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Integration, empowerment and protection of migrant children through compulsory education

Report¹

Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons

Rapporteur: Ms Petra De SUTTER, Belgium, Socialists, Democrats and Greens Group

Summary

In 2016, out of 6.4 million primary and secondary school-age refugees around the world, an estimated 3.5 million had no school to go to. Only 61% of refugee children had access to primary education compared with a global level among non-refugees of 91%, and an average of 23% refugee adolescents attended lower secondary school compared to 84% of non-refugee adolescents.

Schools should be safe places for children to grow, socialise and learn together, but schools are still being used as targets or military bases in conflict zones. Even in countries not at war, they may be the scene of unacceptable demonstrations of coercion by armed forces, such as expulsions of irregular migrants. Asylum procedures are sometimes used as a pretext to deny children schooling, and segregation used as a way to avoid addressing linguistic or cultural challenges.

This report highlights the gap between States' undertakings under domestic and international legislation on primary and secondary education and its actual delivery to migrant and refugee children. Examples from Council of Europe member States illustrate good practices and many areas for improvement. The recommendations constitute a "checklist" of conditions for ensuring migrant children's education.

1. Reference to committee: [Doc. 14241](#), Reference 4277 of 10 March 2017.



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A. Draft resolution²

1. The right to education and States' duty to provide it are enshrined in Article 26 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in Article 17.2 of the 1996 European Social Charter (revised) (ETS No. 163), in Article 13 of the 1966 United Nations Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and in the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

2. Despite this matrix of international legal provisions framing European countries' obligation to provide accessible, acceptable and adaptable education to all children, in 2016, only 61% of refugee children had access to primary education compared with a global level among non-refugees of 91%. An average of 23% refugee adolescents attended lower secondary school compared to 84% of non-refugee adolescents and only 1% of refugees were attending university compared to 36% worldwide. Out of 6.4 million primary and secondary school-age refugees around the world, an estimated 3.5 million had no school to go to.

3. The Parliamentary Assembly is extremely concerned about Council of Europe member States' failure to implement their undertakings with respect to education for migrant and especially refugee children, and stresses the urgent need to remedy the situation by giving priority to providing inclusive and effective educational programmes as well as the infrastructure and teaching resources to support them. It calls on member States to respect their international undertakings, in particular the obligation to provide accessible and free primary and secondary education to all migrant children within their territory, whatever their origin, gender and background. In the light of the obligations subscribed under Article 17.2 of the European Social Charter (revised) the Assembly urges Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Iceland, Luxembourg, Monaco, Poland, San Marino, Spain and the United Kingdom to ratify this instrument.

4. In conflict-affected regions, schools must be recognised as a sanctuary not to be used by military or police forces. In countries not directly touched by war or tensions, domestic legislation should prohibit the presence or entry of police or armed forces inside classrooms in any normal circumstances (for purposes of expulsion, for instance). Their presence is a source of trauma not only for the children concerned, but also for children who witness violations of rights, inhuman treatment and intimidation. In this regard, the Assembly calls on those member States which have not yet done so to sign the Safe Schools Declaration adopted at the May 2015 Oslo International Conference on Safe Schools.

5. Once integrated into mainstream classes, most countries provide the same services to migrant children as to others. The Assembly welcomes this state of affairs and urges States to extend equal treatment to all the different situations in which migrant and refugee children find themselves, from reception to integration and during relocation and resettlement, in order to ensure continuity in education, individual well-being and social stability in the host country, and to favour future integration. Children destined to return to their countries of origin will also suffer from gaps in their education once home.

6. The problems encountered by migrant and refugee families and unaccompanied children concern above all the precariousness and unpredictability of situations, waiting periods for access to education, language barriers, geographical accessibility, insufficient information and guidance for families, lack or absence of financial assistance for asylum applicants to cover educational expenses, and the treatment and integration of traumatised children. The Assembly therefore calls on member States to:

- 6.1. provide primary and secondary classroom education accessible to all migrant children and free of charge;
- 6.2. set national objectives for the school attendance of migrant and refugee children;
- 6.3. integrate education for migrant and refugee children and specialised teacher training into the budget of the Ministry for Education rather than into that of humanitarian and development assistance;
- 6.4. for educational purposes, not differentiate between children according to their asylum status;
- 6.5. encourage all children to attend secondary school until the age of 18, regardless of whether possible school-leaving ages are lower in either the host country or the country of origin;
- 6.6. provide full and comprehensible information to parents about the educational possibilities for their school-age children and their own responsibilities to allow their children to study;
- 6.7. put in place effective "firewalls" between the information systems of schools and immigration authorities to protect data on the status of migrants in irregular situations, in order to avoid its misuse to deny or complicate access to education for migrant children;

2. Draft resolution adopted by the committee on 21 March 2018.

- 6.8. inform and give access, encouragement, learning incentives and assistance to unaccompanied minors to attend classes;
 - 6.9. give access wherever possible to mainstream education in local classes and provide adequate transport and accompaniment to children accommodated in centres and camps;
 - 6.10. make sure that if it is not possible to provide education in mixed local classes, the schooling provided follows recognised methods and curricula which can be used to establish levels of education later;
 - 6.11. ensure that psycho-social assistance is provided in order to diagnose and address cases of trauma, as well as specific teacher training to recognise early signs of distress linked to refugee children's experiences;
 - 6.12. address the infrastructural challenges in terms of educational facilities, which is one of the main obstacles to attaining high enrolment rates of refugee and migrant children.
7. Migrant and refugee children should be given the opportunity to attend pre-school structures in countries where these exist. Where pre-schools are not free of charge, help should be given to enable attendance. The Assembly welcomes the organisation of "welcoming classes" in primary education and international classes in secondary education; these should be provided on regular school premises rather than in dedicated centres and should not be used as a way to segregate migrant children (for example, the length of classes should not exceed the point where children are ready to join normal classes).
8. Language learning is an important part of integration and a precondition for the advancement of other learning abilities. Additional language courses should be made available free of charge to children (and parents) where needed. Where possible, access to mother-tongue educational resources should be made available. The Assembly also calls on all Council of Europe member States to encourage financially and structurally further and higher education for migrants, making use of tools such as the Council of Europe Language Support Toolkit for Adult Refugees and supporting projects such as the Council of Europe's European Qualifications Passport for Refugees piloted by Greece in 2017.
9. Gender-sensitive education should be in place and teachers trained in how to manage culturally sensitive situations linked to gender, to recognise gender-specific issues and to reject and avoid propagating stereotypes. These skills should be taught as a general rule, but the Assembly points out that they are all the more important when the cultures, habits and beliefs of migrants and refugees differ from those of the majority in the host country. Accepting difference and inciting curiosity about other cultures and indeed one's own culture and history begins in the classroom.
10. The Assembly therefore strongly urges member States to work actively towards fulfilment of the objectives set out above. Non-respect of the legal undertakings guaranteed by the implementation of these concrete measures constitutes a flagrant violation of children's rights. Education is a powerful tool for integration of migrants and refugees and for the empowerment of young people destabilised by situations for which they are not responsible.

B. Explanatory memorandum, by Ms Petra De Sutter, rapporteur

1. Introduction

1. According to figures of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), refugees spend an average of 20 years in exile. Although this average is weighted by those who do not return to their countries of origin, it is nevertheless clear that refugees often spend many years in temporary and sometimes precarious situations, such as city refugee camps, where the need to ensure basic rights and resources for oneself and one's family often takes precedence over the other necessities of human existence which are not directly linked to physical survival. Education is one of those necessities, as an enabling factor for the fulfilment of human potential, a precondition for individual well-being and a tool for life in general.

2. The enormous disparities between the inalienable right to classroom education for all children as set out in international law and the reality of refugee children's actual access to education, not only in disadvantaged regions where most children have difficulties in exercising their right to education, is a sobering reminder of the challenges to refugees' access to human rights in general, as compared to that of populations which are not victims of conflict and persecution.

3. The figures speak for themselves: in 2016, there were 6.4 million primary and secondary school-age refugees around the world, of whom an estimated 3.5 million had no school to go to. Only 61% of these children had access to primary education, compared with a global level among non-refugees of 91%. An average of only 23% of refugee adolescents attended lower secondary school, compared to 84% of non-refugee adolescents, and only 1% of refugees attend university, compared to 36% worldwide.³

4. Although the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons regularly addresses education in its reports on various aspects of migrants' and refugees' rights, it has never devoted a whole report to the question. The Committee on Culture, Science and Education prepared a report and a recommendation on education of refugees and internally displaced persons as far back as 2004 ([Recommendation 1652 \(2004\)](#)). It therefore appears appropriate at present to examine the situation in depth, especially in the light of the ongoing and prolonged critical situation of refugees and migrants, in order for the Assembly to take stock of European policies and programmes and to make relevant recommendations to member States.

5. In the preparation of this report I endeavoured first to examine the different aspects of schooling for children and the specificities of education for non-native children in transit and host countries, then at the obligations under international conventions. To complete the work on the report, I looked at a range of national cases and practices in order to provide the Assembly with a clear overview of the challenges to the fulfilment of refugee children's educational rights and needs and the appropriate responses.

6. At a hearing of the committee on 8 December in Paris 2017, Wouter Vanderhole, holder of the UNICEF Chair in children's rights and Spokesperson for the Law and Development Research Group of the University of Antwerp, gave a useful overview of international standards regarding the right to education with recommendations for their implementation. The committee also heard a presentation by the representatives of the Humanitarian Relief Foundation on the achievements and challenges of education for refugee children in Turkey, and on the work of the foundation, which was building 29 schools and running five pre-school training centres and 12 rehabilitation centres for refugees and IDPs, providing educational materials to 357 schools and support to 225 temporary education centres and three teacher training centres.

2. The importance of schooling for migrant and refugee children

2.1. Why should education be given priority?

7. As the motion at the origin of this report points out, "States have a positive obligation to fulfil education rights for migrated children, especially those most vulnerable (such as undocumented migrants)". In peaceful times and places, the classroom is a place where children are together in a non-discriminatory, conflict-free, participative environment, which can be a safe haven from everyday worries and family problems. Primary education helps teach children methodology, verbal and numerical reasoning, and collective, socio-cultural behaviour patterns, and is an essential element of growing up, without it a person is not "whole".

3. UNHCR, "Left behind: refugee education in crisis", 2017. In the introduction, Philippo Grandi points out that nevertheless, as a comparison, the percentage of children in primary education stood at only 50% in 2015, "thanks largely to measures taken by Syria's neighbours to enrol more refugee children in school and other educational programmes, as well as increased refugee enrolment in European countries that are better able to expand capacity".

8. The multiplier effect of education on eradicating poverty and hunger and on promoting gender equality and economic growth also illustrates education's important role; in countries where education is of a high quality the economic advantages include greater productivity and return for the State. In addition, higher levels of education mean less assistance and benefits payable by the State. With respect to integration, a coherent educational trajectory is a precondition for young migrants' entry into further or higher education and employment, and will equip them to defend their own worth as factors of diversity and skilled, motivated adults. This in turn can only contribute to reversing negative stereotypes of migrants as a burden on societies and a source of communitarianism.

9. In the case of refugee children, uprooted from their homes and cultures and confronted with severe hardship, violence and crime, education is crucial to help them to understand situations into which they have been thrown through no choice of their own, and to gain dignity and a sense of their place in society. Education also has a vital role safeguarding migrated children from exploitative and hazardous labour and sexual exploitation.

2.2. International provisions providing for access to education for migrants

10. The right to education as well as States' duty to provide it, in particular in relation to primary education, are enshrined in several fundamental international texts, ranging from Article 26 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights to the 1996 European Social Charter (revised) (ETS No. 163), and including the 1966 United Nations Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

11. Article 13 of the 1966 United Nations Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights states that education should be: *available, accessible, acceptable* and *adaptable*. Primary education must be "compulsory" and "available free to all", whereas secondary education "shall be made generally available and accessible to all by every appropriate means, and in particular by the progressive introduction of free education". Article 13.1 adds that "education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality"; be directed to the human personality's sense of dignity; enable everyone to participate effectively in a free society; and promote understanding among all "ethnic" groups, as well as nations and racial and religious groups. A United Nations General Comment of 16 November 2017 declared that all children, irrespective of migration status, should have full access to all levels and all aspects of education, on the basis of equality with nationals.

12. As far as the Council of Europe is concerned, under Article 17.2 of the European Social Charter (revised), States undertake "to provide to children and young persons a free primary and secondary education as well as to encourage regular attendance at schools". The Charter also contains provisions related to the prohibition of child labour (under 15 years old) and the employment of children while they are still in full-time education. The European Committee of Social Rights (ECSR) has confirmed several times in its case law that minor migrants have the right to education, regardless of their status. The ECSR has also constantly held since 2004 that the rights guaranteed by the Charter are to be enjoyed to the fullest extent possible by refugees.⁴

13. At the December 2017 hearing in Paris, Wouter Vandenhoele pointed out that the European Court of Human Rights has stressed the importance and special nature of secondary as well as primary education (ruling, in particular, that even for irregular migrants, school fees for secondary education should not be charged).

14. The Court has also stated that education serves broader societal functions: it is not only about successful personal and professional development of those who benefit from education, but also important for society: social and professional integration; achieving pluralism and thus democracy.⁵ In a "knowledge-based" society, secondary education plays an ever-increasing role in successful personal development and in the social and professional integration of the individuals concerned.

15. The European Union's Charter of Fundamental Rights refers to the right to education in its Articles 13, 14, 21, 32 and brings together the rights already set out in the Council of Europe and United Nations treaties. The Union's Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) monitors education issues in relation to refugee children, and has been a source of information for this report. A worrying study of 14 EU member countries⁶ reported that in nine States, children in immigration detention had no access to any form of education, and that the main

4. See for instance the General Introduction to the European Committee of Social Rights' Conclusions 2015 (Articles 7, 8, 16, 17, 19, 27 and 31 of the Charter) published in January 2016.

5. See in particular *Ponomarev v. Bulgaria*, Application No. 5335/05, judgment of 21 June 2011, paragraphs 55-57.

challenges concerning access to early childhood education included long waiting periods, language barriers, accessibility in terms of distance, insufficient guidance for families, lack of information, low allowances for expenses, and the treatment and integration of traumatised children. In some parts of three member States (Germany, Greece and Hungary), asylum seekers and refugees do not have access to formal school education, only a few NGOs or volunteers provide any form of education.

3. The global situation with respect to refugees' and migrants' access to education

16. The proportion of children who are refugees is increasing constantly: according to a Unicef report in 2016, children now make up more than half of the world's refugees, despite the fact that they account for less than a third of the global population. Global conflicts since 2011 have seen a 75% increase in the number of child refugees (half of all child refugees protected by the UNHCR in 2016 came from Syria and Afghanistan). A considerable proportion of these children are unaccompanied (this issue is the subject of several past and ongoing reports so will not be examined in depth in this study).

17. The above-mentioned figures (paragraph 3) are world averages – in lower-income countries only 9% of secondary-age children attend school. In these countries, schooling for all children is a greater challenge: providing primary and secondary education for refugees fulfils therefore the double objective of empowering children who are refugees individually, but also of helping them to in turn help their displaced parents and siblings who suffer from illiteracy and lack of professional and life skills to find their place in new environments and start the path towards integration.

3.1. United Nations and non-governmental organisations

18. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4, to “Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning” (by 2030), provides a long-term roadmap for the education needs of vulnerable populations, including refugees, stateless persons and other forcibly displaced people. At the United Nations World Humanitarian Summit in Turkey in May 2016, the “Education Cannot Wait Fund” was established to meet the educational needs of millions of children and youth affected by crises around the world and, importantly, with the aim of bridging the gap between humanitarian aid and development aid. The fund aimed to reach 1.4 million children by the end of 2017, with an eventual goal for 2030 of helping almost 16 million children.

19. UNESCO's World Education Forum in May 2015 adopted a 2030 Framework for Action “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”. This framework reiterates that States must provide free and compulsory primary education and available and accessible secondary education including technical and vocational training, that higher education should be accessible to all. They must also end discrimination at all levels of the educational system.

3.2. The European Union

20. In April 2016, the European Commission announced a €52 million humanitarian aid package aimed specifically at educational projects for children in emergency situations, in line with the Commission's commitment to allocate 4% of its humanitarian aid budget to education (from 1% previously). The assistance targets regions where children are at higher risk of being left out of school or having their education disrupted: the Middle East (especially Syria and Iraq), central and west Africa, Asia, Ukraine, central America and Colombia.

21. The aid is channelled through NGOs, United Nations agencies and international organisations, and at the same time as direct funding for educational materials and teaching, will also address problems of infrastructure. For instance, UNICEF has been allocated funds to improve the quality of children's learning environment in Aleppo by providing solar panels to schools to reduce the problems of power cuts. Low-cost computers and tablets will be given to Syrian children to give them access to digital resources in schools.

22. The European Commission launched its largest humanitarian programme for education of refugee children in Turkey in 2017. The aim is to encourage 230 000 refugee children to attend school in Turkey. In March 2017 the €34 million “Conditional Cash Transfer for Education” (CCTE) project, designed and managed in partnership with UNICEF and the Turkish Red Crescent, began awarding cash transfers directly to refugee

6. *Current migration situation in the EU: Education*, FRA, May 2017. The countries studied were Austria, Bulgaria, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovak Republic, Spain and Sweden.

families whose children regularly attend school. The CCTE will support vulnerable children to improve access to education in both Turkish public schools and Temporary Education Centres and to integrate into the national programme. As at 12 February 2018, 604 057 children, who came to Turkey via mass migration, were enrolled in the Turkish education system. 369 056 Syrians and Iraqis with temporary protection status are enrolled in education facilities which pursue Turkish curricula. In 338 temporary education centres in 20 provinces in Turkey, 225 390 students are receiving intensive language courses in Turkish. The low enrolment rates by Syrians under temporary protection might be partly explained by the fact that Syria lacked an obligatory high school education.

4. What kind of education?

4.1. Schools should keep children safe

23. Since 2007, the military use of schools or universities by government armed forces and non-State armed groups has been documented in at least 29 countries with armed conflict or insecurity, according to the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack.⁷ Human Rights Watch, a member of the coalition, published a report on the subject in March 2017, as well as several country-specific reports, including one on Ukraine⁸ which stated that both Ukrainian Government forces and Russia-backed militants had carried out attacks on schools, used schools for military purposes and deployed forces in and near schools. The resulting destruction has forced many schools to stop operating or to operate in extremely difficult conditions.

24. In countries of transit and reception of refugees and migrants not directly engaged in conflict, firewalls must be ensured between educational institutions and immigration authorities. Children should not be deprived of schooling as a result of delays or negative administrative decisions. Their development as children and young people should be given priority, and interruptions in their educational trajectories avoided in order to reduce sources of multiple discriminations in the future. Police officers should never be granted access to schools in any circumstances related to migration processes, for instance to deal with cases of return after rejection of asylum applications.

4.2. Children should be educated together

25. Investment in a shared system – with refugees and the children of the host community learning side by side – will create long-lasting improvements for the community and ease tensions over the extra strain on local resources. Building new schools and training more teachers improves the quality of a country's education system for future generations of students – be they refugees or citizens of the host country. In countries where refugees are so numerous they are accommodated in centres of a scale exceeding that of large towns – mainly Syria's neighbours outside Europe, but including Turkey – classes must, however, be organised autonomously to ensure access through proximity. Here, the United Nations principles of availability, accessibility, acceptability and adaptability should serve as a guide. In this context, Turkey constitutes a good example, since Syrian pupils are enrolled in the Turkish education system after an intensive Turkish language course.

26. Implementation of inclusive educational principles can encounter difficulties which, if not overcome, amount to serious violations of the right to education. At a joint hearing of the Committees on Equality and Non-Discrimination and on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons in June 2016 in Strasbourg, NGOs working in the Calais "jungle" denounced the fact that refugee children supposedly transported by bus to local schools in Calais were missing classes most of the time simply due to delays and bad scheduling of arrival and departure of buses. This shows that supervision is needed at all stages, and the objective of respect for the best interests of the child must be shared by all actors. States must show firm political will in carrying out policies.

27. There is strong consensus among international actors that integration into mainstream education is required. The European Court of Human Rights has so far ruled on this aspect only with respect to children with disabilities and Roma children, but the principle of non-segregation in education should be extended to migrant children (avoiding differentiation on ground of nationality or ethnic origin).⁹ There may be grounds for

7. www.protectingeducation.org/.

8. "Studying Under Fire: Attacks on Schools, Military Use of Schools During the Armed Conflict in Eastern Ukraine", February 2016: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/02/11/ukraine-attacks-military-use-schools>.

9. See for instance *Oršuš v. Croatia*, Application No. 15766/03, judgment of 16 March 2010 (Grand Chamber).

separate classes in some disciplines, especially with respect to language learning, but in this case there should be a requirement for language tests to be carried out at placement stage; curricula should be designed to address language deficiencies, and should by no means constitute a basis for segregation.

28. In addition to international obligations, the different situations of refugees in host countries pleads for a “blanket” legislation rendering primary and secondary education compulsory for all children, whatever their origin or status. The study by FRA also notes that once enrolled in school, asylum-seeking children usually benefit from the same schooling and care as national children and in some countries are also eligible for additional support, such as language courses or financial allowances for school supplies or support concerning disabilities.

4.3. Primary education should be compulsory and provided during all stages of asylum processes

29. In Europe, national regulations vary considerably, many revealing weaknesses and breaches in the implementation of children's right to education. In the Netherlands, for example, primary education is compulsory for Dutch and migrant children alike up to the age of 16, whereas in Sweden and in Germany school attendance is not an obligation for children between the ages of 6 and 16 whose residence status has not yet been determined. However, the fact that pre-school education in the Netherlands is mainly private and subject to fees means that migrant children are often disqualified, whereas any child arriving in Sweden can attend open pre-schools free of charge. In larger Swedish cities, special pre-schools focus on Swedish language learning.

30. In Turkey, 362 451 children of registered refugees do not attend school. Foreign pupils without identity cards are registered on the spot through an online system. Turkey is undertaking important infrastructural projects to ensure that every pupil with international protection status is able to receive education if he or she wishes. It would appear however that access to education for children without temporary protection remains a problem. For many extremely poor refugee families, children are the only sources of income, and an estimated one quarter of families have at least one child worker. In addition, once children have missed years of schooling it is very difficult to make up for the lost time.

4.4. Access must be given to all levels of education

31. A further advantage of integration into mainstream educational structures is that they provide recognised, accredited qualifications which open up paths to the next phases of schooling. Based on its long experience in the field, the UNHCR has concluded that parallel systems are not only poor substitutes but are even counter-productive, resulting in unaccredited learning stopping children from progressing.

32. The Council of Europe has not directly addressed early schooling in this respect, but in 2017 it launched a pilot project “European Qualifications Passport for Refugees”,¹⁰ whereby refugees having lost their diplomas may be recognised for access to further education on the basis of interviews, and a toolkit for language support for adult refugees.¹¹

4.5. The importance of language

33. Although it may be necessary to provide extra classes for language learning, students acquire social language most rapidly through immersion with peers. However, while many children achieve social proficiency quickly through playing and interacting with others, it can take much longer to achieve academic proficiency. For children to learn academic language, vocabulary and grammar used in the classroom must be explicitly taught, although this should not mean displacement to other educational establishments, as here too, children benefit from peer-group situations and emulation. It goes without saying that the younger the children, the less need for additional language learning, as all pupils will be at an early stage in their progress with reading and writing skills.

34. For older students and families, language can be a real or perceived barrier to integration and is undoubtedly one of the pull factors for refugees wishing to reach the United Kingdom or Germany, for instance. Help with host language learning in countries of reception, and all children's access to second and third languages at an early age is essential for Europe's sharing of responsibilities for and distribution of current migration flows.

10. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/education/recognition-of-refugees-qualifications>.

11. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/lang-migrants>.

4.6. Cultural and social skills, non-formal education, gender and cultural differences

35. This report concentrates on the implementation of compulsory schooling, but alongside this, non-formal and intercultural education is extremely important for refugees and migrants who have crossed entire continents to arrive in countries with very different social and cultural traditions. Formal curricula should therefore be accompanied by guidance in everyday life skills in the host country, adapted to the age and circumstances of children.

36. For migrant girls, education is all the more empowering as a means of gaining autonomy from family and community situations which may inhibit their independence as individuals. A safe classroom is all the more important for girls, and early education has been proved to reduce child marriages and sexual exploitation and abuse. In the home countries of many refugees, access to formal schooling is traditionally more difficult for girls than boys – another reason for making at least primary education an obligation in host countries, as a means of empowering girls and favouring their integration.

37. The education of girls raises particular problems: the system in Syria segregates teenage girls and boys from the age of 12, so many parents are reluctant to allow their daughters to attend mixed schools. An initiative in the Bekaa valley in Lebanon, for instance, funded by Save the Children and the United Nations Women For Peace Association, has led to the opening of a school to educate 160 Syrian girls aged from 14 to 18 who have missed school for several years. If the girls are able to pass the Lebanese system's eighth grade exams (usually taken at 14 or 15), they may go on to attend local Lebanese public schools.

38. In transit or host countries with marked cultural and/or religious differences, children and their parents are required to assimilate and accept rapidly local cultures and traditions; to be educated along with the local children, migrant children must, of course, respect the legislation and regulations concerning education in the host country. Therefore a condition for successful education of migrant children is their willingness to learn, supported by the willingness of their parents to educate their children according to the local rules and laws. Without this willingness to integrate, the efforts of the recipient State authorities to offer education to migrant children will have limited effect.¹²

4.7. Teaching the teachers

39. Teacher training is also an important element in ensuring quality education by inclusion of migrants in mainstream education systems. The UNHCR addresses this with online teachers' toolkits containing adaptable teaching materials on refugees, asylum, migration and statelessness. The information includes professional development and guidance for primary and secondary school teachers on including refugee children in their classes. It contains basic explanations of the different situations of refugees and migrant children, with emphasis on animated sequences. Extensive age-specific teaching materials are also available online and to download. There is also guidance on how to identify and interact with children experiencing migration-related stress and trauma.¹³ These extremely well-designed and practical toolkits should be promoted and translated widely.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

40. Despite the present protracted refugee situation, education for people fleeing hardship is mostly financed from emergency funds, which does not encourage long-term investment in sustainable policies. In most countries, refugee education does not feature in national development plans or in education sector planning, even though according to my research some of the larger refugee-hosting countries are working to reverse this trend. According to the Fundamental Rights Agency, for instance, most EU member States increased their budgets and human resources for education in response to the migration crisis in 2015/16. However, support in some member States depends on project-based funding.¹⁴

41. In addition, refugees' educational access and attainment are not usually tracked through national monitoring systems, meaning that refugee children and youth are not only disadvantaged, but their educational needs and achievements often remain invisible.

12. The European Court of Human Rights ruled in January 2017 that there was no violation of freedom of religion in a school in Basel where Muslim girls were required to participate in mixed swimming classes. The persons concerned were not recent migrants to Switzerland, but the case does illustrate the necessity for adaptability on both sides.

13. "Successfully including children experiencing stress and trauma in your classroom" (www.unhcr.org/59d346de4) and a "Teachers' toolkit on language acquisition".

14. Current migration situation in the EU: Education, FRA, May 2017.

42. In Europe, delivering quality education in line with countries' international undertakings is a challenge which is a long way from being fulfilled and which reveals as many disparities as there are differences in the reception and integration conditions offered. Compulsory education is one of the most important implementing tools for giving priority to the best interests of the child as developed in many of the Parliamentary Assembly's recent reports. This report endeavours to outline the main constituent requirements for primary (and secondary) education for migrant and refugee children.

43. In addition, host countries need to take more account of the experiences of migrant and in particular refugee children. Traumatized children in most European countries have access to some form of psychological support, but this support does not specifically target children with a refugee background. Support in formal education contexts which does take account of multiple trauma in individual children is rarely available.¹⁵

44. Alongside other types of care and assistance, and especially immediate and continued psychological assistance for children traumatized by their experiences, providing quality education to refugee and migrant children today will serve to prepare the Europe of tomorrow. Failing in this task can only lead to more crises and social upheaval. The recommendations in the draft resolution also stress the vital importance of education for promoting peaceful co-existence in the future.

15. *Ibid.*: "Locations in only three member States report that teachers have received support or guidance in dealing with traumatized children, such as special guidelines and training on identification and treatment of children with trauma."