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The increasing number of applicant children prompted more focus on their education, for example in Bulgaria and Romania. Overall 85 applicant children started the school year in Bulgaria, including – for the first time – seven first-graders. The State Agency for Refugees organises the daily commute to and from the school.757 Civil society organisations stepped in to support children with preparatory and catch-up classes.758

The Romanian Ministry of Education observed that in the 2020/2021 school year most of the newly-arrived applicant and refugee children were enrolled in preparatory classes and thus were not registered in official school records. Many of them did not have access to tablets or laptops to follow online schooling. Due to poor Romanian language skills, many of them could not acquire or demonstrate the same level of knowledge as their national peers, received poorer grades and were often included in lower class levels than their age would require.759 To address these challenges, the ministry launched the educational programme School after School for children in the most vulnerable situations (including applicants and refugees) to improve Romanian language and mathematics skills. In addition, AMIF-funded projects of the General Inspectorate for Immigration implemented by civil society organisations provided Romanian language courses and educational activities both online and in-person for applicant and beneficiary children in regional reception centres and regional integration centres. Support included the provision of tablets for educational purposes.

The Irish government continued with initiatives launched in 2020 to facilitate access to education for applicant students.760 Applicants who have permission to work and would like to enrol in Post-Leaving Certificate courses do not have to pay the international fee of EUR 3,600 for the 2021/2022 academic year.761 The government also extended the student support scheme for post-graduate courses762 and examined the possibility to extend English language support.763 Following the removal of some of the barriers in 2020 the Minister for Further and Higher Education reported that the number of applications and grant holders increased fivefold. 764

The Latvian Ministry of Education and Science prepared a report on applicant children's education, informing the Cabinet of Ministers of the challenges and potential solutions in light of the increased number of applicant children in the country.

The Centre for Peace Studies in Croatia analysed the education of applicant and beneficiary children in a thematic report and found some bottlenecks in the current legal framework. The report provides recommendations to overcome both legislative and practical barriers.765

The Hungarian Helsinki Committee reported on delays in accessing education due to the special conditions to submit an intent to apply for asylum *(see Section 4.1)*. It also observed positive examples of working together with local schools.766

In contrast, the Greek National Commission for Human Rights noted that access to formal education was non-existent at the facility of Vathy in Samos, as the recruitment process for teachers for the afternoon preparatory class programme was not launched. Approximately 1,500 children living in the hotspot were offered only non-formal education by different NGOs.767

The case cited earlier from the European Committee of Social Rights also concluded that children did not have access to education on the islands. A report from the Greek Refugee Council and Save the Children found that in open accommodation sites 60% of children were enrolled in some form of education, while only 14% attended in practice. In RICs, only 9% of school-aged children were enrolled and 0.3% attended classes.768 The Greek Ombudsperson and civil society organisations urged the government to ensure that applicant children are swiftly included and kept in mainstream education in local schools.769

Building on trends in recent years in several EU+ countries on rendering social orientation more extensive and swifter for applicants and recognised beneficiaries of international protection,770 social orientation classes became obligatory in Sweden for all applicants as soon as possible after an application for asylum has been registered. The induction is now more comprehensive and delivered to all applicants over the age of 15 through two half-day sessions, while the material is adapted and in written for accompanied children and studied with the case officer for unaccompanied children. The sessions are organised in different languages in first reception centres or through videoconference for persons who have their own accommodation. The Swedish Migration Agency offers childcare while parents follow the course.771

In Italy, the Ministry of the Interior issued a decree modifying previous tender specifications by increasing the per capita amount awarded to managing organisations of reception facilities in order to cover psychological support, social and local guidance, and language courses.772This is a result of legal changes from 2020, when the Reception Decree Law was amended to clearly list the types of services provided within first-line reception facilities.773 ASGI questioned whether the increase would be sufficient to cover the hours of services.774

Among the activities offered in reception centres, the Bulgarian State Agency for Refugees organised Bulgarian language classes for children and adults, well-being sessions for women775 *(see Section 5)*, sports activities, and online screenings in the frames of a film festival.776

Civil society organisations in Malta offered different activities, many of them focusing on providing counselling and outreach to women *(see Section 5)*. Aditus welcomed the significant

increase in the number of reception staff working in centres but observed that many residents still did not have enough information on accessing services.777

An AMIF-funded project in the Netherlands aimed to develop and implement a methodology which allows residents in reception centres to actively participate in civic and social life within and outside of reception centres. So-called #Join-counters were set up to engage and inform residents, offer them a wide range of participation activities and encourage them to participate. The project also covered language lessons in reception centres and training and information meetings for staff on location about the methodology and knowledge on facilitating and offering participation activities.778

Another project provided support for integration and for navigating in Dutch society. In addition, recognised beneficiaries of international protection gave online and physical workshops to applicants still waiting for a decision in a reception facility. The workshops were organised according to different target groups, for example people from a certain country of origin or persons with visual impairments. Short videos were developed on different subjects of the civic integration exam, explained by former beneficiaries of international protection who successfully passed the test. A few role models posted vlogs.779

Fedasil in Belgium launched an action plan for the integration of applicants. A Participation in Society Unit was created within the Future Orientation Department. A general guidance trajectory is planned to be elaborated, focusing on participation in society. In addition, a pilot project will be launched on individual coaching.

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