about refugee issues
- To Co-organize meeting with the decision-makers at the local level
- To conduct training both on the central level and municipality level, where refugee are situated, where to highlight what are the rights of the refugees and what are the differences between migrants and refugees.

### Long term

- To develop an accredited training course for teachers in language-teaching for refugees and asylum-seekers. The course should be accredited to motivate teachers to take classes for their professional development.
- To continue lobbying at the Ministerial level with regards to refugee issues.

## Slovakia

### Short term

- To organize a workshop for Ministries, NGOs, municipalities and international agencies to share the concerns about the education, develop a strategy and an action plan to fulfil the education strategy.

### Long term

- To introduce education as a separate section for the ERF funding.

## Slovenia

### Short term

- To ensure data collection on access to education for refugee and asylum-seeker children by the existing Board of Foreigners.

### Long term

- To start a dialog with the Ministry of Education to develop an evaluation methodology, that allows refugees/asylum-seekers, without education certificates/ diplomas to continue education at a higher level and in universities.





# ANNEX A: Conference Agenda

## Day 1: 29 June 2011, Danubius Helia Hotel, Budapest, Hungary

08:30 – 09:00 *Registration of Participants*

09:00 – 09:15 *Opening and Welcome of the Participants*

- Mr. Golam Abbas, Deputy Regional Representative, UNHCR Regional Representation for Central Europe

09:15 – 09:50 *Introduction of the Participants*

09:50 – 10:30 *UNHCR Education Policy and Strategy*

- Ms. Annika Sjoberg, Education Officer, UNHCR Headquarters, Geneva

10:30 – 10:45 *Coffee / Tea Break*

10:45 – 11:15 *Access to Education and the Integration Evaluation Tool in the Context of UNHCR's Strategy for the Integration of Refugees in Central Europe*

- Ms. Nancy Polutan, Regional Integration Officer, UNHCR Regional Representation for Central Europe

11:30 – 12:30 *Presentation of Conference Paper*

- Ms. Robyn Fysh, Education Consultant, UNHCR Regional Representation for Central Europe

11:15 – 11:30 *Presentation by NGO on Good Practices in Education*

- Ms. Dora Kaniscai-Nagy, The Reformed Church of Hungary

12:30 – 13:00 *Questions/Discussion*

13:00 – 14:00 *Lunch / Networking*

14:00 – 15:00 *Practical Exercise 1: Challenges and Good Practices*

- Ms. Robyn Fysh, Education Consultant, UNHCR Regional Representation for Central Europe
- Mr. William Ejalu, Regional Protection Associate, UNHCR Regional Representation for Central Europe

15:00 – 15:15 *Coffee / Tea Break*

15:15 – 16:00 *Practical Exercise 2: Ideas Market*

- Ms. Robyn Fysh, Education Consultant, UNHCR Regional Representation for Central Europe
- Ms. Nancy Polutan, Regional Integration Officer, UNHCR Regional Representation for Central Europe

16:00 – 16:45 *Practical Exercise 3: Group Debrief and Preparation for Presentations*

- Ms. Robyn Fysh, Education Consultant, UNHCR Regional Representation for Central Europe
- Mr. William Ejalu, Regional Protection Associate, UNHCR Regional Representation for Central Europe

16:45 – 17:00 *Conclusions for Day 1*

- Ms. Katarzyna Oyrzanowska, Integration Associate, UNHCR National Office in Poland

## Day 2: 30 June 2011, Danubius Helia Hotel, Budapest, Hungary

09:00 – 10:30 *Group Presentations*

- Ms. Robyn Fysh, Education Consultant, UNHCR Regional Representation for Central Europe
- Mr. William Ejalu, Regional Protection Associate, UNHCR Regional Representation for Central Europe

10:30 – 10:45 *Coffee / Tea Break*

10:45 – 11:45 *Next Steps/The Way Forward*

- Ms. Robyn Fysh, Education Consultant, UNHCR Regional Representation for Central Europe
- Ms. Nancy Polutan, Regional Integration Officer, UNHCR Regional Representation for Central Europe

11:45 – 12:00 *Final Remarks and Closure of the Conference*

- Ms. Nadia Jbour, Senior Regional Protection Officer, UNHCR Regional Representation for Central Europe

12:00 – 13:00 *Lunch / Networking*

13:00 *Departure of the Participants*

# ANNEX B: List of Participants

Country	Participant Name	Ministry/Organization	Email
Bulgaria	Ms. Petia Karayaneva	UNHCR	karayan@unhcr.org
	Ms. Ivelina Mechkarova-Taylor	UNHCR	imetchkarova@yahoo.com
	Mr. Tsvetan Petrov	State Agency for Refugees	cpetrov@sarefe-gov.bg
Czech Republic	Ms. Marketa Bacakova	Education expert	m.bacakova@gmail.com
	Mr. Pavel Dymeš	Ministry of Interior	krawe@mvr.cz
	Ms. Marta Miklušakova	UNHCR	miklusak@unhcr.org
Hungary	Ms. Agnes Ambrus	UNHCR	ambrus@unhcr.org
	Ms. Gabriella Dézsi	Office of Immigration and Nationality	dezsi.gabriella@bah.b-m.hu
	Ms. Dora Kanizsai Nagy	The Reformed Church in Hungary	menekültmisszió@rmc.hu
	Mr. Laszlo Kozma	Ministry of National Resources	laszlo.kozma@nefmi.gov.hu
	Mr. Balazs Kunt	Office of Immigration and Nationality	Kunt.balazs@bah.b-m.hu
Poland	Ms. Karolina Lukaszczyk	Ministry of Interior and Administration	karolina.lukaszczyk@mswia.gov.pl
	Ms. Katarzyna Oyrzanowska	UNHCR	oyrzan@unhcr.org
	Ms. Ewa Polawska	Office for Foreigners	e.polawska@uric.gov.pl ewa.polawska@gmail.com
Romania	Ms. Corina Popa	UNHCR	popa@unhcr.org
	Mr. Eugen Stoica	Ministry of Education	eugen.stoica@medu.edu.ro
Slovak Republic	Ms. Petra Achbergerova	Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic	petra.achbergerova@minv.sk
	Ms. Zuzana Licakova	UNHCR incoming	zlicakova@yahoo.com
	Ms. Daniela Slaba	UNHCR	slaba@unhcr.org
Slovenia	Mr. Igor Bratuša	Ministry of Interior	Igor.bratusa@gov.si
	Ms. Sonja Gole Ašanin	Ministry of Interior	sonja.gole@gov.si
Switzerland	Ms. Robyn Fysh	UNHCR consultant	robynfysh@gmail.com
	Ms. Annika Sjoberg	UNHCR HQ	sjoberg@unhcr.org
UNHCR, RRCE	Mr. Igor Ciobanu	UNHCR	ciobanu@unhcr.org
	Mr. William Ejalu	UNHCR	ejalu@unhcr.org
	Ms. Nadia Jbour	UNHCR	jbour@unhcr.org
	Ms. Nancy Polutan	UNHCR	polutan@unhcr.org
	Ms. Anna Kirvas	UNHCR Protection intern	kirvas@unhcr.org

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