

# #BACKTOSCHOOL





# A LOST GENERATION

During these years, we have sadly become familiar with the images of thousands of refugee children landing on European beaches or crossing our borders. Children tired, scared, held tight in the arms of their parents or even traveling alone. Children and teenagers who – like all the boys and girls in the world – should wake up in the morning to go to school and instead have been forced to flee and wander without even knowing where to go to sleep in the night.

What happened to those faces, those children who – unlike little Ayslan and many others like him – managed to reach our borders safe and sound? Have they ended up being swallowed in a refugee camp or have they started a real integration path and a new life? In the vast majority of cases, these children have already lost on average two and a half years of school in their country due to dramatic conflicts and violence.

How long did they take, once arrived to us, before seeing a teacher and going back to school?

These simple questions have prompted this research, promoted by the Global Progressive Forum, in cooperation with two of the most significant organizations working on migration and education: the Migration Policy Group and the Sirius Network. We really need to thank them and all the researchers involved in this study for having tried to shed light on the educational integration of refugee children in Europe and Turkey. This is an important but not exhaustive first step, also because one of the most worrying data that emerges from this research is the absence of data.

In fact, a whole generation of refugee children seems to have disappeared from our radar. Only a great joint effort by the European Union and neighbouring countries can allow bringing them #backtoschool.

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## Introduction

Education could pave the way towards a **more stable and brighter future for children seeking and benefiting from international protection**, after often several years of flight and insecurity. Many of them see education as an opportunity to re-build their lives in a new environment and they typically arrive highly motivated to continue school after long periods of absence. Still, **law, policy and practice** in the final country of asylum will **determine** whether children under international protection are **able to realise their dreams and aspirations**. Children's high ambitions might quickly disappear when faced with specific legal, administrative and practical barriers hindering them from continuing and succeeding in school.

The objective of this study is to give a **comparative overview of the current situation of asylum seeker and refugee children having reached compulsory school age in seven EU Member States** (France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden) where recently they have all experienced a sharp increase in the number of asylum applications. **Turkey** was added to the analysed countries as an emerging country of destination supported with €3 billion through the EU's "Facility for Refugees in Turkey". Building on the European standards for the educational integration of refugee children, the analysis points out that children's educational integration path and educational success is **still heavily dependent on the national legal and policy framework** and the level of its implementation in practice.

The paper is based on the findings of other major research programmes conducted by the Migration Policy Group (MPG) and the **SIRIUS – Policy Network on Migrant Education**. It builds on the work presented in the SIRIUS Policy Brief 'Refugee Children in education in Europe. How to prevent a lost generation?' (Crul, 2017) and on the national and comparative reports of the SIRIUS 'Multi-country Partnership to Enhance the Education of Refugee and Asylum-seeking Youth in Europe' undertaken in Belgium (Flanders), Bulgaria, Germany, Greece, the Netherlands, Sweden and the UK between 2016 and 2017 (Koehler, et al., forthcoming)<sup>1</sup>. It also takes account of the ongoing SIRIUS project RefuEdu – 'Exchange of knowledge and good practice to enhance the education of refugee and asylum seeking youth'. Furthermore, the paper builds on research undertaken in the framework of the **National Integration Evaluation Mechanism (NIEM)** project, coordinated by MPG and led by the Institute of Public Affairs (IPA) in Warsaw. This involves research done on the European standards for refugee integration (Tanczos, 2016) and some of the preliminary

<sup>1</sup> *Tuijman, van den Heerik, Le Pichon, & Baauw, 2016; Ravn, Nouwen, Clycq, & Timmerman, forthcoming; Kakos & Sharma-Brymer, forthcoming; Koehler & Schneider, Multi-country Partnership to Enhance the Education of Refugee and Asylum-seeking Youth in Europe – National Report Germany, forthcoming*

nary conclusions based on data gathered by NIEM country coordinators from France (France Terre d'Asile), Greece (ANTIGONE Network), Hungary (Menedék), Italy (Fondazione ISMU), the Netherlands (Maastricht University) and Sweden (Malmö University). The study also draws on the policy paper '**Back to School: Responding to the needs of newcomer refugee youth**' (Huddleston & Wolffhardt, 2016). Finally, the chapter on Turkey further elaborates the results of the research undertaken in the framework of the **Civil Society Dialogue – Harmonisation of Refugees Project** (Huddleston & Tanczos, 2017).

## Refugee children in compulsory school age – The European standards for refugee children's integration in education

Education is a **human right** and it is secured by **several international conventions**, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 26), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Articles 13 and 14) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 28 and 29). The Refugee Convention (Article 22) guarantees access to elementary education equal to nationals and ensures at least same access as for other resident foreign citizens with regard to other forms of education.

**EU law** goes beyond these standards to **further facilitate** the integration process at school. **All minor beneficiaries of international protection must be guaranteed full access to education under the same conditions as nationals** (recast Qualification Directive, Article 27(1)). Before recognition, asylum seeker children should have access to education under similar conditions as national pupils **within three months of lodging their application**. If a Member State decides to do so minor asylum seekers' education can be organised separately from mainstream curriculum and classes. Member States are required to provide **preparatory and language classes** to facilitate asylum seeker children's access to education, but EU law does not further clarify the organizational terms and quality of these support classes (recast Reception Conditions Directive, Article 14).

The current EU legislation shapes a school integration process that **aims for full access to education**. Refugee children often arrive to Europe traumatised after long periods of insecurity and are usually out of school for several months or even years. Full access in practice should mean



that they are assisted so as to overcome these barriers and ultimately are offered the chance to attend school just like any other children. Hence, implicitly all Member States should provide the extra support that asylum seeker and refugee children might need in order to catch up with their classmates in the respective countries. However, ensuring full access to education is interpreted in different manners across countries and refugee children's educational integration paths will vary hugely according to the national legal, policy and implementation contexts.

## Refugee children in compulsory school age – The journey in practice

EU Member States and Turkey have experienced a sharp increase in the asylum applications as a consequence of the persisting conflict in Syria. Altogether, there are at least 1.5 million children in need of international protection in the region.

**Turkey** hosts approximately 3.4 million refugees, including 2.8 million Syrians, and the share of minors is estimated to be around 30% - just over 1 million children seeking for protection and for a more stable perspective in their lives (Huddlestone & Tanczos, 2017). However, the majority of

these children **risk becoming part of a lost generation**. Many of them are not enrolled in any type of formal education and even those who attend schools still have little chance to be able to enroll in regular Turkish classes. The parallel system of temporary education centres for Syrians should be gradually phased out, but currently Syrian children in formal education are typically attending these institutions instead of regular Turkish schools. The minority who is able to enroll in mainstream schools is not systematically supported to catch up with the Turkish curriculum or to learn the language properly and they are also at great risk of dropping out of school. Typically, international organisations and civil society try to fill this immense educational and support gap by offering at least some form of education, language tuition or scholarships.

In the absence of stable, long-term perspective in Turkey, many families will try to make their way to the European Union. Overall 1.260.910 persons applied for asylum in 2016 in the EU and among them 398.255 were minors under 18 years (Eurostat, 2017a).

## GREECE

When they **arrive in Greece**, they are already **likely to have missed 2.5 years of their education** on average (UNICEF, 2017), but they will **possibly remain out of formal education** in one of the Greek islands for several months. Unaccompanied minors often have to wait even longer owing to inconsistencies and long waiting periods in the legal guardianship system. Even once they are recognised and eventually move to the Greek mainland, the newly introduced Greek language support programme is available only in a small fraction of schools and refugee children will most probably need to catch up with regular classes without any kind of support.

If their journey brings them through the Balkan route, families **risk to spend months in one of Hungary's transit zones**, where there is no access to any kind of systematic educational activities in practice. When they are moved to one of the Hungarian reception centers, children are likely to attend a designated school and they are segregated within the mainstream school system (Hungarian Helsinki Committee, 2017, p. 63).

Like Greece, the children of those few recognised refugee families who ultimately stay in Hungary under these circumstances will need to make it through the Hungarian educational system without any systematic language or educational support. In both cases, international organization and civil society try to step in and fill this support gap.

Children arriving on EU territory **through Italy are more likely to be able to continue their education** without further major delays. They can usually enroll in regular classes, typically the one below the class corresponding to their age. Whether they will then receive extra support to learn Italian and catch up with the Italian curriculum will vary from school to school, but Italian schools typically **lack funds, capacity and experience** to implement support measures in a systematic manner and extra tuition is usually available on an ad hoc basis (Grigt, 2017).

**Refugee children's journeys are likely to continue, disrupting their education again.** A small minority will be relocated and usually wait for months before finally being transferred to another EU Member State (European Council on Refugees and Exiles - ECRE, 2017). Children - in the meantime - should continue going to school during this long waiting period, but being in an insecure situation, they are more likely to be demotivated from learning a new language and adapting to a school system

## HUNGARY

## ITALY



that they will leave behind. Others will try to reach other EU Member States straightaway without even applying for asylum at these first entry points. Whatever their initial reason is – perhaps they already have family, friends or other ties elsewhere, or just simply do not want to be stuck in an insecure lengthy asylum and relocation procedure – children will not be able to attend regular schools.

Overall, this can **add up to 3 to 3.5 years or more of missed education**. When compulsory school aged refugee children are finally settled and can start attending formal education, they **rarely receive sufficient support to bridge this gap** and succeed in regular classes. For example, **in France**, they **typically have one year to learn the language** and afterwards they will have to rely on overburdened and often inadequate mainstream services. **In the Netherlands, extra funding for schools** receiving newcomer children is currently available for a maximum amount of **two years**. **In Germany**, the transition period normally lasts **one year**. If and how much extra support schools receive after children start attending mainstream classes varies much among the Länder. Ultimately child refugees spend a **rather long period in separate immersion classes** and are **usually transferred** to regular classes or oriented towards vocational tracks that are **below their potential**. Among the analysed countries only **Sweden** offers an educational support system that is **likely to enable refugee children to realise their educational potential**. **Still, the rapid increase in arrivals meant a serious challenge** for the country's educational system and the **current lack of teachers** risks the stable continuity of these support measures – and consequently, risks losing many potential doctors, engineers, teachers, policy-makers who once started school as refugees.

While the level of challenge would require policy makers and other stakeholders to continuously monitor, assess and adapt law, policy and practice on refugee education, currently they are not even able to know the exact scope of the challenge due to **large data gaps**. Data on the number of minor asylum seekers is available through Eurostat, but once recognised, refugees disappear from statistics under the larger categories of third-country nationals or foreigners. When available, educational statistics typically involve these latter groups. **The exact number of refugee children in compulsory school age enrolled in education remains unknown. Their later school attainment levels cannot exactly be followed**. One might be able to get a better picture through an analysis based on typical country of origins, but this picture will never be precise and complete. **Detailed information is also absent on the amount of funding for the school integration of refugee children**. Education budgets are likely to be nominally on the rise, but whether these additional funds are able to match the immense increase in needs remains unclear.

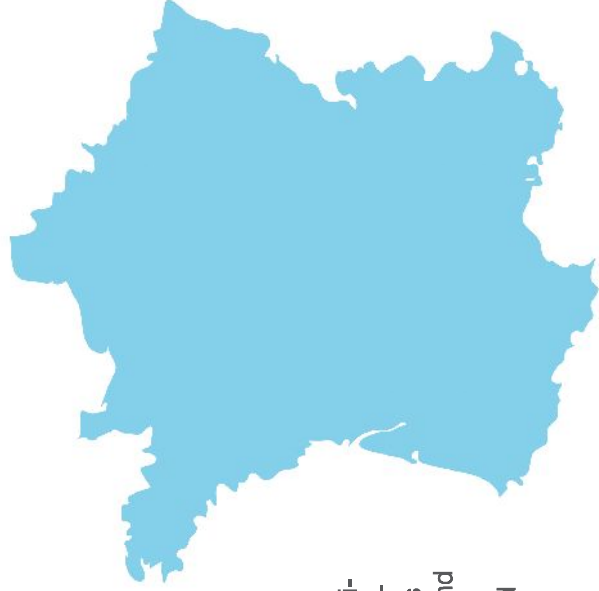
	France	Germany	Greece	Hungary	Italy	Netherlands	Sweden	Turkey
Number of asylum applications from children in 2016	14.910	722.370	19.720	8.550	11.170	6230	10.875	No publicly available data [2]
Preschool/Kindergarten	3–6 years	3–6 years	2.5–4 years	3–6 years	3–6 years	2.5–4 years	1–6 years	3–5 years
Compulsory school age	6–16 years	6–16 years	5–16 years	3–16 years	6–16 years	5–16 years	7–16 years	6–18 years
Above the compulsory school age	No qualification obligation or enrolment duty	Qualification obligation	No qualification obligation	No entitlement to education	"Right-duty" to education and professional training	Qualification obligation	Entitlement to upper secondary school.	Limited access to higher education
Responsible authorities	Ministry of Education, CASNAVs	Ministry of Education and Science, Ministries of Education in Länder	Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs	Ministry of Human Resources, Kiebsberg Centre for the Management of Educational Institutions	Ministry of Education, Local school boards	Ministry of Education, municipalities, local school boards	Swedish National Agency for Education, municipalities	Ministry of National Education, Provincial Education Commissions
Number of refugee children enrolled in education	No publicly available data.	288.373	No publicly available data.	No publicly available data.	No publicly available data.	No publicly available data.	No publicly available data.	No publicly available data.[3]
Legal deadline for enrolling asylum seeker children education	3 months	3 months (differences among the Länder)	3 months, but possibility to offer them only non-formal education	3 months	3 months	3 months	1 month	No
Average time between asylum application and enrolment in education	Few days	6 months	Education typically organised separately from regular schools throughout the asylum procedure.	30 days (children in reception centres) up to several months (children stranded in transit zones)	No data. Estimated to take place typically within a few days.	6 weeks	No publicly available data. Typically within legal deadline.	Majority out of formal education.
Separate immersion classes	Yes	Yes	Yes, but not offered in a structural manner.	Ad hoc	No	Yes	Yes	No. Parallel system of temporary education centres for Syrians
Legal right to equal treatment in education for refugee children	Yes	Not for all, dependent on legal status and differences between Länder	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Administrative barriers	No	Yes	Decreasing	No	No	No	No	Yes
Placement in the compulsory school system	Based on evaluation tests organised through CASNAVs	After immersion classes and on the basis of prior assessments (in Hamburg by School Information Center and teachers)	Based on age and prior academic knowledge, decision by the school board.	No guidelines. Dependent on the decision of the school board.	Based on the children's age, decision by the school board.	Based on intake interview or intake period according to the age, prior knowledge and the student's future aspirations.	Based on a mandatory individualised assessment.	Placement tests, but in practice often discretionary decision by school.
Language support	Yes	Yes	Ad hoc	Ad hoc	Depends on the school board's decision.	Yes	Yes	No



# France

## Overall

- Newcomer compulsory school aged children can **enrol within a few days** without any major administrative barriers. However, families are at great risk of precarious accommodation arrangements and homelessness due to a **lack of places in reception centres** and **children might not be able to attend classes regularly**.
- Children seeking and benefiting from international protection **receive extensive language support** through the special “UPE2A” immersion classes, but after this initial period they often need to **rely on inadequate and overburdened mainstream support services**.
- France established a **strong general monitoring system for schools**, but it **does not collect specific data** on the enrolment and school attainment of **asylum seeker and refugee children**.



## Refugee children in compulsory school age - In law and policy

Compulsory school aged asylum seeking children must be included in formal education **within three months** of lodging their asylum claim.

Children seeking and benefiting from international protection go through the same **evaluation procedure** as any other newly arrived third-country national. They pass a specific test assessing their language and education level organised by the regional “CASNAV”, the Academic Centre for the Education of Newcomers and Traveller Children. All newcomer pupils are placed in a school and class corresponding to their academic level. Pupils with sufficient language knowledge are directly included in the mainstream classes. Other pupils are expected to join regular classes and in addition receive specific language support and attend special classes known as “UPE2A”, **Pedagogical Unit for Newcomer Non-Francophone Children, for maximum 2 years**.

CASNAVs are part of the regional and local education authorities and fix the amount of their annual **budget**, dependant on various factors, which will include the number of newcomers in the specific locality.

## Refugee children in compulsory school age - In practice

**14436 accompanied and 474 unaccompanied minors requested asylum** in France in 2016 (Office français de protection des réfugiés et apatrides - OFPRA, 2017, p. 108), but public data lacks information on the number of minors in compulsory school age. Educational statistics were publicly available for the **2014/2015 school year**, when **49.772 non-francophone newcomers** entered the education system (primary, lower secondary and non-compulsory upper secondary) in Metropolitan France and 88.5% among them received educational support (Ministère de l'éducation nationale, 2017a, p. 22). However, no data is available on the number of children seeking or benefiting from international protection enrolled in the different levels of the French education system. Even though France established a strong general monitoring system for its education policy (Essomba, Tarrés, & Guillén, 2017, p. 40), it can provide only a few hints on the educational integration of refugee children in the absence of specific data. Information about special funding and the budget for the educational integration of beneficiary children is also missing. It is planned to increase the Ministry of Education's general budget in 2018, as well as the overall number of teacher in compulsory education, and the objective is to

## Asylum seeking and refugee children and the French school system in general

- All children, regardless of their legal status, have an **equal right to education and to general education support** :
- Children can enrol forfree in their district's “**maternelle**” classes at the age of 3.
  - **Compulsory education** starts at age of **6** with the “élémentaire” classes and continues until the end of “collège” at the age of **16**.
  - Following the compulsory school years children can continue with **further secondary education** in the “lycée”.



match finances with “accompanying every child towards success” (Ministère de l’éducation nationale, 2017b, p. 8). However, it is **unclear what proportion of this budget will be dedicated for special targeted support** for asylum seeker and refugee children.

Children seeking asylum **do not seem to face particular barriers to enrol in compulsory education** and they are typically registered with a school within a few days after arrival. Some difficulties might arise to register in a “collège” in the middle of the school year, which can delay school attendance. Youngsters after the compulsory school age face significantly more challenges as they are not entitled to education and schools are not obliged to enrol them.

**Newcomers with sufficient French knowledge** continue their studies in mainstream classes, without any systematic additional educational support targeted for beneficiaries of international protection. Children must **rely on mainstream academic and psycho-social services**, available to any children in the French education system, which are **often overburdened** and are **not adapted** to their specific educational needs. Catching up with the educational curriculum and striving in school remains a major challenge for refugee children in these circumstances.

**Pupils lacking sufficient French skills** typically **attend 1 year the special UPE2A immersion classes** before they fully join regular education. Whilst in principle, they should attend all mainstream classes from the very beginning, in practice the transition to regular classes are more gradual and children are firstly included in subject matters such as such as arts, music and sports. Pupils are **often placed in classes below their prior educational level**, as the assessment is still generally based on their French level. The quality of the immersion classes tends to vary from school to school. Places might be scarce and classes might be overburdened in some municipalities. **After transition**, similarly to their francophone counterparts, asylum seeker and refugee children are **dependent on mainstream education support services**, which often **risk being inadequate**. Many pupils seem to repeat classes and are still likely to fare worse in school after the initial special support.

The **precarious housing situation** of asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection is a **major barrier for newcomer children to continue with and succeed in education**. Places in asylum reception centres are scarce and provide accommodation only for 30-35% of asylum seekers. Others receive a slightly higher daily allowance of around 11 euro a day, which is typically not enough for renting accommodation in urban areas close to education and employment opportunities. Once recognised, beneficiaries receive accommodation support for a rather short period,



typically not long enough to find suitable housing on their own. Therefore, many asylum seekers and recognised beneficiaries are homeless or are at risk of becoming homeless. Even though asylum seeker and refugee families seem to be treated as a priority group for accommodation, homelessness is rather common among them as well. Hence, some children might not be able to attend classes regularly and are at great risk of dropping out of education.

Number of asylum applications from children in 2016	14,970
School system	Kindergarten: 3-6 years Compulsory school: 6-16 years Above the compulsory school age: no duty for minors to get a diploma or other qualification and no duty for schools to enrol children
Responsible authorities	National level: Ministry of Education Implementation at regional level through the CASNAVs (Academic Centre for the Education of Newcomers and Traveller Children)
Number of refugee children enrolled in education	No publicly available data.
Legal deadline for enrolling asylum seeker children education	3 months
Average time between asylum application and enrolment in education	Few days
Separate immersion classes	Yes
Legal right to equal treatment in education for refugee children	Yes
Administrative barriers	No
Placement in the compulsory school system	Based on evaluation tests organised through CASNAVs.
Language support	Yes



# Germany

## Overall

- The education system from early childhood education and care to higher education is **almost entirely decentralized** with the Basic Law containing only a few fundamental provisions. The predominant responsibility in the area of education rests with the Länder. This paper demonstrates general features and specific features of the Länder Bavaria, Berlin and Hamburg.

- All Länder have a **system of preparatory or integration classes** for newly arrived migrant children. These classes combine German language teaching with some central school topics and information about society, laws and culture in Germany, they normally last 1 year and aim at a fast integration into the mainstream education system.
- In principle this system is in charge also for refugee children, but **there are limits in the access**, because: (a) in many regions **the system has been overloaded** with the number of school-age refugees who arrived in 2015/16, (b) education for refugees is **also a political issue**, so the access to education and the way it is organized are **frequently made object of specific regulations**.

## Asylum seeking and refugee children and the German education system in general

All children and youth **under age 18** have **the right and under age 16 the obligation** to attend school :

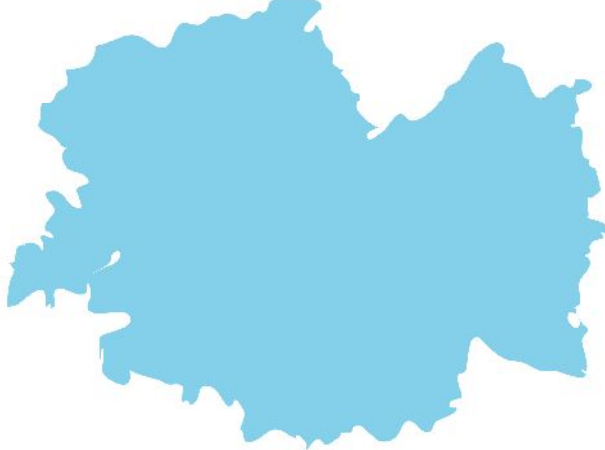
- Children between 3 and 5 years can enroll in **preschool (Kindergarten)**, but this is **not obligatory**. The overall responsibility for organizing preschool education lies with the Länder. **Children with a migrant background** have to take **a language test 1,5 – 2 years before school entry**. If the test reveals a need for German language support, they are obliged to participate in extra language courses before entering school.

- **Primary education** commonly begins **at the age of six** and consists

of four grades of schooling (in Berlin and Brandenburg: six grades). At the **secondary level**, there are various educational paths with respective leaving certificates and qualifications for which different school types are responsible. In most Länder, children may continue grades five to ten at the **Mittelschule** or **Realschule** (in Berlin and Brandenburg: grades seven to ten), or five (seven) to twelve at the Gymnasium, or five (seven) to 13 at the **Gesamtschule** or another form of integrated school. The German education system has been criticized for **early tracking** causing a high level of stratification and inequality, although the ability to transfer between school types and the recognition of school-leaving qualifications is basically guaranteed if the preconditions agreed between the Länder are fulfilled. For pupils in compulsory school age who have a “different educational biography” because, instead of going to school, they have been working since young age, there are **“international work entry classes”** (Internationale Berufseinstiegsklassen – IBE) aiming at a fast integration into the labour market.

- Age 16 marks the end of compulsory school age and therefore represents the most important dividing criterion. Regular schools are **not obliged to admit young people above the age of 16**. This means that young refugees between the ages of 16 and 21 may not be able to attend school. In some Länder where compulsory education is dependent on students’ age, young refugees **might be denied** the right to further education once they reach the age of 16. In Bavaria, Berlin, Hamburg and most other Länder, young people **above the age of compulsory schooling** who do not have a medium secondary school leaving certificate and do not take up an apprenticeship, complete their compulsory education on a **fulltime basis at a vocational school**, which offers a combination of general education and specific vocational preparation in certain fields. Special classes for asylum seekers between 16 and 21 years have been established since 2016 at vocational schools. These classes combine intensive language learning, preparation for the lower school leaving certificate and support in finding an apprenticeship position within two to three years.

- Refugees generally have **access to university** in all Länder, if the necessary linguistic and other access requirements (e.g. valid university entrance qualification) are met. The regional authorities examine if foreign qualifications and certificates correspond with German standards. In order to be able to attend university foreigners must reach a certain language level of the Common European Framework of Reference (CER) in German. The exact level depends on the particular university, the particular degree programme and the instructional language. The required level might vary between B2 and C2. For refugees without a direct permission to study, some universities offer preparatory colleges that prepare foreigners during one year for university entry. After having passed the course successfully participants are allowed to study in university.





- For refugees **beyond the age of general education**, there are **vocational integration classes** in the form of a two-year course : first year : focus on language acquisition and further subjects like mathematics, social science, ethics, information technology and regional and cultural studies; second year: vocational preparation, including traineeships. School-leaving qualifications – in most cases a lower secondary certificate – can be obtained through the course as well.

## Refugee children in compulsory school age – In law and policy

There is a relevant distinction between **‘right’ and ‘duty’ to schooling** : Every school aged person in Germany has the ‘right to education’, regardless of the legal status, but only if this comes along with the ‘duty’ to schooling, this right can be enforced. In some Länder, asylum seekers whose procedures are ongoing have no ‘duty’ to schooling; this results in long waiting periods until school attendance is possible due to limited capacities. Persons with a tolerance (Duldung) have the duty to attend school in all Länder; in some Länder this duty is linked to residing in a flat. Refugees from countries that are considered as ‘safe’ or who have low prospects of being able to remain in Germany are denied school education in some Länder.

For newly arrived children and young people, there are **transition** (also : ‘integration’ or ‘welcome’) **classes** in all Länder. There are some variations in the organisation of these classes. Some classes try to integrate pupils in mainstream classes for subjects where language is not as relevant as soon as possible and while still attending the transition class for language learning; other classes focus on fast and intensive language learning and transfer pupils to mainstream classes only after a skills level of A2 has been reached. The classes normally last **1 year**. In special cases they **can be extended** for an additional year.

## Refugees in compulsory school age – In practice

When asylum seekers are accommodated in **distant locations** where no schools are near or reachable by public transportation, **pupils may not be able to attend school** at all. Due to the high numbers of new arrivals in 2015/16, many refugees were and some still are staying in emergency accommodation for prolonged periods of time. In **some cases** this results in **seven to eight months of non-school attendance**.

**A particular case** are reception centres where **people from countries that are considered as ‘safe’** and people with low perspectives for a long-term stay in Germany are living. **Schooling** in these centres is **at a minimum level**. For example in the reception centre in Bamberg, there are class sizes of up to 45 children. The children have 12 lessons per week and are taught in groups according to their age – 6 to 9 years, 10 to 12 and 13 to 16 years. There is no set curriculum. The subject materials are selected and prepared by three teachers. It is not considered important for these children to learn German since they are expected to be sent back to their countries of origin. This implies a violation of Art. 28 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Finding the type of education that **builds up on their prior education** represents **a challenge**; a functioning system to enable connectivity with prior education is not in place in most Länder.

Overall, understanding the complex German education system represents a challenge for most new arrivals. Generally, young refugees are **unable to make informed choices** about their education.

By the beginning of 2016, **8,500 additional teachers** had been hired. The Standing Conference of the Länder estimates that **20,000 additional teachers are needed** in order to meet the educational needs of newly arrived refugees.

## Specific features in Bavaria, Berlin and Hamburg

### Bavaria

40% of new arrivals in Bavaria are children and young people. At the end of 2016, there were 58.500 refugee pupils in school age in Bavaria. They were taught in 658 transition classes at primary and lower secondary schools (470 classes in the year before) and in 1.200 vocational integration classes. It is planned to generate 1079 teacher positions and 700 additional positions for staff involved in the education of refugees.

The **system is more mixed** than in Hamburg with **differences across regions and municipalities** in Bavaria.

In **most cases**, newly arrived children in primary school age are **integrated directly** into regular classes, **transition classes** for those in secondary school age (emphasis on German language and partially German society and social life) are mostly installed in the **lower qualifying secondary schools** (Mittelschule). But overall, the ambition and idea is

to **manage the educational integration of refugee children within the regular system**. Its advantage is that the pupils are confronted with the full range of subjects from the very beginning). However, lacking German language skills is a major problem and obstacle. As refugee students unanimously report, teachers hardly ever use any other language than German – not even English – to make sure that all students understand and can follow. According to teachers, **only exceptional students are able to fulfill all the requirements**.

The high rate of **bad school orientation advice** at the end of primary education and **early tracking** are general issues within the German school system, but they are especially relevant in Bavaria. Here the **school choice is based exclusively on grades** and there is a **limited availability of integrated schools** that combine several tracks.

Bavaria has been rather reluctant in recent years to reform its educational system. One of the reasons for this is the fact that Bavaria generally leads all comparative rankings with regard to educational outcomes. Nevertheless, the Bavarian school system seems **less prepared for dealing with larger groups of immigrants** and strongly increasing heterogeneity and diversity of the student force. There is a strong discourse that **demand the adaption of students to the rules** and ways of the current system **instead of the system adapting to the students' needs**.

## Berlin

Since Berlin is a City-Land, it has a high degree of self-determination.

Currently there were **12.190 newly arrived pupils** in Berlin, most of them attend one of the **1.004 welcome classes** and (school year 2016/17).

The **bureaucratic process of allocating refugee pupils to a school/class** is rather **complicated** and much determined by the decisions of public authorities. First, pupils are registered at the regional school coordination unit. They must then take a language test. The regional school coordination unit will decide on the school type based on the test results and the pupils' age and will assign pupils to welcome classes or regular classes. Finally, the school authority decides which school the child should attend and informs the parents. Parents can only then register the child at the school.

Refugee children in the ages of the first two grades of primary school (**6-8 years**) are integrated **directly into regular classes**. Those in the age groups of grade three and older (**8+ years**) normally **attend welcome classes**. They are located at all the different school types **independent of**

**the school the child will attend** after the welcome class. Teachers of welcome classes document the learning progress of each student and on this basis make **individual plans for gradual integration** into regular classes. Refugees who are 16 and older can attend welcome classes at higher secondary schools.

In twelve districts of Berlin there are '**vacation schools**' that pupils of welcome classes can attend during school holidays **for additional language training**. The schools are free of cost, attendance is voluntarily.

The mother language can be credited as second foreign language.

A '**Guideline on the integration of newly arrived children and young people in Kindergarten and school**' makes provisions for schooling in Berlin. However, the guideline leaves much flexibility for individual arrangements of the provisions. This leads to **much variation** between schools in regard to availability of material and rooms, quantity and quality of teachers, content of teaching and integration into regular classes.

## Hamburg

In the last two years, schools in Hamburg have integrated 10.000 refugee pupils. At the beginning of school year 2016/17, 4.576 refugee pupils attended 395 welcome classes. 1.298 pupils were taught in learning groups in first reception centers and 2.783 in International Preparatory Classes (IVK). 400 additional teachers were hired in order to meet the educational needs of newly arrived refugee pupils.

Since Hamburg is a City-Land, it has a high degree of self-determination. Generally, Hamburg **tries to integrate** every new arriving child immediately or as soon as **possible into the regular school system**.

'**Learning groups**' have been formed in first-line reception centers:

classes of 15 children and adolescents roughly divided into age groups, who receive German language lessons and partly alphabetization (also sports and maths but German language is the main goal). Attendance to learning groups is **obligatory** for all young people under age 18, **but absenteeism** is reported to be high.

Teachers are free lancers or ex-teachers in pension age; they are accompanied by neighbouring schools who assist in assessing the school level of the pupils once they are ready to attend mainstream schools.

After being moved to accommodation centres, asylum-seeker children under the age of 16 **are assigned to regular schools**. The School Information Centre (SIZ) assesses the prior education and knowledge and assigns



the students to the schools according to the learning level and availability of places (normally families cannot ask for a place in a particular school).

There are **preparation classes** at different regular schools, either as basic classes (which put a special emphasis on alphabetization) or IVK. Both, basic classes and IVKs are **mixed-age** and **heterogeneous** in terms of first languages and national origin. The main goal of both types is that pupils learn German as fast as possible, and that they make the transition to regular classes as soon as possible. In order to do so, the curriculum is stepwise broadened with subjects like math and English.

**After one year** the children are assigned to **regular classes**, but many of them at this moment still do not know German well enough to easily follow teaching. **Language teaching** and **tutoring support** is **continued** also in regular classes. Ideally, there are never more than five IVK-pupils per regular class. In exceptional cases, pupils may also repeat the IVK for another year.

**Some secondary schools** operate with a **longer and more intensive preparatory system**. This is aimed at facilitating the transition to the academic track for high potential students. In these longer courses pupils stay two years in the IVK, repeating 10th grade at the Gymnasium. As , the most common origin languages of immigrant students are being recognized as the obligatory second foreign language and can be credited as a main subject in the final exams.

Hamburg aims to include more and more higher secondary schools (Gymnasium) into the system of welcome classes. Welcome classes have so far been installed at 40 higher secondary schools in Hamburg; this is the highest figure in Germany.

The system has basically been in place since several years, because of repeated waves of refugees and migrants. But there are many more preparation classes (established in many more schools), challenges in terms of room capacities, teaching personnel and decisions (e.g. to design adequate follow-up pathways) that are a result of the high numbers of new arrivals in 2015/16.

In total **56** of the 204 **primary schools**, **32** of the 58 **integrated schools** (Stadtteilschulen), and **24** of the 61 **academically oriented high schools** have been **providing welcome classes**.

In cooperation with the economic sector, Hamburg has also installed a temporary residency permit for those adolescents who have found an apprenticeship position.

Number of asylum applications from children in 2016	722.370
School system	Preschool: 3–6 years Compulsory school: 6–16 years Above the compulsory school age: qualification obligation
Responsible authorities	National level: Ministry of Education and Science (but: Länder have authority for education policies) Länder level: Ministries of Education
Number of refugee children enrolled in education	288.373
Legal deadline for enrolling asylum seeker children in education	3–6 months (differences among the Länder)
Average time between asylum application and enrollment in education	6 months
Separate immersion classes	Yes
Legal right to equal treatment in education for refugee children	Not for all, dependent on legal status and differences between Länder
Administrative barriers	Yes
Placement in the compulsory school system	After immersion classes and on the basis of prior assessments (in Hamburg by School Information Center and teachers)
Language support	Yes



# Greece

## Overall

- The general administrative challenges throughout the Greek asylum procedure and the inadequate reception conditions create an **overall unfavourable environment for the continuity of newcomer children's education**.
- While the legal and policy frame might seem to be adequate, it does **not establish equal rights with Greek children for asylum seeker pupils**. Hence, **asylum seeker children** still face **significant barriers to enroll in mainstream education** and to attend regular classes, especially if they are stranded in one of the islands. International organisations and civil society try to fill this gap with **non-formal educational activities**.
- The **provision of targeted language support** is still at an initial stage and it is **not yet available for the majority** of children seeking and benefiting from international protection due to a lack of funding.
- **Only estimates** are available **about the school enrolment rate** of newcomer children, and these usually include both asylum seeker and refugee children. Therefore, it is **very difficult to monitor the impact of the new legal and policy provisions**.

## Asylum seeking and refugee children and the Greek school system in general

According to the Greek constitution all children have the right to education, regardless of their legal status. **Children benefiting from international protection** have the **same right to education** as other Greek children, while asylum seeker children can enrol in education **under similar conditions** :

- Public **kindergartens** are free and non-compulsory for children between 4 and 6 years, but places are typically very limited.
- **Compulsory schooling** starts at the **age of 6** with “dimotiko sholio”, primary school. Primary education lasts for 6 years and is followed by three years of “gymnasio”, lower secondary general education. Compulsory education **ceases** at this level at the **age of 15**.

- **Upper secondary education** is available, but not obligatory in general or vocational “lykeion”.

## Refugee children in compulsory school age - In law and policy

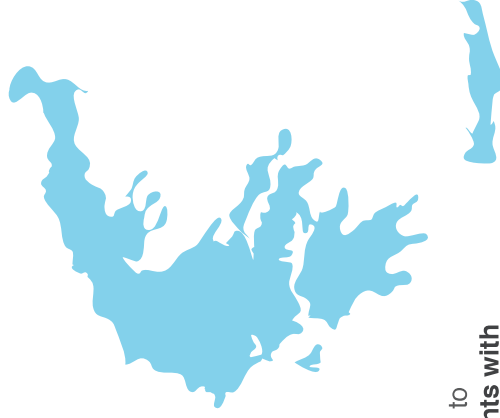
Asylum seeker children need to be involved in some form of education **within three months** of their arrival, which can be organised outside of the formal school curriculum.

As a main rule, all newcomers, both seeking and benefiting from international protection, can **directly enrol** their children **in mainstream classes** corresponding to their children's age and academic level. Greek educational policy and school instructions clearly provide for an exception for asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection from the general documentation requirements for enrolment and asylum seeker and refugee children can be registered at schools with incomplete documentation as well.

**Children with a reasonably good level of Greek** attend regular classes and should receive **extra after-school educational support** from specialised teachers to catch up with the curriculum and close the language gap. They can benefit from this support for **maximum three years**. **Children with no or very little Greek** attend some subjects in regular classes and should receive an **intensive after-school tuition** improving their Greek knowledge. The maximum length of these classes is **one year**.

School areas around reception centres, temporary sites and specific urban areas were designated as “**educational priority zones**” and receive **increasing funding** from the Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs.

This **legal and policy framework is rather new** and its implementation has started only in the 2016/2017 school year. Previously, beneficiaries of international protection should have in principle registered with mainstream schools and could receive for one year additional Greek language support in after-school reception classes. Asylum seeker children should have enrolled in mainstream schools if places allowed but could not have access to the additional preparatory language classes (Center for the Study of Democracy, 2012, p. 238).





## Refugee children in compulsory school age - In practice

**19.720 children applied for asylum** in 2016 in Greece (Eurostat, 2017a), but only partial estimates are available on their school enrolment rate. According to the estimates of the Ministry of Education in October 2017, **around 2500 asylum seeker and refugee children attended regular classes** in Greek schools (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2017, p. 4). UNICEF's estimated in June 2017 that there were around 12.000 6 to 17 years old refugee and migrant children overall, and 3500 of them were in formal education in the school year 2016/2017. On average they **missed 2.5 years of schooling** (UNICEF, 2017). Most of the children attend **only non-formal education** provided by international organisations and civil society actors, who have been trying to step in to somehow cover for the absence of places in formal education (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2017, p. 4). According to a survey carried out in May 2016 in 40 Greek accommodation centres, there were 105 types of educational activities organised by 76 different actors (Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs, 2016, p. 18). Hence **significant amount of the additional funds** seems to have been spent **on non-formal educational activities** in camps. Additional resources for former education from the Greek state are not following the increase in children's educational needs and are allocated at a much slower pace (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2017, p. 17).

**Access to education** seems to be still **largely dependent on the geographical circumstances** (Greek Council for Refugees, 2017, p. 110), sometimes even overriding the rights associated with a specific protection status. Reception camps on the islands and in the mainland should in principle cater for asylum seekers, while recognised refugees are supposed to be moved to apartments in the mainland, but due to the lack of places, many beneficiaries are stranded in camps. Asylum seekers applying for relocation also typically remain in camps for the whole period of the procedure, which usually takes several months. The lengthy procedures, long insecurity about the status and overcrowded reception facilities causes create an **overall unfavourable environment for children's continuity of education** and school integration.

Until recently, it was a wide-spread illegal school practice to deny school enrolment for refugee children based on the lack of documents. **School refusals seems to be far less frequent** currently as the Ministry of Education

took a series of actions to clarify with school principals the documentation requirements and to facilitate the administrative process for asylum seekers and refugees.

**Unaccompanied minors** face a particular challenge, as they firstly need to go through a **lengthy procedure to be assigned a guardian, who can then register them with a school** (Human Rights Watch, 2017). In practice, the Ministry of Education encourages schools to register unaccompanied minors above the compulsory school age even before they are officially assigned a guardian. Given the overall excessive delays in the asylum, family reunification and relocation procedures, they are likely to travel to other EU countries and simply disappear from the Greek asylum system.

The implementation of the new legal and policy framework for education focuses in practice primarily on refugee children in compulsory school age on the mainland living in urban areas outside of camps. The **“educational priority zones” are not yet in place on the islands** and asylum seeker and sometimes even recognised refugee children **still cannot enrol in regular classes** or formal after-school reception classes. Given the fact that the registration procedure itself can take several months, asylum seeker children are at a significant risk of being out of formal education for extensive periods (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2017, p. 8). Children living **in camps in the mainland** can enrol in public schools in the neighbourhood, but the **lack of transportation** can be a significant barrier to physically reach regular schools. In some places EU, IOM and UNICEF funds are used to organise a daily school bus service (International Organisation for Migration, 2017). **Classes for Greek and for asylum seeker and refugee children are in practice typically separated**, with Greek children attending school in the morning and others in the afternoon. Children living **outside of camps in the mainland** can enrol in the nearest designated public school within the educational priority zone programme and when available, they usually attend both morning and afternoon classes. However, in practice the implementation of the language support programme seems to be still severely underfunded, and the **special reception classes started only in a small fraction of regular mainstream schools**. Children are often quickly demotivated as they are unable to keep up with the curriculum without special language and educational support. Many of the families seem to decide to move forward from Greece in the absence of favourable integration perspectives, including barriers to their children's education, which in turn might discourage children to follow the Greek educational curriculum.

Number of asylum applications from children in 2016	19,720
School system	Preschool: 2.5-4 years Compulsory school: 5-16 years Above the compulsory school age :
Responsible authorities	National level: Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs
Number of refugee children enrolled in education	No publicly available data
Legal deadline for enrolling asylum seeker children in education	3 months, but possibility to offer them only non-formal education
Average time between asylum application and enrollment in education	Education typically organised separately from regular schools throughout the asylum procedure.
Separate immersion classes	Yes, but not offered in a structural manner.
Legal right to equal treatment in education for refugee children	Yes
Administrative barriers	Decreasing
Placement in the compulsory school system	Based on age and prior academic knowledge, decision by the school board.
Language support	Ad hoc





# Hungary

## Overall

- There are no specific structural administrative issues for asylum seeker and refugee children to enroll in schools, but access to education can **significantly be delayed** when children remain **in transit zones** for the whole period of the asylum procedure, where education is not provided at all.
- The legal framework is vague and **does not foresee any specific targeted language tuition and catch up classes** for newcomers. Asylum seeker and refugee children are not systematically supported to integrate in Hungarian schools and they usually attend **segregated schools and classes**.
- While publicly available data and statistics are largely lacking regarding the educational situation of children seeking and benefitting from asylum, the fact that the general per capita education budget has been decreasing suggests that **schools will continue to remain unequipped to invest** in the educational integration of newcomer children.



## Refugee children in compulsory school age - In law and policy

Asylum seeker children in compulsory school age need to be enrolled in formal education **within 3 months** of lodging their application.

The **legal framework** is generally **vague about the placement and support** of foreign children in the Hungarian education system. In principle parents can choose freely the educational institution for their children, but there are some designated schools which are more prepared to welcome newcomer students. For example, there are designated schools for asylum seeker children nearby the reception facilities and there are a **few** special mainstream schools in some bigger cities with systematically organised **immersion classes** for migrant children in general. Other schools can decide themselves about the availability and format of additional language and academic tuition. There is no legal limit on the length of the eventual immersion classes and **nation-wide guidelines lack** about the assessment of children's prior education and about the principles to transfer them to mainstream schools.

**Structural normative funding is not available** for schools since 2013. Additional funding for targeted measures is only available through project-based calls.

## Refugee children in compulsory school age - In practice

While the number of asylum applications have significantly increased in the past years in Hungary, the number of beneficiaries of international protection remained relatively low. Many asylum seekers simply continued their journey towards other EU countries with better perspectives for integration. By the end of 2016, there were **1833 refugees** and **1540 beneficiaries of subsidiary protection** holding valid ID cards, but there is **no data about the exact number of minors benefiting from international protection**. While the overall national budget for education has been on the rise, **the per capita funds decreased**, which suggests that schools are in general in a more difficult financial situation. In the absence of any normative funding for newcomers, they do not seem to be given the extra funds that the integration of asylum seeker and refugee children would require.

## Asylum seeker and refugee children and the Hungarian school system in general

- Children seeking or benefitting from international protection have **legally the same access** to education as Hungarian children:
- The **compulsory school age starts already at the age of 3** with **kindergarten**.
  - **Primary education** typically lasts for **8 years**, although pupils can transfer after 4 or 6 years to some of the specific high academic track secondary educational institutions preparing for university.
  - Pupils can continue their studies in one of the three types of **secondary educational institutions** for four years. However, the **compulsory education ceases at the age of 16**. Education is not an entitlement above this age.

The majority of asylum seeker children in reception facilities are **enrolled without any major structural administrative barriers** in formal education within 30 days, but some illegal practices and unjustified delays can still occur (Hungarian Helsinki Committee, 2017, p. 63). However, access to education **can significantly be delayed** due to the fact that asylum seekers typically enter the country through **transit zones** at the Southern border of Hungary, where there is no access to any type of formal or non-formal education (Ibid., p. 36). In principle, asylum seekers should be swiftly further moved to one of the asylum reception facilities throughout the country, but in practice many families and unaccompanied children are stranded here for the entire time of the asylum procedure, sometimes even for months.

Children enrolled in formal education **cannot count on any systematic state help** to learn Hungarian and catch up with their peers. They are **usually segregated within the mainstream education system**, either going to a designated school without or with only few Hungarian children or they attend completely separate immersion classes to learn the language, sometimes only for 2 hours a day/ Once their Hungarian knowledge is deemed to be sufficient, they are typically **transferred to regular classes below their age, prior knowledge and educational potential**. Any type of targeted language and educational support is dependent on the decision of the relevant local school board, who typically lack the experience, capacity, equipment and human resources to implement extra tuition. Mainstream educational services are generally inadequate and insufficient, as they are almost inclusively available in Hungarian. **Civil society** is very active in this field to **fill in the gap** and offer language tuition for newcomer children and methodological support for interested schools.

Children are quickly demotivated and school **absenteeism** is an issue, particularly for asylum seeker children whose families consider moving on from Hungary at the first possible opportunity.

Number of asylum applications from children in 2016	8.550
School system	Compulsory school: 3–16 years Above the compulsory school age: no entitlement to education
Responsible authorities	National level: Ministry of Human Resources, Klebelsberg Centre for the Management of Educational Institutions
Number of refugee children enrolled in education	No publicly available data
Legal deadline for enrolling asylum seeker children in education	3 months
Average time between asylum application and enrolment in education	30 days (children in reception centres) Up to several months (children stranded in transit zones)
Separate immersion classes	Ad hoc
Legal right to equal treatment in education for refugee children	Yes
Administrative barriers	No
Placement in the compulsory school system	No guidelines. Dependent on the decision of the school board.
Language support	Ad hoc





# Italy

## Overall

- Asylum seeker children are usually **rapidly enrolled in formal education**. However, **unaccompanied minors typically face more administrative hurdles** and they risk waiting for a longer time before they can continue their education.
- Schools have the full autonomy to decide on the form and length of the eventual extra language and academic tuition to support newcomer children catching up with their missing school period. This could allow for flexible and individualised measures, but in practice **schools still often lack trained staff and funds** to give the necessary catch-up support for refugee children.
- Education statistics are only available on the situation of foreign children in the Italian education system, but there is **no possibility to monitor the educational integration and attainment of children beneficiaries of international protection**.

## Asylum seeking and refugee children and the Italian school system in general

- All children, regardless of their legal status, have the **same right to education** than their Italian peers, for all levels of education :
- Parents can enrol their children between the ages of 3-6 in the nearby public state run **kindergartens** for free, but places are usually very limited.
  - School is **compulsory** for children between the **ages of 6-16**. Children attend 5 years of elementary schools, followed by 3 years of lower secondary education in the middle schools, after which pupils need to take an exam. Pupils can continue their studies for five years in a high school,

technical institute or professional institute or they can enrol for three years in a regional vocational training programme. Only the first two years of upper secondary education is still obligatory in all of these cases.

- **Above the compulsory school age**, children have a “right-duty” to education and professional training, and have to obtain a diploma or a professional qualification (Grigt, 2017, p. 13). There is a special system of Provincial centres for adult education and training (CPIA) targeting specifically foreign citizens above the age of 16, typically unaccompanied minors, who do not yet have a middle school certificate and who need to prepare for passing this specific exam.

## Refugee children in compulsory school age - In law and policy

Asylum seeker children in compulsory school age need to be **enrolled as soon as possible** and schools have the duty to accept children from their area.

Newcomer children are **directly enrolled in mainstream education** and there are no separate immersion classes foreseen at national level. The Ministry of Education published guidelines on the integration of migrant pupils encouraging language, educational and psycho-social support, but schools have the autonomy to decide on the specifically available support services.

Asylum seeker and refugee children are **placed in the class that corresponds their age**, but exceptionally school boards can make a different decision and place them at a different class level. The Ministry of Education's guidelines clarify that in such case children should be enrolled in the class one below or above their age in order to limit the age difference among pupils, but this suggestion is not binding on schools.

The Ministry of Education offers annually special **funding** for schools located in areas with significantly increasing immigration. Other funding possibilities for schools for the educational integration of asylum seeker and refugee children are project-based and their availability changes each year (Ibid., p. 30).



## Refugee children in compulsory school age - In practice

Among the 122,960 asylum applications in Italy, there were **11,170 claims from children under 18 years** (Eurostat, 2017a). 6020 applications came from unaccompanied minors (Eurostat, 2017b). There is no further information about the exact number of asylum seeker children in compulsory school age, or the level of their school enrolment. Education statistics from the Ministry of Education are published on the situation of foreign students in the Italian education system (European Website on Integration, 2017), but it is impossible to draw conclusions specifically for the educational integration of children asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection, as the data includes for example EU-citizen children as well. The Ministry of Education dedicated extra funds for schools specifically for language and school integration support, but these do not seem to match the sudden increase in needs (Grigt, 2017, p. 30). Funding is also considered to be rather unpredictable (Ibid.).

**Enrolment** in formal education seems to be **rather swift and easy** for the majority of asylum seeker children, staying both in the first line temporary reception centres (CAS) and in the second line SPRAR system. There are typically **no administrative barriers**, schools usually enrol newly arrived children even before the asylum application registration is finalised. Most of the schools are aware of the legal framework and their duties, but there are still few **instances of refusing** asylum seeker and refugee children's **school registration** due to a lack of knowledge about their legal situation and about the national education integration guidelines. Enrolment might also be delayed when there is a lack of places, sufficient infrastructure or trained teachers. Newcomer children seem to typically **attend classes one grade below their age**. When these classes are full, children are sometimes assigned to even lower grades.

**Unaccompanied minors risk being out of education for a longer period** than other asylum seeker children arriving with their families. The procedure to appoint a legal guardian can last for several months (Ibid., p. 17), making it significantly more difficult for minors to enrol in school and find their way through the Italian education system. Many of them rather continue their journey on their own to other EU countries with family and friends.

The **availability of extra language and educational support measures vary from school** to school and there is no overview or coordination at national level about the implementation of the Ministry of Education's integration guidelines. There is typically some support in every school, but these are **implemented in a rather ad hoc manner**. The availability and length of this additional support is largely **dependent on project-based funding** and many schools do not have the capacity to continuously look for extra short-term funds to maintain these services and offer them on a regular basis (Ibid., p. 30).

Number of asylum applications from children in 2016	11.170
School system	Kindergarten: 3–6 years Compulsory school: 6–16 years Above the compulsory school age: "right-duty" to education and professional training
Responsible authorities	National level: Ministry of Education Large autonomy for schools to implement the national legal framework
Number of refugee children enrolled in education	No publicly available data
Legal deadline for enrolling asylum seeker children education	3 months
Average time between asylum application and enrolment in education	No data. Estimated to take place typically within a few days.
Separate immersion classes	No
Legal right to equal treatment in education for refugee children	Yes
Administrative barriers	No
Placement in the compulsory school system	Based on the children's age, decision by the school board.
Language support	Depends on the school board's decision.



# The Netherlands

## Overall

- While school enrolment might have temporarily been delayed at the peak of arrivals in 2015, children can currently **easily and rapidly register** at a school. Issues might arise rather with the **continuity of education throughout the asylum procedure**, as asylum seeker families change accommodations rather frequently.
- Asylum seeker and refugee children in compulsory school age receive extra language and educational support for an extended period. This seems to be **typically enough for pupils in primary school** to catch up with Dutch children, but **might slightly be short for secondary school pupils**, especially to allow them to orientate towards higher academic level school tracks.
- Detailed statistics are available about the educational situation of asylum seeker children, but children benefitting from international protection disappear within the larger category of third-country nationals and further **data is missing to adequately monitor and assess their educational career**.

## Asylum seeking and refugee children and the Dutch school system in general

All children seeking and benefitting from international protection have **legally the same right to education** as their Dutch peers :

- Children between 2,5 and 4 years can enrol in **preschool**, but this is not obligatory. Parents must pay a fee dependent on their income. The overall responsibility for organising preschool education lies with municipalities that also determine the details of the education programme and decide which children are eligible for preschool education. One of the important declared functions of preschool is ensuring that all children start primary school speaking at least some Dutch.
- Education is **compulsory** between the **ages of 5 and 16**. The first year of **primary education** at the age of 4 does not yet part of the compulsory education system. Primary school then lasts until the age of 12, when pupils pass a national test and its results largely determine their further recommended academic track. They can continue their studies in three types of **secondary educational institutions**, lasting for four, five or six years.

- Youngsters **between the ages of 16 and 18** fall under the “qualification obligation”. They must attend education if they do not have a final diploma from a secondary education institution or for basic vocational education.

## Refugee children in compulsory school age - In law and policy

Asylum seeker children in compulsory school age must be enrolled in education **within 3 months**.

Newly arrived children who do not sufficiently master the Dutch language are **firstly enrolled in an immersion class** to learn the language, before they can transfer to mainstream classes.

**In primary education**, there is no strict national criteria guiding the prior assessment and classification of pupils and these classes can be organised according to the age and/or Dutch knowledge of the newcomer pupils. On the first day of school children participate in an **intake interview**, which helps the school to get to know their education and family background better and to identify any eventual trauma-related issues.

There seems to be no maximum legal cap on the length of the immersion classes, but funding is available for **maximum two years** following the arrival to the Netherlands. The **principles for transferring children to regular classes can differ from school to school**, as nation-wide criteria lack in this field.

**In secondary education**, the so-called “**international transition classes**” have a more uniform approach towards the classification of students and classes are organised according to the different levels of expected education at the end of the immersion period. International transition classes are always part of mainstream secondary schools. Pupils go through a **longer intake period based** on which their individual objectives are elaborated. They have to achieve these specific academic and language objectives before transferring to mainstream classes. Extra funding is available for **maximum two years** after entering the country.

The **immersion classes**, both for primary and secondary education, are organised in a **systematic** manner and receive a **stable funding**. When children transfer to mainstream education within two years from their arrival, schools continue to receive extra funding, which could allow for continued targeted support for refugee children in this period.



## Refugee children in compulsory school age - In practice

According to the statistics of the Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers on 1 May 2017, **4264 asylum seeker children in compulsory school age received education**, while **671 were registered** to start classes and were transitioning from one school to the other. **677 asylum seeker children were missing from statistics**, but the Agency underlines that this does not mean that they were not receiving any education. The discrepancy is rather **due to data collection issues**, such as delayed school administration or differences in name spelling (Centraal Orgaan opvang Asielzoekers, 2017). Once recognised, children benefiting from international protection disappear within the larger category of third-country nationals in national education statistics and further data is missing to adequately monitor and assess their educational career. **Funding** for newcomer children's education has been **on the rise**, with the government recently extending the funding period from one year to two years. However, there is **no overview about the exact use** of this funding and it is not clear, how much money is spent for example on generally improving the school infrastructure and increasing the number of places and how much is dedicated for example specifically on language and catch-up tuition.

Asylum seeker children are typically **registered in school within 6 weeks after arrival**. The enrolment procedure currently seems to be fairly easy, without any major delays or significant administrative barriers. However, at the peak of arrival, before summer 2016, the Dutch system was also faced with a serious lack of accommodation for newly arrived families, which contributed to a larger delay in school enrolment.

Newcomers at **primary school** enrol in one of the **approximately 200 special classes** available nation-wide (Tudjman, van den Heerik, Le Pichon, & Baaui, 2016, p. 13). These classes are typically **organised separately within the mainstream school infrastructure** according to the age and Dutch language-level of the children, but classes in some schools are more mixed and children with different language knowledge attend the same class. Pupils are **transferred** to mainstream education when their language proficiency is deemed to be sufficient, **typically after 1 year**, to the class corresponding the best to their age. The availability of extra language and educational support will then vary from school to school.

**In secondary education, approximately 100 international transition classes** are established for newcomers (Ibid, p. 16). Most of these classes seem to be inserted within VMBO schools and only few of them form part

of a school community providing for a wider range of academic tracks. Hence, their placement might risk of rather orienting asylum seeking and refugee children to lower level **educational tracks**. Pupils typically spend a longer time in these classes and often **remain for 2 years** before they transfer to a mainstream class, as at this age they usually need to catch up on both wider language and academic gaps (Ibid.). While the first assessment and later on the transfer should primarily consider the previous educational level and future aspirations of the pupils, recommendations seem to be still overwhelmingly based on the level of Dutch knowledge, risking again to orientate newcomer children to lower level academic tracks (Onderwijsraad, 2017).

The **accommodation arrangements** under the Dutch asylum system have a particularly negative impact on the school career of newly arrived children. Families must often move homes throughout the asylum procedure and as the assessment procedures can vary from school to school, different schools might evaluate differently young children's prior knowledge, which **disrupts the continuity** in the educational integration process.

Number of asylum applications from children in 2016	6230
School system	Preschool: 2,5-4 years Compulsory school: 5-16 years Above the compulsory school age: qualification obligation
Responsible authorities	National level: Ministry of Education Large autonomy for municipalities and schools to implement the national framework
Number of refugee children enrolled in education	No publicly available data
Legal deadline for enrolling asylum seeker children education	3 months
Average time between asylum application and enrolment in education	6 weeks
Separate immersion classes	Yes
Legal right to equal treatment in education for refugee children	Yes
Administrative barriers	No
Placement in the compulsory school system	Based on intake interview or intake period according to the age, prior knowledge and the student's future aspirations.
Language support	Yes



# Sweden

## Overall

- Sweden has a **stricter time limit of for school enrolment** than the current EU standard and children are typically enrolled within this deadline in practice as well. However, at the peak of arrivals, exceptionally 3-6 months delays occurred.
- Sweden has a strong and favourable legal and policy environment **able to provide for the specific needs of refugee children**, which is implemented in practice as well. The major **challenge is to keep the good teacher-student ratio**, which enables the implementation of this string support system.
- **Data gaps on national level** makes it difficult to monitor and review national policy and budget specifically on refugee integration.

## Asylum seeking and refugee children and the Swedish school system in general

- All asylum seeker and refugee children have **the right to attend preschool, compulsory school and upper secondary school**:
- The Swedish education system offers places in preschools for children above the age of one and all children above the age of three have the right to attend **preschool for free** at least 525 hours per year.
  - **Compulsory school** age starts with the first grade at the age of 7 and ceases after ninth grade at the age of 15. However, the law **does not oblige asylum seeker children** to attend compulsory education.
  - After having completed the compulsory school years, children are **entitled to upper secondary school education**. Refugees have the right to enrol if they start their upper secondary school studies before the age of 20, while this age is limited to 18 years for asylum seekers.

## Refugee children in compulsory school age - In law and policy

Asylum seeker children need to be offered a place in a school **within one month** of their arrival by the responsible municipality.

Newcomer children are firstly enrolled in **separate immersion classes** focusing on their Swedish language tuition and they are **transferred to regular classes as soon as possible**. Pupils can continue to partially follow these immersion classes next to the regular ones for a maximum period of 2 years. **Improving** newly arrived asylum seeker and refugee children's **placement in the school system** has been at the forefront of legislative and policy interests in Sweden. A new law has recently entered into force making it **mandatory to carry out a thorough, individualised assessment** of each newly arrived students' prior knowledge within two months. The Swedish National Agency for Education have developed nation-wide criteria, guidelines and toolkits to support municipal schools in the mandatory assessment processes and the Swedish government made extra funds available for schools to be able to carry out this extra responsibility. Separate assessment guidelines have been developed by the Agency for groups of special concern, such as unaccompanied minors, victims of violence, torture, abuse or other forms of trauma, minors with disabilities and minors arriving above the compulsory school age.

Asylum seeker and refugee children receive extensive support to succeed in education and find the most suitable education fitting their profile and aspirations. They have the right to continued Swedish language support and **Swedish as Second Language** is a subject offered throughout the compulsory schooling and above. Municipalities also had the opportunity to apply for extra funds to organise additional language classes, outside of the standards curriculum, for maximum four semesters. Additionally, if newcomer children are unable to entirely follow the classes in Swedish, they have the right to **study guidance in their own language**.

The overall aim of the strong support measures is to offer each child the possibility to fulfil their potential and encourage them to have high educational aspirations.

The Swedish National Agency for Education allocates the budget to municipalities for the local organisation of education. Extra educational funds were recently made available for municipalities with a high number of newcomer children and the Swedish government also announced a new investment programme for 2017-2015 to support municipalities in including



newcomer children in their schools (Bunar, 2017, p. 5). Municipalities are then responsible to allocate these funds according to the local needs, including the integration of asylum seeker and refugee children.

## Refugee children in compulsory school age - In law and policy

Sweden saw a record number of asylum applications in 2015, when approximately 70.000 children requested asylum in the country. The number of applications then significantly decreased in 2016, when 10.000 minors applied for asylum. **22.059 asylum seekers were enrolled** in compulsory schooling in the school year 2016/2017 in Sweden, but there is no nation-wide data available about the number of refugees, who get lost in the overall statistics on foreigners in Swedish education. 156.711 children in primary and lower secondary education received study guidance in their own language and 108.087 took Swedish as Second Language, but this data includes all foreign pupils. Information lacks about **the overall size of the budget specifically tagged and/or used for educational support** for refugees within the budget available for municipalities for refugee integration. State budget for integration has generally been on the rise and through the government's new initiative municipalities will be allocated 2.138 million SEK for the 2017-2025 to improve the educational infrastructure for newcomers. However, in the absence of detailed data on the specific use of these funds it is yet unclear how these efforts are really matching the size of the challenge.

Newly arrived asylum-seeking children seem to be **enrolled in the education system fairly quickly and easily**. National statistics are not available on the average time between the asylum application and school enrollment, but children are typically registered within the 1-month legal time limit. Still,

enrolment depends heavily on the municipal capacity and some municipalities reported longer enrolment periods and delays after the increase in the number of arrivals in 2015 and 2016.

Newly arrived children are **quickly transferred** from separate immersion classes **to regular classes**, typically **within a few months**. They are supported with native language study guidance and Swedish as Second Language courses in practice as well. While it would be too early to assess the education attainment of the children arriving after 2014, previous research found that many refugee children could reach higher education (Crul, 2017, p. 8).

The challenge for Sweden is to uphold this strong support system and **increase the number of teachers** matching the growing number of newcomer children. Even though the teacher-students ratio is currently satisfactory, there is in general a lack of teachers in the country and in particular, a lack of second-language teachers, which might risk the stable continuity of support measures in the future.

Number of asylum applications from children in 2016	10.875
School system	Preschool: From 1 year Compulsory school: 7-15 years Above the compulsory school age: attending upper secondary school is an entitlement
Responsible authorities	National level: Swedish National Agency for Education Main responsibility for education lies at municipality level
Number of refugee children enrolled in education	No publicly available data
Legal deadline for enrolling asylum seeker children education	1 month
Average time between asylum application and enrolment in education	No publicly available data. Typically within legal deadline.
Separate immersion classes	Yes
Legal right to equal treatment in education for refugee children	Yes
Administrative barriers	No
Placement in the compulsory school system	Based on a mandatory individualised assessment.
Language support	Yes





# Turkey

## Overall

- As a new country of asylum, Turkey faces an **enormous challenge to substantially improve its legislation, policy and practices on refugee education**. Turkey does not yet offer an explicit legal right to equal treatment in education for children seeking or benefitting from international protection and children have to face major legal, administrative and practical barriers to continue their studies in formal education.
- Newcomer children are **not supported** in a systematic manner to **learn the language and catch up** with the Turkish curriculum. **NGOs and international organisations** are trying to **fill these gaps** in educational support, especially in terms of Turkish language education.
- Many of the processes and support are organised in an **informal and ad hoc manner**, making it difficult to have an overview about the educational situation of newly arrived children.

## Asylum seeking and refugee children and the Turkish school system in general

Children seeking or benefitting from one of the various protection statuses in Turkey have the right to education, but Turkish legislation does **not** offer an **explicit legal right to equal treatment in education**:

- **Pre-school** is optional for children between 3-5 years. Places are typically scarce and concentrated in larger towns and cities. Pre-school activities are organised in an ad-hoc manner in (temporary) accommodation centres, where only a small fraction of applicants and beneficiaries are accommodated, and they are provided typically by NGOs.

- **Compulsory school age** starts with the first grade at 6 years and ceases at the age of 18 years after the twelfth grade. 4 years of primary school education is followed by 4 years of lower secondary school and 4 years of upper secondary school (general, vocational or technical high schools).

## Refugee children in compulsory school age - In law and policy

There seems to be **no legal deadline for school enrolment** of children seeking or benefitting from international protection in Turkey.

In principle, children in compulsory school age from all protection groups must **immediately be placed in the mainstream Turkish public education system**. Children who have missing certificates about their prior education career need to go through a grade placement test organised by the Provincial or District Education Commission. The **parallel system of temporary education centres** for Syrian refugee children still exists, but according to Turkish legislation they cannot enrol new pupils from the 2015/2016 school year and they need to be gradually phased out. Children can transfer from temporary education centres to regular classes provided there is place and if they take an **equivalence test**. For high school students, these equivalence tests are organised only in certain provinces once a year.

Turkish law foresees that the Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM) **promote the “harmonisation” process** of beneficiaries of international protection, especially in the field of education, but there is no further precision about the character of these activities.

## Refugee children in compulsory school age - In practice

Data is missing about the enrolment rate of the **majority of protection groups** (applicants, refugees, conditional refugees, children under subsidiary protection), but studies suggest that most of them are **enrolled in compulsory schooling**. More information and various estimates are available on the situation of **Syrian children**. The number of school-aged children is estimated to be around 830.000-930.000, with an estimated **enrolment rate between 37-59%**. The estimated enrolment rates of children

living in temporary accommodation centres are significantly higher (89%), than those living outside of camps (30%), but these rates are largely fluctuating among provinces, districts and even neighbourhoods (Huddleston & Tanczos, 2017, p. 38). The **budget** for the Ministry of National Education has been on the rise and it seems that the significant majority of this budget was spent on **strengthening school infrastructure in general**, but these resources do not seem to match the needs, given that the majority of Syrian children are still out of regular Turkish schools. The “Facility for Refugees” could contribute to close this gap, but it seems that **substantial amounts were spent on policies maintaining inequalities**, such as the temporary education centres, and it is **not clear what percentage of the budget supports Turkey to establish targeted, public language and educational support** for newcomer children (Ibid., p. 52).

Little is known about the exact amount of **time between arrival and enrolment** in some form of education. Children living in camps typically participate at least in **non-formal education** or enrol in temporary education centres a few weeks or months after arrival, but they are usually unable to attend regular Turkish schools. The majority of children **outside of camps do not receive any type of formal or non-formal education** in a systematic manner and they are likely to just simply **drop out of school**. Among the minority of children in formal education in or outside of camps, most of the Syrians are still **following an outdated Syrian curriculum** in temporary education centres, keeping children in formal education but limiting their future perspectives in Turkey.

**Criteria for enrolment** in mainstream schools is often subject to the interpretation of the local school boards, and even when these requirements are fulfilled, enrolment is likely to remain dependant on the **discretionary decision** of the school principal. This flexibility in some very rare cases is favourable for newcomer children, but as places in mainstream schools are becoming extremely limited in some parts of Turkey, **school denials** seems to be more and more frequent.

If enrolled, **children’s placement** in regular classes usually happen **on an ad hoc basis**, based again on the school principal’s discretionary decision. Systematic **Turkish language and general educational support lacks** for children from all protection groups. Language classes and catch up education are **organised typically in an ad hoc and informal manner** at local level by international organisations, municipalities and NGOs. Due to the lack of targeted support, children are at **high risk of dropping out** from school, especially at the end of each four-year educational cycles.



Number of asylum applications from children in 2016	No publicly available data. Estimated number of Syrian children in school age : 830.000–930.000
School system	Preschool: 3–5 years Compulsory school: 6–18 years Above the compulsory school age: Limited access to higher education.
Responsible authorities	National level : Turkish Ministry of National Education Implementation through the Provincial Education Commissions
Number of refugee children enrolled in education	No publicly available data. Estimates between 37–59% enrolment rate.
Legal deadline for enrolling asylum seeker children education	No
Average time between asylum application and enrolment in education	Majority out of formal education.
Separate immersion classes	No Parallel system of temporary education centres for Syrians
Legal right to equal treatment in education for refugee children	No
Administrative barriers	Yes
Placement in the compulsory school system	Placements tests, but in practice often discretionary decision by school
Language support	No



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