



Podcasts for teachers working in multicultural classrooms

Transcripts of podcasts from Bulgaria, prepared by Association of European Development.

Podcast 1

Title: Introduction to the Topic of Migration and Education in Bulgaria

Description: This podcast introduces the "Welcome at School" project, co-funded by the European Union's Erasmus+ programme, which is being implemented in Bulgaria, Greece, Poland, Ukraine, and the Czech Republic. It presents statistics on Ukrainian children in the Bulgarian education system following the 2022 conflict, noting that only a small percentage are enrolled in schools. The podcast distinguishes between voluntary migration, which is planned and motivated by the search for better opportunities, and forced migration, which is urgent, unplanned, and often the result of wars, persecution, or natural disasters.

Podcast 2

Title: Main Challenges for Children with Migrant Experience in Bulgaria

Description: The second episode examines the main barriers that children with a migrant background face in Bulgaria. These include the language barrier, which hinders communication and integration in school; cultural differences in traditions and views on discipline; and the psychological stress of adaptation and feelings of isolation. Specific challenges for Bulgaria are also highlighted, such as the lack of sufficiently trained teachers, limited access to language courses, and bureaucratic obstacles to school enrolment.

Podcast 3



Title: Flexible Assessment Methods for Students with Migrant Experience - A Conversation with Maria Nikolova

Description: This episode features Maria Nikolova, a Bulgarian language and literature teacher with 15 years of experience. She discusses the challenges of assessing foreign students, such as cultural differences in educational approaches (e.g., emphasis on memorization versus critical thinking), the language barrier, and adaptation problems. The use of portfolios with projects and drawings, as well as an individual approach with adapted exam materials like oral exams or the use of a dictionary, are proposed as effective alternative assessment methods.

Podcast 4

Title: Facing External Exams - Challenges and Solutions for Foreign Students

Description: The guest is Mrs. Maria Petrova, a Bulgarian language and literature teacher with over 15 years of experience. The discussion focuses on the difficulties foreign students encounter in external exams, such as the 8th-grade exam and the Matura (final high school exam). The main challenges are the academic language used in the exam materials and the requirement for analytical thinking. While measures like extended time and the use of dictionaries exist, they are often insufficient. Alternatives such as portfolio-based assessment and oral exams are suggested, along with better teacher training and parental support.

Podcast 5

Title: Building Relationships Between Children from Different Cultures

Description: This episode explores the challenges and opportunities in building friendships between children from different cultures and with migrant experiences. The main barriers identified are language, cultural differences, and the emotional burden of past traumas. Joint activities such as sports, art workshops, picnics, and trips are highlighted as successful practices for fostering friendships, along with intercultural exchange programs. The important role of teachers, parents, and intercultural assistants in this process is emphasized.



Podcast 6

Title: Bridges Between Cultures in Adolescence

Description: The podcast focuses on teenagers and the challenges they face in building relationships in a multicultural environment. Adolescence is a period of identity formation, and cultural and linguistic barriers can lead to insecurity and feelings of isolation. The need for facilitators like teachers and parents to reduce these barriers through educational programs is stressed. Joint sports activities, cultural workshops, and trips are offered as practical solutions to help young people discover common ground.

Podcast 7

Title: Language as a Key to Social and Educational Integration

Description: This episode, featuring an intercultural assistant, discusses language as a fundamental tool for integration. Mastering the local language is crucial not only for communication but also for building social contacts, understanding the local culture, and creating a sense of belonging. Methods for motivation, such as interactive activities, games, and the use of applications, are discussed. The importance of maintaining a balance between the new language and the native language is highlighted, so the child can enrich their identity without losing their roots.

Podcast 8

Title: Language, Culture, and Civic Engagement for Youth with Migrant Experience

Description: A guest in this episode shares their long-term experience with the challenges faced by foreign students, who often feel isolated due to linguistic and cultural barriers. Language is described as a "bridge between cultures" that enables friendship-building and participation in school life. Conversations with native



speakers and the use of technology like the Duolingo and Babbel apps are cited as effective learning methods. Participation in sports clubs and civic initiatives is also identified as key to building self-confidence and a sense of belonging to the community.

Podcast 9

Title: The Advantages of Diversity in Multicultural Schools

Description: This episode discusses how cultural and linguistic diversity in schools can be an opportunity, not just a challenge. Interacting with children from different cultures develops skills like cooperation and tolerance and prepares them for a globalized world. The organization of "culture days," language clubs, and art projects like drawing exhibitions are shared as successful initiatives for promoting diversity. Creating a safe environment where students feel free to share is emphasized as crucial for the success of these initiatives.

Podcast 10

Title: Sharing Cultures and Building Identity in a Multicultural Environment

Description: The final episode continues the theme of the multicultural environment as an advantage that prepares students for the global job market and develops social skills like empathy. With a teacher and intercultural assistant named Elena, the discussion explores how sharing culture (traditions, food, stories) helps young people strengthen their identity and feel connected to their new society. For cultural events to succeed, collaboration with students and their families is necessary to present their culture authentically. The role of mentors and school support structures is also key to overcoming fears and building self-confidence in children with migrant experience.

1. Introduction to the Topic of Migration and Education in Bulgaria

Hello and welcome to the first episode of our podcast dedicated to the education and integration of children with migrant experience. Our podcast is part of the "Welcome



at School" project, co-funded by the European Union under the Erasmus+ programme. This project is being implemented in several European countries: Bulgaria, Greece, Poland, Ukraine, and the Czech Republic, and it aims to facilitate the integration of migrant children into the educational system through various methods, platforms, and resources. In the upcoming episodes, we will meet with education experts experienced in working with children from different migration backgrounds.

We have many interesting conversations ahead, and we hope to support the work of educators and other specialists in schools. In 10 episodes, we will provide an introduction to the topic, because it is indeed very important to have a good foundation before we give experts the opportunity to join our podcast and share their positive experiences and good practices from the inclusion of this group of children.

And now, let's start with some statistics. In the first 12 months of the conflict, around 25,000 Ukrainian children entered Bulgaria. As of December 2022, only 3% of Ukrainian children of school age were actually enrolled and attending Bulgarian schools. This amounts to nearly 2,250 children from Ukraine. By February 2024, the number of these children from Ukraine in Bulgaria was approximately 21,000, which is about 40% of the total 53,300 Ukrainian citizens residing in our country at that time.

Only 3,800 of these 21,320 children are enrolled in Bulgarian schools. This represents only about 20% of their total number. A large portion of Ukrainian children in Bulgaria are refugees, forced to leave their homeland due to the military conflict there. Many of them continue their education online through the Ukrainian educational system, which complicates their integration into Bulgarian schools. The main group of students with migrant experience in Bulgaria after 2022 are from Ukraine. Before this period, before the conflict itself, a significant number of students with a migrant background came from other countries outside Europe, such as Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq. After the start of the war in Ukraine, a sharp increase in the number of Ukrainian refugees in Bulgaria was observed, as well as in other European countries, of course.

Despite the efforts of Bulgarian institutions, the percentage of Ukrainian children integrated into the local education system remains low. The reasons for this are varied and include the language barrier that children face, the differences between the educational systems in Bulgaria and Ukraine, and the desire of some families for their



children to continue their education online through the Ukrainian system, with the hope of a quicker return to their hometowns. These data highlight the need for additional efforts from our country and our educational system to support the inclusion of Ukrainian children in Bulgarian education, as well as to overcome the existing barriers so they can participate as fully as possible in the educational process here in Bulgaria.

At this stage, it is really important to distinguish between the types of migration—between voluntary migration and forced migration. This difference is very significant and largely determines the reasons why people, families, and children leave their country and the degree to which they have a choice in undertaking this process.

Voluntary migration is a process where people themselves make the decision and choose to move to another country or region for better economic, educational, or personal opportunities. Voluntary migration usually involves a process of advance planning and is accompanied by prior preparation for the journey, accommodation, work, and education, including finding a place and education for the children in advance. It is also characteristic of voluntary migration that the people, the migrants who voluntarily leave their homes, can always return when they wish. The reasons for voluntary migration are varied, often related to seeking a better way of life, better quality of life, better healthcare services, and more security. Better economic opportunities and the search for higher pay, higher incomes, opportunities for professional realization, and better job prospects are also common reasons. Access to higher quality education is also a factor. Very often, a very popular reason for voluntary migration is family reunification, joining family members who left the country some time ago and have settled elsewhere. It is often these family members who create the preconditions for such migration of other members of their family. An example of voluntary migration, in general, are people who move from Bulgaria to Germany, Austria, sometimes England, and other European countries to work and live better.

On the other hand, forced migration happens not by choice, but due to external circumstances that threaten people's lives, security, or sometimes their basic human rights. It is very specific, extremely specific to forced migration, that people leave their country urgently and often without preparation. They leave without knowing where they will be accommodated, often how they will travel there, and when they arrive, they do not know if they will be able to find a job or a safe place to shelter. They do not



know if their children will have the opportunity to study, if there will be a school for them. Simply put, leaving one's home happens urgently. Very often, they even travel without documents. A specific feature of forced migration is that people are forced to stay abroad for a long time because they simply cannot physically return to their homes due to conflicts. Indeed, such military conflicts and wars are one of the main reasons people leave their homeland and their native places. Other reasons can be persecution for political, ethnic, religious, or other reasons. Natural disasters like earthquakes and floods are also a common reason for forced migration, as are economic crises and conditions of extreme poverty that make survival impossible for a person and their family. An example of such forced migration are the people who left Ukraine after the beginning of 2022, seeking refuge in other countries, including Bulgaria. Forced migration is often associated with refugee status, while voluntary migrants do not need international protection.

And that's where we stop for today, but we will continue in the next episode, where we will discuss the main challenges facing children with migrant experience, and we will also focus on the specific challenges they face in the current conditions in Bulgaria. Stay with us, and until next time. End.

2. Main Challenges for Children with Migrant Experience in Bulgaria

Hello again in the second episode of our podcast, dedicated to the education and inclusion of children with migrant experience. We are producing this as part of the "Welcome at School" project, co-funded by the European Union under the Erasmus+ programme. Today, we continue the conversation on the topic of the main challenges for children with a migrant background. The main focus of our project, "Welcome at School," is the education of this group of children, and therefore, we approach this with great hope that the overview we are providing today and within this podcast series will reach more specialists in the educational sphere. This will enable them to be even more effective and support their students even more successfully.

Here are some of the main challenges that children with migrant experience face. One of them, perhaps the most fundamental, is the language barrier. On one hand, it can



hinder the daily communication and activities of the child and family, but on the other hand, it also becomes a very serious obstacle to their quality integration and inclusion in the field of education. Another serious obstacle—we will go into more detail on each of them later, but for now, we will list them at the beginning—are the cultural differences between the child's national culture and the culture in the new country where they are starting their new life.

Another serious obstacle is the stress of adapting to the new way of life and the new environment. There are also barriers related to purely psychological risk—not just psychological, but the risk of rejection.

And now let's focus on the first listed barrier: the language barrier, which hinders daily communication. It is a fact that many children arrive in Bulgaria without speaking Bulgarian. Even though we are from the same language group as the children from Ukraine, we speak two different languages, and this can be a serious obstacle and make communication with peers, teachers, and administrative staff extremely difficult, both for the child and for their parents. The lack of language skills also complicates the building of friendships and social contacts, greatly narrowing the child's social circle and limiting them to only children who speak their native language, which can prevent them from truly immersing themselves in the atmosphere of the new country. As a result, the child may experience anxiety and a sense of isolation because they may not understand 100% of what is happening around them.

The school system in Bulgaria requires proficiency in the Bulgarian language because education here is conducted in Bulgarian. Therefore, not mastering Bulgarian is a very serious obstacle to successful inclusion in school. The educational materials and texts are in Bulgarian, which makes mastering the curriculum very difficult. As we mentioned in the previous episode of our podcast, many students, especially from Ukraine, continue to study online through their home country's educational system, which further complicates their adaptation to the Bulgarian curriculum.

Regarding cultural differences, we must say that different traditions, customs, and ways of life can indeed cause a very serious culture shock. Differences in teaching methods and understandings of discipline can lead to difficulties in adapting to the Bulgarian school environment. Also, other seemingly minor details like eating habits or religious beliefs, or ways of celebrating, can also lead to a feeling of being different



and disconnected from the surrounding environment.

The change of environment, the new school, new people—these are many factors that cause and can cause strong stress and insecurity. Children may feel nostalgic for their homeland, for the friends and family they left behind. The lack of familiar faces and a supportive social environment can lead to feelings of intense isolation, anxiety, and other conditions that emotionally burden the young person. Furthermore, some local students may perceive migrant children as different and avoid contact with them. Stereotypes and prejudices may arise, leading to discrimination and bullying. The feeling of being an outsider can lower a child's self-esteem and negatively affect their academic achievements.

There are also some challenges that we consider to be very specific to the current situation in Bulgaria. This is, overall, the lack of sufficiently prepared teachers for working with students with migrant experience. It is a fact that in recent years, the state has made many efforts in this direction, and not only the state but also the European Union, and one of these efforts is the current project. These efforts aimed to properly prepare teachers and other key participants in the educational system to be adequate and to most effectively include these children, who are considered different even though they are not, into the educational system. But unfortunately, not all teachers have the necessary skills, qualifications, and experience to handle the cultural and linguistic diversity in the classroom.

Another specific challenge in the Bulgarian system is the limited access to additional language courses for the children, the students, as well as for their families. And although some schools offer additional Bulgarian language lessons, this is not a standard, and unfortunately, it is not always sufficient. Other common problems here are issues with documents and school enrolment and, unfortunately, various bureaucratic obstacles that can delay children's access to education.

With this, we conclude today's episode of our podcast. We believe that with this and the previous episode, our listeners are now better prepared and demonstrate more understanding and empathy on this topic. Stay with us for the next episode, where we will turn to the experts and ask them to share their experiences and good practices. See you soon.



3. Flexible Assessment Methods for Students with Migrant Experience - A Conversation with Maria Nikolova

Hello, dear listeners. Welcome to our podcast, part of the international project "Welcome at School." This project aims to support the integration of children with migrant experience into the educational system through effective assessment and support methods. In Bulgaria, we work with various educational institutions and non-governmental organizations that are actively working to improve the school environment for all students. Today we will talk about the challenges and opportunities in assessing foreign children. Is it difficult? Is it different from working with Bulgarian students? What strategies work best? We will discuss these questions next. Today with us is Maria Nikolova, a long-time teacher of Bulgarian language and literature with 15 years of experience working with children with migrant experience. She works in a Sofia school with a large number of foreign students, including refugee children and economic migrants. What challenges do you identify when assessing foreign children?

Working with children with migrant experience is a real challenge, but also incredibly rewarding. Assessing these children requires much more flexibility and understanding compared to traditional methods. Cultural differences are one thing we encounter, namely the different cultural attitudes towards education. In many countries, the school system is based on completely different principles. For example, students from the Middle East often come from educational environments where the emphasis is primarily on memorizing information, not on critical thinking. For them, independent projects or text analyses can be completely unfamiliar. This makes assessment difficult within the Bulgarian educational system, where students are expected not only to reproduce information but also to analyze and apply it. The language barrier is one of the most serious obstacles we face. In the beginning, many of the children barely understand Bulgarian, which puts them at a disadvantage during tests. When a child cannot understand the questions in the text, they cannot show their real knowledge. I've had cases where students know the material but simply cannot formulate their answers in Bulgarian.

Problems with adaptation are another important social aspect.¹⁰⁹ Often, children



experience anxiety and a sense of isolation, especially if they are new to the country and do not know the language and culture.¹¹⁰ This directly affects their academic motivation.¹¹¹ I have seen students who are initially afraid to even answer a question in class because they are worried they will make a mistake.¹¹²

Okay, and what are the assessment methods that could be more effective and, of course, better?¹¹³

Alternative assessment methods.¹¹⁴ One of the best methods for assessing these children is the use of a portfolio.¹¹⁵ Instead of relying only on standard tests, we can track the student's progress through various forms—projects, drawings, oral stories, and even videos.¹¹⁶¹¹⁶¹¹⁶¹¹⁶ This allows the child to show their knowledge in a way that is more comfortable for them—an individual approach when working with foreign students.¹¹⁷ Adapting exam materials is of key importance.¹¹⁸ For example, I give a student who is still learning Bulgarian the opportunity to use a dictionary or to answer orally instead of in writing.¹¹⁹ This way, I can assess whether their difficulties are related to the subject or simply to the language.¹²⁰

Maria, I have a case study for you. Imagine a student from Afghanistan who does not know Bulgarian refuses to speak in class and does not want to participate in tests. How would you handle that?¹²¹

This is a very realistic situation.¹²² In such a case, I would start with individual meetings with the student to understand what his fears are.¹²³ Often, children feel insecure because they don't want to embarrass themselves in front of their classmates.¹²⁴ Personally, I would introduce informal communication methods like games and group tasks to encourage him to get involved in a more natural way.¹²⁵ Moreover, I would initially offer him the opportunity to answer questions in writing or through illustrations until he feels more confident.¹²⁶

Today, we discussed the main challenges in assessing children with migrant experience, such as language barriers, cultural differences, and social adaptation.¹²⁷ We talked about good practices like an individual approach and the use of



alternative assessment methods with Maria Nikolova.¹²⁸ We could encourage teachers to adapt their methods, parents to support their children, and schools to create a more inclusive environment.¹²⁹

More information can be found on the project's website, "Education Without Borders."

¹³⁰ Thank you to our guest, Maria Nikolova, for her valuable experience and useful advice.¹³¹ Look forward to our next episode, where we will discuss how teachers can prepare for work with multilingual students.¹³² We invite you to listen to our next episode.¹³³ Thank you.¹³⁴

4. Facing External Exams - Challenges and Solutions for Foreign Students

Hello, dear listeners. Welcome to the new episode of our podcast, dedicated to the challenges and opportunities in the education of students with migrant experience.

¹³⁵ This podcast is part of the "Welcome at School" project.¹³⁶ The project's goal is to support the integration of students with a migrant background into the educational systems of the host countries.¹³⁷ Today, we will discuss an extremely important topic: how foreign students cope with external exams and to what extent these exams reflect their real knowledge and abilities.¹³⁸ With us today is Mrs. Maria Petrova, a teacher of Bulgarian language and literature with over 15 years of experience working with foreign students and as an examiner for external exams.¹³⁹¹³⁹¹³⁹ Welcome.¹⁴⁰

Thank you. I am glad to participate in this important conversation.¹⁴¹

Mrs. Petrova, in your opinion, what are the main challenges that foreign students face in external exams?¹⁴²

The main challenge is the language barrier.¹⁴³ What happens in practice?¹⁴⁴ Even if the



student has advanced in mastering the Bulgarian language, the academic language in the exam materials is often significantly more complex.¹⁴⁵ Furthermore, there are cultural differences in the way questions are asked.¹⁴⁶ For example, in some countries, the emphasis is on memorizing and reproducing information, whereas in Bulgaria, exams require analytical thinking.¹⁴⁷ This places an additional burden on students with a migrant background.¹⁴⁸

What adjustments does the educational system make to facilitate these students, Mrs. Petrova?¹⁴⁹

There are certain measures, such as extended time for the exams and the option to use dictionaries, but they are not always sufficient.¹⁵⁰¹⁵⁰¹⁵⁰¹⁵⁰ Some countries allow adapted versions of the exams, but in our country, this is still in the development process.¹⁵¹ It would be useful to offer exams that assess the students' knowledge, not just their ability to understand the Bulgarian language.¹⁵²

In that case, do external exams reflect the students' real knowledge?¹⁵³

That is a debatable question.¹⁵⁴ For students who have difficulties with the language, the results do not always reflect their knowledge.¹⁵⁵ They might understand and have knowledge in a given subject, but if they cannot express their thoughts in Bulgarian, their results will be below expectations.¹⁵⁶ This leads to an incorrect assessment of their real abilities and potential.¹⁵⁷

Let's discuss the 8th-grade exam. For example, how do foreign students cope with it?¹⁵⁸

Extremely difficult.¹⁵⁹ This is a serious external exam, and preparing for it requires several years of language study.¹⁶⁰ Even with adaptations, the phrasing of the questions remains a challenge.¹⁶¹ For example, in the Bulgarian language test, there are reading comprehension texts that require not only knowledge of the language but also an understanding of the context and logic of the questions.¹⁶²



And in your opinion, are there alternative forms of assessment? ¹⁶³

Theoretically, an alternative system could be created, for example, a portfolio in which the student can present their various projects and skills. ¹⁶⁴ Another option is an oral exam with more clarification, but for now, the system relies mainly on the standard exam. ¹⁶⁵

Let's move on to the Matura (high school exit exam). ¹⁶⁶ In your opinion, is it possible for a foreign student to pass it successfully? ¹⁶⁷

Yes, of course, but it is extremely difficult. ¹⁶⁸ The Matura in Bulgarian language requires a high level of language proficiency. ¹⁶⁹ I have personally seen students who do well in mathematics, but the Bulgarian language exam puts them at a disadvantage. ¹⁷⁰

How do you think the system can become more fair? ¹⁷¹

In my opinion, a balance must be found between equality and fairness. ¹⁷² For example, assessing all students in the same way might be supplemented by additional adjustments for foreign students that take into account their level of language proficiency. ¹⁷³

And what other forms of support can be offered? ¹⁷⁴

One of the most important things is the availability of preparatory programs and courses for language adaptation. ¹⁷⁵ In my opinion, besides everything else, teachers should be trained on how to assess students whose native language is not Bulgarian. ¹⁷⁶ Parents also play a key role and should be informed about ways they could help. ¹⁷⁷ There must be mutuality. ¹⁷⁸

Today, we have looked at some of the biggest challenges facing foreign students in



external exams. ¹⁷⁹We saw that language barriers can distort students' real knowledge and that the educational system needs to adapt to be more fair. ¹⁸⁰Mrs. Petrova, what would you say to our listeners? ¹⁸¹

I would encourage teachers to be more flexible in their assessment, parents to support their children, and the students themselves not to give up, because with support and adaptation, great results can be achieved. ¹⁸²

Thank you for your participation. And to you, dear listeners, I remind you to subscribe to our podcast and visit our project's website to learn more. See you soon.

5. Building Relationships Between Children from Different Cultures

Welcome to podcast episode 123. In this episode, we will focus on the potential of peer relationships both in and out of school, examining the challenges faced by children from different cultures and immigration backgrounds. ¹⁸⁶This topic is extremely relevant, as migration is a global phenomenon, and relationships between children of different personal, cultural, and social backgrounds are key to their integration and well-being. ¹⁸⁷Our goal today is to provide useful advice and concrete ideas for parents, teachers, and the children themselves to help in the process of building strong and supportive connections. ¹⁸⁸This podcast is part of the "Welcome at School" project, which is being implemented in several European partner countries. ¹⁸⁹The project aims to create tools and practices to support students with migrant experience and to provide support for teachers, parents, and specialists working in schools. ¹⁹⁰We believe that the integration of these children is important not only for them but for all children, as it helps create more open and tolerant communities. ¹⁹¹

Let's start with a question: what are the challenges in building relationships between children from different cultures and with different migrant experiences? ¹⁹²How can cultural differences affect interactions between local and foreign children? ¹⁹³

Often, when we have children with migrant experience, they face numerous challenges



in school. ¹⁹⁴One of the main ones is the language barrier. ¹⁹⁵Children who do not speak the local language will feel isolated and cannot participate actively in social and academic activities. ¹⁹⁶This is an obstacle that makes it difficult for them to build relationships with their local peers. ¹⁹⁷If they do not fully understand what is happening in class or what other children are saying, they may experience fear and insecurity, which does not help with socialization. ¹⁹⁸Another major challenge is cultural diversity itself. ¹⁹⁹Many children often come from very different social and cultural backgrounds, which sometimes leads to misunderstandings or even stereotypes. ²⁰⁰For example, some children may not be used to the open expression of emotions as is common in the local culture, or they may not understand certain social norms. ²⁰¹These differences can create tension if they are not explained and accepted. ²⁰²We must not forget the emotional burden of children with migrant experience. ²⁰³They have often experienced serious traumas such as family breakdowns, violence, or journeys through dangerous places. ²⁰⁴These emotions can make them more withdrawn or distrustful of their peers. ²⁰⁵This can also complicate the building of relationships. ²⁰⁶

Regarding the opportunities that cultural diversity provides, I want to mention that when we manage to overcome these barriers, children begin to see the world from different perspectives. ²⁰⁷When different cultures interact, they can learn from each other and build richer social and emotional connections. ²⁰⁸Cultural diversity can be not only a challenge but also a great opportunity for mutual enrichment. ²⁰⁹

Now let's talk about specific examples of activities that can help children integrate. ²¹⁰What joint activities in or out of school can help children become friends and build relationships? ²¹¹

In our school, for example, we organize sports activities that unite all children. ²¹²Sport is a great way to build relationships because it doesn't require much conversation and focuses on common goals. ²¹³For example, football and basketball are popular among all children, and they quickly find a common language through playing together. ²¹⁴Another very successful format is art workshops. ²¹⁵Drawing, painting, and crafts offer a space for self-expression, and it is very important that children can work in groups. ²¹⁶This encourages them to share ideas and work together on common projects, while at the same time getting acquainted with different cultural means of



expression and styles.²¹⁷ We also organize joint picnics and trips outside of school.

²¹⁸When children get out of the school environment, they can be more relaxed and open to new friendships.²¹⁹ Specially organized outings allow children to connect outside the classroom and get to know each other in an informal setting.²²⁰ One of our successful examples is the program for intercultural exchange sessions, where children and their families can meet and tell stories about their native places, cultures, and traditions.²²¹ This is an important way to create mutual respect and understanding between different groups of children.²²²

And how can parents, teachers, and intercultural assistants support children in building strong relationships with each other?²²³ What is their role in this process?²²⁴

Teachers also play a very important role in creating an integrated environment in school.²²⁵ They can actively encourage group activities in which all children participate, regardless of their background.²²⁶ It is also important for teachers to demonstrate respect for all cultures and to create rules that support good behavior and tolerance towards differences.²²⁷ From the perspective of intercultural assistants, our role is to help children understand what these differences mean.²²⁸ We can be facilitators of dialogue between children, while at the same time helping them understand that we are all different and that these differences must be respected.²²⁹ Parents also have a key role.²³⁰ They should encourage their children to be open to new friendships and to talk about their new peers at home.²³¹ Parents can support school initiatives by participating in joint events and showing their children how to be tolerant and open to differences.²³²

What challenges might we face in this process and how can we overcome them?

²³³How can we deal with language barriers, stereotypes, and fears of difference?²³⁴

One of the big problems is the language barrier, but this can be overcome with appropriate language programs and active work with translation.²³⁵ It is important not to let children feel misunderstood or isolated.²³⁶ We can also use visual and interactive teaching methods to help overcome these barriers.²³⁷ Another problem we often encounter are stereotypes and prejudices.²³⁸ It is important to organize activities that



challenge these stereotypes, such as introducing children to different stories and cultures that enrich them and help them broaden their understanding.²³⁹

I hope our listeners will be inspired by the practical advice and examples I have shared.

²⁴⁰Together, we can create schools and communities where all children can feel respected and supported.²⁴¹ Don't forget to subscribe to the podcast and visit our website for more useful resources and campaigns related to the integration of children with migrant experience.²⁴² Thank you for being with us. See you soon.²⁴³

6. Bridges Between Cultures in Adolescence

Welcome to our new podcast episode. We are glad you are with us to discuss an extremely important and contemporary topic: how to build bridges between cultures in adolescence and how to deal with the challenges that arise when different cultures meet in and out of schools.²⁴⁴ This podcast is part of the "Welcome at School" project. We believe that understanding and integrating cultural differences is the foundation for building strong and stable social relationships.²⁴⁵ We thank all partners participating in and supporting the project, including local organizations and schools.²⁴⁶

Today's topic is very relevant: what are the challenges related to the relationships of young people and teenagers from different countries and cultures?²⁴⁷ The question arises: do these relationships build themselves, or is a facilitator such as a teacher, parent, or intercultural assistant necessary?²⁴⁸ What significance do these relationships have for the well-being of young people?²⁴⁹ And why is the integration of teenagers important not only for those with migrant experience but for all children?²⁵⁰ The purpose of this podcast is to present practical advice for parents, teachers, and young people themselves.²⁵¹

To begin, let's focus on the special situation in and out of schools.²⁵² In the context of



migration and cultural differences, many children and teenagers who have come from different parts of the world encounter a new cultural environment.²⁵³ How can these cultural differences affect the relationships between local and foreign teenagers?²⁵⁴ Are there opportunities and challenges that can play an important role in the process of building connections between them?²⁵⁵

When we talk about cultural diversity, it is important to realize that adolescence is a period in which socialization plays a huge role.²⁵⁶ Children begin to build their identity and connect with peers who share similar interests and values.²⁵⁷ However, when these children come from different cultures, barriers arise—not only linguistic but also cultural.²⁵⁸ There may be differences in behavior, habits, and even in the way of communication.²⁵⁹ This puts children in a situation of uncertainty, and sometimes they feel misunderstood or disconnected.²⁶⁰ Cultural differences often lead to incomplete understanding between children.²⁶¹ For example, some children may feel uncomfortable if local teenagers do not include them in conversations because there may be stereotypes or fear of the different.²⁶² The work of intercultural assistants, teachers, and parents is to reduce these barriers through educational programs that emphasize mutual respect and expanding the scope of socialization.²⁶³

What is really important for young people to adapt and successfully integrate into their new social environment?²⁶⁴

Adolescence is the time when young people try to fit into the social structure and identify with groups that share similar interests and values.²⁶⁵ In the context of migration, when a child or teenager arrives in a new country, they may feel isolated, like a foreigner in their own group.²⁶⁶ Therefore, it is important to understand that their need for social acceptance and belonging is vital.²⁶⁷ One way to achieve this is by creating a space where all teenagers, regardless of their origin, can feel included and significant.²⁶⁸

Let's talk about practical solutions and examples of activities that help young people integrate.²⁶⁹ What specific initiatives can be undertaken to build a bridge between different cultures?²⁷⁰



Our NGO organizes a series of events that bring together young people from different cultures, for example, joint sports events, cultural workshops, joint trips, and picnics.

²⁷¹These activities give young people the opportunity to get to know each other, share traditions and cultures, and establish contact outside the classroom. ²⁷²In this way, they begin to understand that despite their differences, there is much in common between them that connects them. ²⁷³

In what ways can parents, teachers, and intercultural assistants support these integration processes? ²⁷⁴

Parents have a key role because their support is the foundation for building positive attitudes towards others. ²⁷⁵We can encourage our children to be open to differences, to be proactive in socializing, and to participate in events that include foreign children. ²⁷⁶It is important to show them by personal example how to build friendships with people from different cultures. ²⁷⁷

What are the main challenges for the future in the integration of young people, and how can these barriers be overcome? ²⁷⁸

The main challenges are related to language barriers, prejudices, and stereotypes that still exist in society. ²⁷⁹To overcome them, we must work actively on creating opportunities for open and frequent communication between different groups. ²⁸⁰Schools play an important role in organizing such platforms that can overcome these barriers and give young people a chance to build intercultural friendships. ²⁸¹

Today we discussed how building bridges between different cultures in society is not only possible but necessary. ²⁸²Through contemporary activities, support from adults, and active participation of everyone in the integration process, we can create a more open and inclusive society. ²⁸³Let us all think about what we can do to support these processes in our school or community. ²⁸⁴How can we get involved as parents, teachers, or members of the local community to help teenagers build bridges of mutual understanding and respect? ²⁸⁵You can find more information and resources on



our website, as well as get involved in the campaigns and activities of local non-governmental organizations working on these issues.²⁸⁶ Support us and be part of the change.²⁸⁷ This podcast is part of the "Welcome at School" project, which aims to create tools to support students with migrant experience, as well as to support adult parents and teachers.²⁸⁸ We thank all our partners who are actively working for the integration of young people.²⁸⁹

7. Language as a Key to Social and Educational Integration

SPK_1: Topic 4, episode 1. Welcome to the first episode of our podcast.²⁹⁰ Today we will examine the importance of language and how it can be the foundation for the social and educational integration of foreign students.²⁹¹ Many young people who go through migration processes face the challenge of mastering a new language in order to connect with peers and adapt to the school system.²⁹² This is an important moment because language is not just a means of communication, but it is also key to the future development of these young people.²⁹³ We will discuss how language is not only key for daily communication but also how it helps children to be actively involved in school life and build a sense of belonging.²⁹⁴ Along with this, we will also talk about the challenges you face in this process and what methods can be used to motivate and support the learning of a new language.²⁹⁵

This podcast is part of the "Welcome at School" project, which is being implemented in Bulgaria, Greece, Poland, Ukraine, and the Czech Republic.²⁹⁶²⁹⁶²⁹⁶²⁹⁶ The project's goal is to provide tools and resources to support students with migrant experience and to assist parents and teachers in the inclusion process.²⁹⁷ We thank all our partners who are working on this project, as well as the local organizations that are actively involved in the efforts to include the children.²⁹⁸ Today with us in the studio is a very interesting guest who deals with these issues daily.²⁹⁹ She is an intercultural assistant who works on various aspects of migrant integration and new language learning.³⁰⁰ We will hear their perspective and stories that will help us better understand what can motivate children to learn and how to integrate into school life more successfully.³⁰¹ Again, we



say that language is a basic ingredient of any social and educational integration.³⁰² For young people who come to a new country, mastering the local language is not only important for communication but also for their participation in society.³⁰³ Let's discuss how language skills can change the lives of children going through this process.³⁰⁴

SPK_2: I agree. Without language, children cannot build new social contacts, and this often leads to a feeling of alienation.³⁰⁵ Language is also key to understanding local customs and culture.³⁰⁶ For example, if you can't understand the local language, it will be difficult to understand how school events are conducted or how to participate in school life.³⁰⁷ When we talk about language in the context of migration, it is not just a matter of mastering grammar or vocabulary, but of the opportunity for social connection.³⁰⁸³⁰⁸³⁰⁸³⁰⁸ Children need to be able to communicate not only in the classroom but also outside of it, with peers, teachers, and even people on the street.³⁰⁹ If they do not master the language, they feel isolated and cannot take advantage of all the opportunities that the new environment offers them.³¹⁰

SPK_1: Let's think about the challenges that migrants, especially children, face when they have to learn a new language.³¹¹ Can you share stories and examples from your practice?

SPK_2: One of the children I work with told me his personal story, which touched me very much, and I wrote it down.³¹³ I will not mention names, but I think it is very suitable for your question.³¹⁴ "I arrived in the new country as a child, and at first, it was very difficult to fit in.³¹⁵³¹⁵³¹⁵³¹⁵ I didn't speak the language well.³¹⁶ This created problems for me in communicating with other children.³¹⁷ I often felt lonely and misunderstood.³¹⁸ Despite everything, I started to learn the language through games and activities that helped me relax and start connecting with others."

SPK_1: That is a truly great example of how positive learning helps in mastering a new language.³²⁰ The motivation to learn a new language can come from different places.³²¹ Some children are motivated by the need to connect with their new social environment, while others may be inspired by a future profession or a dream place they want to go.³²²³²²³²²³²²³²²³²²³²²³²² How can we stimulate and maintain this motivation?



SPK_2: Motivation often comes when children see real benefits from learning the language.³²⁴ One way is through interactive activities like games or using apps that make learning more fun.³²⁵ In addition, parents and teachers have a role to play; they can create a supportive environment and motivate children through positive rewards and praise.

SPK_1: And how does learning a new language affect children's sense of belonging and their cultural identity?³²⁷ This is also an interesting topic. Is there a risk that the new language will threaten their native language, culture, and the identity they have had so far?

SPK_2: Language is closely linked to culture, and therefore, learning a new language can also be a way to enrich children's identity.³²⁹ However, it is important to maintain a balance. While the new language can be a powerful tool for integration, the native language must also be valued and cultivated.³³⁰ Children must learn to celebrate their roots while learning to adapt to the new culture.

SPK_1: Wonderfully said. And how can getting to know a new language increase children's engagement in school life, and does this happen?

SPK_2: It does happen.³³³ A great example is when students start participating in extracurricular activities or group projects.³³⁴ This is a primary way for socialization and active engagement.³³⁵ Children who can communicate in the local language have the opportunity to participate in events, be part of school life, and show their skills and talents.

SPK_1: What is the role of the local community? How can the local community support children with such migrant experience?³³⁷ What is the role of non-governmental organizations, local authorities, and institutions?³³⁸ Where is our place?

SPK_2: The local community can play a key role in integration by providing resources and training opportunities, as well as maintaining social networks for migrants.

³⁴⁰Non-governmental organizations often organize courses and events that help children connect with others and integrate.

SPK_1: Great. We discussed how language is not only a means of communication but also a key factor for the successful integration of children.³⁴²³⁴²³⁴²³⁴² Language opens new opportunities for socialization, learning, and participation in society as a whole.



³⁴³What can we do to support migrant children to learn a new language and integrate better? ³⁴⁴Think about it, you as teachers, parents, and active members of the community. ³⁴⁵How can we all help? ³⁴⁶More information about courses and projects can be found on the project's website and at local non-governmental organizations that work with migrants and migrant children. ³⁴⁷I remind you again that this podcast is part of the "Welcome at School" project. ³⁴⁸The project aims to create tools to support students with migrant experience and to provide valuable resources for parents and teachers. ³⁴⁹

8. Language, Culture, and Civic Engagement for Youth with Migrant Experience

SPK_1: Hello and welcome to our podcast. ³⁵⁰Today we will discuss how language, culture, and activity are important for young people with migrant experience. ³⁵¹For many students who start in a new educational system, language is key not only for academic success but also for their social integration. ³⁵²What do you think? ³⁵³What are the challenges these students face?

SPK_2: First, I want to thank you for the invitation to join your podcast and this truly interesting project, "Welcome at School." ³⁵⁵Indeed, foreign students often start in a new educational system without knowing the language. ³⁵⁶This places great obstacles before them. ³⁵⁷They cannot communicate with their classmates, they do not have access to the learning material, and very often, unfortunately, the children feel isolated. ³⁵⁸Moreover, these children often come from a completely different cultural context, which complicates not only their integration in school but also in society as a whole. ³⁵⁹Because language is not only a means of learning, but it is also a way of building social connections, and we must not forget that. ³⁶⁰Without it, children feel like outsiders to the system, outsiders to society. ³⁶¹They feel isolated, they feel... overall, they are large, and this can have very long-lasting effects on their motivation and self-esteem. ³⁶²

SPK_1: Thank you very much. I am very glad you are here with us. Thank you for accepting our invitation. ³⁶³You are one of our most important guests so far, and we are



extremely excited to hear your answers and, of course, for you to share your many years of experience.

SPK_2: As I said, I am also very happy to be part of what is happening here today.

³⁶⁵Indeed, the challenges are very great, and I am glad that I can be helpful. ³⁶⁶Thank you.

SPK_1: And we thank you. ³⁶⁸Today we are presenting the "Welcome at School" project, which is being implemented in several European countries and aims to support the integration of migrant children through the study of new languages and active civic participation. ³⁶⁹³⁶⁹³⁶⁹³⁶⁹This project also provides an opportunity for collaboration with local non-governmental organizations that help young migrants find their place in the new environment. ³⁷⁰³⁷⁰³⁷⁰³⁷⁰Part of the project is the creation of various tools to support students with migrant experience, from language courses to programs for socialization and activating their participation in school and public life. ³⁷¹What is the role of language in the process of social integration?

SPK_2: It is a fact that language is a bridge between cultures, and it is a primary means of communication. ³⁷³At the beginning of migration, children face serious barriers, many barriers, such as unfamiliar terms in school subjects, the inability to express their needs, feelings, desires, and they cannot show the knowledge they have accumulated so far. ³⁷⁴This can lead to a great sense of internal stress, tension, even despair, depression sometimes. ³⁷⁵And when we give them the opportunity to learn the language, we not only help them navigate the school environment but also to fit into the social context. ³⁷⁶This also includes new friendships they can build by participating in school activities, sports clubs, and school events like concerts or theatrical performances. ³⁷⁷And these seemingly minor social interactions are crucial for the sense of belonging to the new society in the new country where the children are. ³⁷⁸³⁷⁸³⁷⁸Although it may take time, language gives confidence and opportunities for progress not only in school but in life as a whole.

SPK_1: This long and comprehensive answer. ³⁸⁰Many useful things... your experience truly shows how deeply you are into this topic. ³⁸¹³⁸¹³⁸¹³⁸¹³⁸¹³⁸¹³⁸¹³⁸¹In line with this conversation, what are the most effective methods for learning a new language, in your opinion?

SPK_2: Thank you again for the question. ³⁸³Regarding one of the most effective methods, according to what I have learned, of course, from my practice, is to actively



involve children in conversations with native speakers.³⁸⁴ This actually gives an opportunity to practice in a real situation and to hear how words and phrases are used in the context of our daily life.³⁸⁵ One of the strengths of this method is that it allows the language to be learned not just from a textbook or dictionary, but in a more natural way.³⁸⁶ At the same time... I have always encouraged the use of technologies, which are very useful.³⁸⁷ For example, there are very convenient, free applications.³⁸⁸ Such are Duolingo; Babbel is also a very good application, and they are excellent for repeating and mastering new words and phrases that sound very natural.³⁸⁹ We also, with my colleagues, integrate various practices from social media.³⁹⁰ I have always encouraged chats with local young people, classmates.³⁹¹ I have encouraged the new children to participate in various online events, which I believe is useful for their language development.³⁹² And of course, we should never underestimate the importance of courses led by professional teachers who can help.³⁹³ For me, this is the only way to learn good grammar, to structure knowledge, and to clear up difficulties that often arise in grammar when one learns a language only from the street.³⁹⁴ For children who cannot attend regular courses, there are internet platforms and applications that offer alternative ways of learning.³⁹⁵ As I said, they are free and are really very, very useful.³⁹⁶ It is also important to create an environment where students have the opportunity to use the language outside of school hours through participation in clubs and extracurricular activities where the language can be practiced again in real conditions.

SPK_1: Thank you so much. The answer was again extremely comprehensive.³⁹⁸ It really answered many of my internal questions.³⁹⁹ And how can activity in school help children integrate more easily?⁴⁰⁰ What is your opinion on this matter?

SPK_2: And let me tell you, because we always talk about practice, I have collected different opinions from children I work with, and now I will read you something that one of my children, a student I work with—and I call them "my children" because when a person sees the progress, you really get very close to these children—I will read to you from my student.⁴⁰² I have extracted this.⁴⁰³ The child says, "I started participating in the school's sports club, and that helped me not only to meet new people but also to feel like a part of the school."⁴⁰⁴ When you start to feel comfortable with your new classmates, learning starts to become easier.⁴⁰⁵ Moreover, when I participate in school-related events like holidays and school exhibitions, I start to actively use the language, which helps me to learn new terms and expressions faster."⁴⁰⁶ This is what the child says and adds, "Participating in school initiatives helped me build



self-confidence, which not only made my learning easier but also my social inclusion."

⁴⁰⁷The child is really mature and very aware, and one of my best students, whom I am truly proud of.

SPK_1: Wonderful. Thank you so much for sharing his story with us. ⁴⁰⁹Examples like this from real life, from what happens to us, are very important and valuable. ⁴¹⁰And to conclude with the last question, which I think will be very interesting to hear your opinion on. ⁴¹¹What is the importance of civic engagement, as it is key for young people with migrant experience? ⁴¹²We understood that from your earlier answers. ⁴¹³Please, explain a bit more.

SPK_2: Civic engagement gives young people great opportunities to feel like part of society. ⁴¹⁵For migrants, so to call them, it is very important for them to live with the feeling that they are not rejected but are accepted, to participate in various initiatives, and to have the opportunity to freely express their opinions and ideas. ⁴¹⁶This not only integrates them but also gives them the internal feeling that they can influence their surrounding environment and that they are an important part of it. ⁴¹⁷Participating in school elections, volunteering in various local organizations, and in municipal events related to the migrant community is a way to show their participation and to actively engage in the life of the local community. ⁴¹⁸And this is not just a matter of social activity, but also of building personal self-esteem and confidence. ⁴¹⁹I am convinced of this.

SPK_1: Thank you very much for this answer. We really learned many valuable things today. ⁴²¹Pep, thank you again for joining us. ⁴²²It was an honor to have you here in the studio.

SPK_2: And I, I thank you.

SPK_1: So, at the end of the podcast, I want to remind you that this project is being implemented in several European countries and aims to provide tools for better integration of students with social experience. ⁴²⁵We thank our guest for the interesting conversation. ⁴²⁶Look forward to the next episode, in which we will discuss new ways to motivate students. ⁴²⁷Don't forget to subscribe to our podcast and visit the project's website.



9. The Advantages of Diversity in Multicultural Schools

SPK_1: Hello, welcome to the new episode of our podcast dedicated to the topic of diversity in schools and how it affects children with migrant experience.⁴²⁹ This podcast is part of a project implemented in several European countries with the aim of creating tools to support children and adults with migrant experience.⁴³⁰ We will talk about the importance of cultural and linguistic diversity in schools and how it can be both an opportunity and a challenge for children.

SPK_2: And I thank you for the invitation.⁴³² I'm glad to be here with you today to discuss this truly important topic because the migrant experience, although often perceived as a challenge, brings many opportunities to enrich our lives and, in particular, school life.⁴³³ And here it is important to note that every student brings with them their unique experiences and perspectives, which can be beneficial for everyone in the classroom, especially if this new student comes from another culture, from another country, and with another mother tongue.

SPK_1: Thank you very much for being here with us today.⁴³⁵ We are happy to have you as our guest.⁴³⁶ So today, we will discuss what it means to be part of a multicultural and multilingual school environment.⁴³⁷ What challenges do children who come from different cultures face, and how can they benefit from these differences in their learning and socialization?⁴³⁸ We will talk about the opportunities that this diverse environment offers for personal development and preparation for the modern labor market.⁴³⁹ We start with a provocative quote that might provoke some thought and direct the discussion. "A person lives as many times as the languages they speak. If you know only one, you live only once." What do you think about this, and how is language connected to the socialization and personal development of children?

SPK_2: I have to say that I have indeed heard this saying before.⁴⁴¹ I can't remember its author exactly, but I fully support it.⁴⁴² And I really think this quote is very important because language is not just a means of communication but a key to understanding new cultures, and sometimes a key to understanding oneself.⁴⁴³ And children who learn new languages, they not only acquire some grammar or accumulate new words in a foreign language's vocabulary, but they also enrich themselves with new perspectives and new values.⁴⁴⁴ This is especially important for children with the so-called migrant experience who find themselves at a crossroads between different cultures.



SPK_1: Thank you. Let's talk a little more about the challenges and opportunities that multicultural schools provide.⁴⁴⁶ They are the specific situations and opportunities that are created when there are children from different cultures in one class.

SPK_2: The fact that in intercultural schools, students come from different cultures is both a challenge and, as I already said, a very big opportunity. It is a challenge due to the differences in language, customs, and education, which can create barriers in communication and sometimes, I would say, barriers in learning.⁴⁴⁹ For example, when a child does not speak the language of the country they are in well, they may have difficulties both with the learning material and with socialization.⁴⁵⁰⁴⁵⁰⁴⁵⁰ But on the other hand, looking at it this way, it is also an opportunity.⁴⁵¹ I mean, an opportunity to learn about new cultures and to develop skills for cooperation and tolerance on the part of the individuals themselves, as well as their classmates.⁴⁵² When students interact with children who have a somewhat different background, they learn new perspectives, new points of view, which enriches their personality and actually prepares them for the modern global world, in which we are all different.⁴⁵³

SPK_1: Thank you very much. My answer was very comprehensive.⁴⁵⁴ Culture also plays an important role in the development of children.⁴⁵⁵ What are the benefits of cultural diversity, and how can it enrich school life?

SPK_2: Look, here we need to make a clarification, that when we talk about culture, we shouldn't just think about clothing and food, but about the worldview, the way we perceive the world.⁴⁵⁷ For example, when cultural days are held, these are not just opportunities for students to present their country, but they are opportunities for others to get acquainted with the culture and to understand that cultural diversity is something to be welcomed, not rejected.⁴⁵⁸ Such initiatives can open the children's eyes to new possibilities and spark interest in what is different. We can learn a lot about ourselves when we share our traditions and customs and when we accept different traditions and customs.⁴⁶⁰ And I have truly witnessed how such initiatives positively influence students.⁴⁶¹⁴⁶¹ For example, when we held a culture day at our school...

SPK_1: Everyone.

SPK_2: ...all students, not just those from other countries with the migrant experience, as we call them, but also the local ones, got so actively involved in participating in and



organizing the event. ⁴⁶⁴They shared really interesting traditions, songs, dances, we even cooked together, and it was a completely, completely different experience. Very interesting, which showed how culture can be enriching for every one of us.

SPK_1: You mentioned cultural events. What other initiatives can help children with the so-called migrant experience to promote their culture and be part of school life?

SPK_2: I believe those culture days were a great emotional experience. ⁴⁶⁸Other examples are, how should I say, from our experience, which I can share, are language clubs or various art projects that give students the opportunity not only to share about their culture but also to... to connect in the new school environment. ⁴⁶⁹In one of the projects we worked on, we organized a fantastic exhibition of the students, which included their drawings representing their native places. ⁴⁷⁰It created an opportunity for others to get to know the native places of their classmates, as well as for the students themselves to self-reflect and comprehend the differences between their native places. ⁴⁷¹Along with getting to know many different places and traditions.

SPK_1: How can we encourage, in that case, students to participate actively in these initiatives and to be confident in their identity?

SPK_2: First and foremost, a safe environment. ⁴⁷⁴It is important to create a safe environment where students feel free to share. ⁴⁷⁵This can be done by organizing special classes, how should I say, dedicated to different cultures, in which students can talk about their traditions and experiences. ⁴⁷⁶Furthermore, it is very important to encourage their participation in extracurricular activities such as sports clubs, cultural clubs, and some such cultural and sports events where students can show their skills and build such informal connections and new friendships.

SPK_1: Thank you so much. You gave extremely comprehensive and wonderful answers.

SPK_2: And I thank you for the invitation.

SPK_1: Today, we discussed how diversity in schools is not only a challenge but also a huge opportunity for personal development. ⁴⁸⁰Through the cultural initiatives and activities that we organize in schools, we can build a more open and accepting society. ⁴⁸¹This podcast is part of a project that aims to create tools to support students with migrant experience. ⁴⁸²Within the project, materials and initiatives are being developed



for teachers, as well as students and parents, to facilitate the integration of children and to encourage cultural diversity.⁴⁸³ Once again, a big thank you to our guest for all these valuable thoughts they shared with us.⁴⁸⁴ Look forward to the next episode, in which we will explore more ways to support diversity in schools.⁴⁸⁵ Don't forget to subscribe to the podcast and visit the project's website.⁴⁸⁶ See you soon.⁴⁸⁷

10. Sharing Cultures and Building Identity in a Multicultural Environment

SPK_1: Welcome to our podcast. In this episode, we will talk about the importance of cultures in contact and how young people can share their multicultural experience.⁴⁸⁸ I'd like to remind you that the podcast is part of the "Welcome at School" project, which is being implemented in several European countries with the aim of broadening the understanding of multicultural education and the integration of students with migrant experience into the school system.⁴⁸⁹ The project is realized jointly with our partners, which include local schools and non-governmental organizations.⁴⁹⁰ With local authorities, we focus together on supporting migrants and multicultural communities.⁴⁹¹ Together with our partners, we are working hard to create educational tools and resources that help both students and teachers to cope with the challenges arising from cultural diversity in the classroom.

This week, we are discussing what it means to be part of a multicultural environment, especially in school.⁴⁹³ Because often, diversity in the classroom is perceived as a challenge.⁴⁹⁴ But it is time to ask ourselves if it isn't, in fact, an advantage.⁴⁹⁵ Doesn't a linguistically and culturally diverse school represent more opportunities for personal development and for preparation for the global labor market?⁴⁹⁶ Can we accept differences as opportunities, and not as a threat?⁴⁹⁷ We will discuss all these questions together with our guest today, or rather, our female guest, who has a unique perspective on this process.⁴⁹⁸ She is a teacher.⁴⁹⁹ At the same time, she also has experience as an intercultural assistant and has worked with young people with migrant experience.⁵⁰⁰ She is a volunteer in various non-governmental organizations.⁵⁰¹ Let me introduce our guest, Elena.⁵⁰² Today, it is truly a great pleasure to be with



you.⁵⁰³ But before we begin the discussion, let's start with a, I would say, interesting quote that might sound a bit provocative.⁵⁰⁴ I believe it's a good start to today's conversation.⁵⁰⁵ "Invite me to dinner, and I will tell you who you are."⁵⁰⁶ This statement really makes us think about how sharing cultures—not just food, but also traditions and stories—can reveal a lot about ourselves.⁵⁰⁷ Why does culture play such an important role in understanding who we are and how to connect with others?⁵⁰⁸ I leave this question hanging in the air while we listen to our guest.⁵⁰⁹ Let's start with something basic.⁵¹⁰ What is it like, Elena, to grow up in a multicultural environment?

SPK_2: Thank you very much for inviting me here today.⁵¹² I was terribly excited when I received the invitation.⁵¹³ Let me begin. Students who come from different cultures bring with them a unique experience that enriches not only their education but also that of their classmates.⁵¹⁴ When we talk about schools with a diverse ethnic and cultural composition, the many benefits that can arise from such diversity are often underestimated.⁵¹⁵ Besides the fact that these students learn to communicate in different languages, they acquire skills for cooperation, empathy, and understanding of differences—skills that are indispensable in the modern global world.

SPK_1: Okay, how do these advantages manifest in real life, in practice?

SPK_2: Well, education in schools that support diversity can provide students not only with knowledge from traditional textbooks but also with important social skills that will be useful to them in the future.⁵¹⁸ The opportunity to communicate with people from different cultures not only illuminates their personal development but also prepares them better for the labor market, which is becoming increasingly globalized.⁵¹⁹ For those students growing up in such a multicultural society, they learn not only to accept differences but also to use them as their own resource.⁵²⁰

SPK_1: Yes, that is clear.⁵²¹ Another main topic I want us to look at today is why, in your opinion, it is important to share our culture while at the same time learning about foreign and new cultures.⁵²² Why do you think so?⁵²³



SPK_2: Well, when we talk about culture, we don't think, as you said earlier, only about customs, holidays, and food, but also about the opportunity to build intercultural bridges.⁵²⁴ For young people who are going through the process of integration, sharing their culture can be a way to strengthen their identity and feel more connected to their new society.⁵²⁵ It's impossible not to emphasize that sharing different cultures also strengthens empathy.⁵²⁶ As I mentioned earlier, when we begin to understand the traditions and ways of life of others, we begin to broaden our perspective and become more open to the world around us.⁵²⁷ This is crucial for young people who are in the stage of building their self-awareness and social skills.⁵²⁸⁵²⁸⁵²⁸⁵²⁸

SPK_1: How can we create a space for sharing such cultures in school?⁵²⁹ Organizing, for example, cultural events like festivals, thematic evenings, or culture days.⁵³⁰ I believe it is an excellent way to provide an opportunity for students to share a part of their heritage.⁵³¹ But what does it actually mean to organize such an event, and what steps must be taken for its successful realization so that it achieves its goals?⁵³²

SPK_2: The examples of teachers who participate in such events, including myself, involve collaboration with the students and their families to create content that represents their culture in an authentic way.⁵³³ Schools can organize, for example, special classes dedicated to cultural differences or hold workshops where students themselves can demonstrate traditions from their country, talk about their family's history, or simply show unique elements of their cultural identity.⁵³⁴

SPK_1: That really sounds interesting.⁵³⁵ It is true, however, that this whole process is not without difficulties.⁵³⁶ Young people with migrant experience often face fear and rejection, as well as a lack of self-confidence.⁵³⁷ But how can we help overcome these difficulties, and what strategies can you suggest be used to build self-confidence and gain support from peers?⁵³⁸



SPK_2: Well, here mentors and school support structures play a very important role in this process.⁵³⁹ They can offer tools and strategies, as you asked, that can help young people feel valued and accepted in their new environment.

SPK_1: And so, to summarize, in this episode, we have truly highlighted the importance of cultural exchange and how it enriches both the personal development of young people and the entire school community.⁵⁴¹ There is no doubt that a multicultural environment provides countless opportunities for new knowledge, for empathy, for building stronger and more globally connected individuals.⁵⁴² Are we ready to accept and actively support these opportunities?⁵⁴³ What can we do to encourage a multicultural and multilingual environment in schools?⁵⁴⁴ I am sure that each of us can contribute to this, to living in a more open, more accepting community, and that depends entirely, entirely on us.⁵⁴⁵ Thank you to our wonderful guest for the exciting words, for the inspiring stories.⁵⁴⁶ Don't forget to subscribe to our podcast and visit the project's website, where more materials and other useful resources are available in support of the inclusion of students with migrant experience.⁵⁴⁷ New meetings and success in sharing your culture.