

## 2. RE APPROACHES AND STRATEGIES IN NORTHERN EUROPE

## 2.1 THE FRAMEWORK OF RE IN NORTHERN EUROPE

In the UNHCR data base on refugees, Northern Europe consists of eight countries, the Nordic countries: *Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Norway* and *Iceland*, and the Baltic countries: *Lithuania, Latvia* and *Estonia* with a total population of 33,121,044. At the end of year 2017, the total number of refugees, asylum-seekers and stateless persons in Northern Europe was 788,717 (UNHCR, 2019, table 1).

Country	Country Population	Asylum-seekers arriving in 2018	Number of people granted protection in 2018	Refugees resettled in 2018	Top 5 countries of origin among asylum-seekers arriving in 2018	Recognition rate for protection status in 2018*
Sweden	10,120,242	18,045	10,640	4,862	Syria, Iran, Iraq, Georgia, Eritrea	34%
Denmark	5,781,190	3,120	1,315	0	Syria, Eritrea, Georgia, Iran, Morocco	50%
Finland	5,513,130	2,945	2,740	611	Iraq, Russia, Turkey, Iran, Somalia	55%
Norway	5,295,619	2,530	1,460	2,324	Turkey, Syria, Eritrea, Iran, Iraq	69%
Lithuania	2,808,901	385	135	18	Tadjikistan, Russia, Iraq, Azerbaijan, Afghanistan	50%
Latvia	1,934,379	175	30	0	Russia, Iraq, Azerbaijan, Egypt, Georgia	24%
Estonia	1,319,133	90	20	29	Ukraine, Russia, Egypt, Pakistan, Bangladesh	27%
Iceland	348,450	730	105	52	Iraq, Albania, Somalia, Afghanistan, Pakistan	28%

\* the share of positive decisions in the total number of asylum decisions for each stage of the asylum procedure (i.e. first instance and final on appeal)

Table 1. Regional Representation for Northern Europe: Overview (UNHCR, 2019).

The Nordic and Baltic countries have divergent historical and political experiences of migration. Among the Nordic countries Sweden has been an exceptionally inclusive migrant-receiving country since World War II, while global migration to Finland did not pick up until the 1990s and in 2006 it was still the EU-15 country with the lowest foreign-born population in proportional terms (United Nations, 2006). Denmark is known for its strict migration policy, Sweden has been regarded as the most liberal Nordic country while Norway and Finland are considered to land somewhere in between. The dynamics of migration politics and research in Iceland are on a decidedly smaller scale. Although the number of asylum-seekers quintupled from 200 in 2015 to some 1000 in 2016, and the foreign-born denizens already form a nearly 12 percent minority of the country's total population, the crisis framing is mostly missing in the Icelandic public debate. Research-wise, interest in migrancy has gradually increased in the country (Pyrhönen, Leinonen & Martikainen, 2017).

## 2.2. AN OVERVIEW OF RE IN NORTHERN EUROPE: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

### *The Baltic countries: Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania*

Historically, the population in the Baltic States has been diverse, due to the earlier immigration waves during 1950–1988. Having been made part of the Soviet Union in 1940, the Baltic States were subjected to centrally planned industrialization after WWII accompanied by high migration flows from other territories of the Soviet Union. Latvia and Estonia both have large historical minority groups – 26% and 25% of the total population respectively. The historical minority in Lithuania is much smaller or 5.8% from Russian origin and outnumbered by the population of Polish origin (6.6% of the total population). As relatively new European Member states (joined the EU in 2004), the three Baltic countries – Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania – are among the few EU countries with negative net migration rates (Mägi & Siarova, 2014).

Due to geographical position the origin of immigrants vary between the countries. In Estonia the majority comes from Finland (26%), then Russia (23%) and Ukraine (8%). In Lithuania most immigrants are coming from Russia (25%), Belarus (16%) and Ukraine (13%) and in Latvia, most immigrants come from Russia (42%), Ukraine (7%) and Uzbekistan (6%) (49). In addition to this statistics show an increase in flow of asylum seekers in the Baltic States (52).

All Baltic States have a long path of integration of historical minority children in education and a significant number of minority pupils as part of their school population. In the school year 2013/2014 the numbers were: Estonia: 24%, in Latvia: 28% and in Lithuania: 7%. All Baltic States have a relatively low share of newly arrived immigrant pupils in general education institutions. In the school year 2013/2014 the numbers were: Estonia: 0,12%, in Latvia: 0,37% and in Lithuania: 0,27%.

The need to distinguish between different pupils' groups in the context of current and future educational needs and policy responses, has been recognized. Thus to make clearer distinction between the groups of; historical minority pupils (the Russian-speaking minority in Latvia and Estonia and both Russian and Polish-speaking minorities in Lithuania); newly arrived immigrants; and returnees (former residents returning to the Baltic States). Recent inflows of immigrants who do not speak the national language or Russian, as well as the growing tendency in returnee rates in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania pose new challenges for the national education systems. According to the policy research done by Mägi & Siarova (2014) many schools are not prepared to meet diverse needs of students like linguistic and cultural needs, in terms of both human and financial resources. Therefore, even though newly arrived immigrants and returnees form only a fractional share of the overall pupil body in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, in the light of growing mobility and transnationalism, the Baltic education systems have, according to the report to demonstrate ability to support all pupils with various needs, including those arising from linguistic and cultural differences.

### *The Nordic countries: Sweden, Iceland, Denmark, Norway and Finland*

The Nordic countries have organized the migration process in chain-systems, where the first years are strictly regulated concerning residence, obligation, and contains a collaboration between the different authorities. The migration chain is the process from a person deciding to apply for asylum or citizenship until the person is granted or rejected residency. Different authorities have defined tasks in the migration chain; several ministries in the government, immigration authorities, education system, municipalities, and the police. If the refugee application is granted, the refugee follows an integration program. The programs components are housing, income, and courses in language and society. The aim is to prepare the refugee for the society and assist in the integration process.

The Nordic countries differ regarding civic orientation, they emphasize the process of integration and receiving citizenship differently. In Norway, Denmark, language and society knowledge courses are mandatory, but in Sweden, Iceland, and Finland it is voluntary courses. This difference between these Nordic countries is associated with the term “the civic turn”; a discourse in the immigration politics focusing merely on the integration process, but all of the Nordic countries are influenced by the integration discourses (Borevi, Jensen, and Mouritsen, 2017). The courses in the three countries that are dominated with the civic turn, the authorities attempt to support the process to become a community member and enhance the refugee in establishing a social network in the society. For example, in Norway, the municipalities are an important part of the chain, running the integration program and providing counselors to help the refugee in the process (IMDI, 2020). This means that the different authorities, as school-, health-, and, welfare authorities have infrastructures facilitating collaboration coherence in the support system. For schooling, it means that there is some cohesion between the children's school program and the adults integration programs. As an overall frame, this migration chain enables the school to outline school practice that corresponds well with the migrant children's needs. However, the difference in children's rights causes some difference between the countries, on the practical levels.

In the Nordic countries the children's right has a high standing, due to the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Families with children receive additional attention in the integration phase. If the refugees have children the authorities provide parents support, as kindergarten, integration classes in school, childcare, and parenting courses. Children have both rights and obligations to education. In order to learn the language, the most common is to organize integration classes, although it can vary between countries. But the municipalities have crucial roles to outline the local integration practices. The residential practice is strictly regulated and the refugees have limited possibilities to influence the process. Only by giving up funding, the refugees can influence the place of residence, courses, and receiving counseling. However, if the children have special needs, caused by educational, health or social needs this might affect the choice of place of residence. Asylum seekers without parents or guardians are due to extra intentions. They are enrolled in educational programs for refugees, but often in a separate process compared with other immigrants. They both have school rights and receive special designed education meeting their needs. Sweden has just granted a new law, giving adolescents applying for asylum, rights to stay to finish high school (age 15-18). In Finland, enhanced the development of the immigrant student's education paths, as one of several measures to promote the integration process. In Norway, there has not been a similar funding initiative, instead the stress has been put on the residence process. The settlements of refugees depend on the municipalities that demonstrate history and ability to provide good integrational practice. Only some municipalities get the rights to settle refugees and receive funding for the measures defined in the integration practice.

The Nordic countries is a region with a strong social democratic tradition and highly developed welfare states (Kangas and Kvist, 2018). The welfare system is funded and organized by the government. There is little emphasis on the private network. The concept community in the welfare system is focusing towards the state and their institution, and not dependent on the public. Therefore the chain process in the asylum process is dependent on the public services. There is little expectation on the members and volunteers. However, in all the three countries, the focus on the possibilities in collaboration with volunteer, associations, sport clubs, private initiatives, and local organizations, are raised. While the integration chain is quite well-organized, the local capacity is an underused resource. The potential to enhance the work with refugee and minority children and adolescents, is most likely to further develop the local initiatives and engagements. Hence, innovation in Scandinavian refugee service for children and youth, are collaboration with local associations and organizations. In these matters, inspiration from other European countries has the potential to create innovation. Nordic countries are often described as having similar culture and emphasis regarding education and welfare, often referred to as the “Nordic welfare model” with a focus on social justice (Wozniczka & Rosvall, 2019). In terms of education there is a history of emphasis on “School for All” rooted in ideas on normalization, integration, and later inclusion, for all students (Bjarnason & Persson, 2007). Although there are similarities in

this regard, the Nordic countries have developed their own path and, for example, Swedish policies include ideas of social justice the country has since the 1980s turned from a strong social democratic agenda to a market oriented agenda with a focus on the choice of the individual and perhaps on the expenses of social justice (Wozniczka & Rosvall, 2019).

When the Nordic countries are compared regarding immigration and the ratio of foreign citizens it is evident that Denmark and Norway are different regarding this. In 2015 11,6% of Denmark's citizens had a *foreign citizenship* and in Norway it was 9,9% but in 2016 this picture changed down to 8,3% in Denmark and up to 10,3% in Norway and has increased since. For Iceland the numbers were in 2016 7,9% for Iceland and Sweden and in Finland 3,8% (Haraldsson, 2017).

During the last few years, there has been a shift in the Nordic countries regarding people coming to the Nordic Region. The population of the Nordic Region grew by 16% from 1990-2017, with immigration as a major driving force to this increase (Karlsdóttir, Norlén, Rispling & Randall 2018). Number of asylum seekers has increased dramatically, most notably in Sweden. The majority is coming from Syria and Afghanistan as well as Iraq. This influx has had substantial impact on the Nordic Region evidentially in Sweden, which received more immigrants per capita than any other European country in 2015 (ESPON, 2015).

The arrangements for refugees and asylum seekers vary between the countries. In Sweden asylum seekers have the right to settle anywhere in the country but in Finland, the majority of asylum seekers live in asylum centres, a portion reside though in private accommodation. In Norway, accommodation in asylum centres is optional for asylum seekers, though a majority do choose this form of accommodation. In Denmark and Iceland, asylum seekers are concentrated in a smaller number of municipalities corresponding with the locations of the country's asylum centres (Karlsdóttir, Norlén, Rispling & Randall 2018). The large wave of asylum seekers in 2014 and 2015 included many unaccompanied minors, the number is estimated to be 46 thousands in total, of which 35 thousands arrived in Sweden. In 2015, more than half of the unaccompanied minors who sought asylum in the EU did so in a Nordic country. The most common country of origin was Afghanistan followed by Eritrea, Syria, Iraq and Somalia (Karlsdóttir, Norlén, Rispling & Randall 2018).

The findings from the Nordic countries related to immigrant youth having a lower educational attainment is in accordance with recent studies from several European host countries. These studies show that school dropout rates are higher and that educational attainment is lower among children of non-Western immigrants than their native peers (Brinch, Bratsberg & Raaum, 2012).

Findings from a Nordic project (Learning Spaces for Inclusion and Social Justice: Success stories from immigrant Students and School Communities in Four Nordic Countries 2013-2015) revealed some general issues among the Nordic countries, both positive and challenging. Among the challenges at preschool level are the need to include more actively second language learners in the play as there were missed learning opportunities for some of the immigrant children (Iceland). In Norway it was mentioned that there is a need to work with the children's first language but access to people who speak the children's first language is limited, varying and random. At the compulsory level an identified challenge was to involve all teachers in the schooling of newly arrived students. In Finland a challenge related to preschools was regarding more competences in teaching Finnish as a second language in the group and at the compulsory level researchers identified that some teachers took almost alone the responsibility to develop the practices towards more just schools. These types of visionaries may burn themselves out and the practices may fade away. Regarding upper secondary schools the concerns were related to the minimal number of immigrant background students who enter this level of education as this again minimizes their chances to enter higher education. In Sweden, identified challenges at preschool level were related to big groups of children and difficulties to work with each child's needs as well as a lack of mother tongue teachers directed towards preschools. At compulsory level the importance of shared norms, values and a Christian identity was emphasised by one Swedish school. The researchers thus added that linguistic and ethnic diversity at this school could sometimes be interpreted as a threat to the school culture, e.g. when values among the students were considered as "incompatible" with Christian values (Ragnarsdóttir, 2015).

### *Sweden*

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, immigration in Sweden has always been rather extensive but in recent years, it has changed from being foremost economic immigration to immigration of refugees due to conflicts

and war, which is the dominant form today. Immigrants to Sweden are mainly from Iran and Iraq, former Yugoslavia, Afghanistan and Syria (Wozniczka & Rosvall, 2019). Debates have been about the existence of Swedish as a second language, as a subject, and how it should be taught. Advocates stress that non Swedish speakers need specific teaching arrangements in order to effectively learn the language but opponents point out the separating effects resulting from this approach as it may place students in different learning groups.

Another aspect that is explored in research is related to teachers' feelings when it comes to immigrant students with low socio-economic background, and how the teachers attitudes affect the organization of education in the classroom. The main findings in the article is the importance of presenting this particular group of students with challenges in their education. It is claimed that the lack of challenges in the educational setting in combination with little room for students' own initiatives resulted in low enthusiasm among students when it came to schoolwork and as consequence also low learning. This would be in contradiction to a pedagogic approach that stressed active involvement in the classroom by the students, and that at the same time gave the students influence on what happened in classrooms. This last approach would result in a high level of students' engagement and high learning outcome (Wedin, 2015).

Another research article highlights how teachers experience pressures due to test-based performativity that will be in contradiction to the teachers preferred pedagogical approaches (Lunneblad and Dance, 2014). The research in this specific article is based on ethnographic case studies of two non-mainstream high schools in Sweden and the United States. It explores the group of immigrant students who are second-language learners in Sweden. Most of these students come from low socio-economic backgrounds, and are often described as being 'in the risk zone' while their schools are seen as to be 'in crisis'. When looking closer into these schools it is clear that the teachers working there are genuinely committed to student-centered teaching and to teaching Swedish as a second language. At the same time are the schools facing market demands something that have consequences for everyday school.

Another study focuses on different forms of learning among adult refugees that will contribute to a stronger integration in the Swedish society (Andersson and Andersson, 2011). This research explores how Somali refugees have experienced the educational approaches offered by the Swedish community and other alternative ways of achieving knowledge about Swedish society. It is emphasized that the participants' way of shaping an alternative form of education should be of general interest. This notion of what is seen as "authentic learning" can be used to understand contextual learning. This implies that learning takes the learners' perspective, the content relates to the learners' interest areas, and learning refers to real activities and real situations. The main findings of this research emphasize how the adult refugees' influence on their own learning would contribute to active participation, and how this approach is characterised by considering that cultural contexts influence the learners' interpretation, and meaning-making.

### *Iceland*

Iceland is the smallest of the Nordic societies, with a population of 356.991 as 1st of January 2019 (Statistics Iceland 2020). For a long time, Iceland has been portrayed as a very homogenous country with few immigrants. Throughout the 20th century the immigration ratio was around 3% and in the year 2000 only 2,6% of the population were registered as immigrants. This has changed fast the last few years as immigration to Iceland has grown rapidly. In 1995, 1.8% of the population were registered as non-Icelandic citizens, but in 2017 the numbers are 12% of the population (35,997 individuals) originated from other countries (Ragnarsdóttir & Lefever, 2018). The largest immigration group is from Poland (45%) and other but smaller groups are from Lithuania, Philippines and Thailand (Statistics Iceland, 2020). The number of asylum-seekers and refugees coming to Iceland has increased as well. These changes in population are reflected in Icelandic schools. According to Statistics Iceland around 13% of all preschool children and 10.8% of all compulsory school students had heritage languages other than Icelandic in 2018 (Statistics Iceland, 2020a). These numbers are much higher in some municipalities. Although the percentage of immigrants in Iceland is not high in general, the changes have been fast and for a small nation of 350,000 inhabitants this can have a major impact on small towns and villages and their schools.

A small part of the immigration to Iceland are quota refugees who arrive in Iceland through the UNCHR resettlement program. In total 704 quota refugees have settled in Iceland between 1956 and 2019. The last five years these people have mainly been from Iraq, Syria, Uganda and Congo (Government of Iceland, 2020).

Ragnarsdóttir & Hama (2018) have done research among some of the quota refugees who have recently arrived and described the setup for their situation. The setting is the same for all quota refugees coming to Iceland. They receive support for one year. The support includes contact with three or four support families, housing, courses in Icelandic, financial assistance, healthcare, and various services related to settlement. Teams include representatives from the Red Cross, municipalities, schools, social services, and healthcare. Each municipality prepares for the arrival of the families assigned to its area. Following a medical examination, the refugee children start school. This is normally a few weeks after arrival (p.83).

The public education system in Iceland is divided into four levels from preschool education to higher education and by and large free of charge. Compulsory education is in one stage from the age of 6 to 16 and preschool and secondary school participation, although optional, is widespread. Preschool education for children from 2 years old or even younger is offered by municipalities and enrolment of 3–4-year-olds is over 95% (Ragnarsdóttir & Lefever, 2018). Children who are refugees or asylum seekers have according to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted into Icelandic law in 2013, the right to attend school as other children at no cost. Since 2016, there has been a surge in the number of applications for asylum in Iceland, including families with children, as well as unaccompanied children (Guðmundsdóttir, Gunnlaugsson & Einarsdóttir, 2018).

The current legislation on schools in Iceland emphasizes the principle of equality. The role of schools is that they “shall [...] seek to organize their work in a way that corresponds as fully as possible with the circumstances and needs of pupils, and to promote the all-round development, well-being and education of each individual”(Compulsory School Act No.91/ 2008). This emphasis is reiterated in the National Curriculum Guidelines for each school level (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, 2012a, 2012b, 2012c). In addition, Icelandic education policy is based on the ideology of inclusive education (sometimes referred to as “School for All”) and schools are supposed to offer students appropriate education with an emphasis on equal or equivalent study opportunities. Schools should operate as learning communities where diversity and the different needs, abilities, and characteristics of students are respected and addressed (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, 2012a).

Ragnarsdóttir & Lefever, (2018) have pointed out that while educational policy and curriculum guides in Iceland emphasize equity and inclusion, multilingual and heritage language issues have generally not been sufficiently addressed in official policy documents. Their research and others have documented inequalities and marginalization of immigrants in schools and communities in the Nordic countries, including Iceland but there are evidence as well in research findings from recent research in Iceland that have indicated that particular schools and communities have succeeded in their quest for inclusion, equality, and social justice for this group of students.

Very little research has been done in Iceland on children who are asylum seekers but a recent study adds evidence on this and highlights the importance of school and education for children and families who seek asylum in Iceland. In line with the CRC and Icelandic law, asylum-seeking children should have access to normal education as soon as possible after arrival. Yet, many of those participating in this study had to wait for weeks and even months before admission and the conclusion is that it is urgent to formulate and implement a long-term policy regarding the education of children who seek asylum in Iceland (Guðmundsdóttir, Gunnlaugsson & Einarsdóttir, 2018).

In general when it comes to immigrant students, research in Iceland has revealed the need to formulate better education for immigrants and refugee students. Research shows for example that teachers are unsupported in their quest for understanding and managing education for this group of students and that the Icelandic school system challenges immigrant parents’ understanding of school as a traditional place of learning. There is a lack of collaboration and discussion between both parties on students’ needs and parental expectations (Gunnþórsdóttir, Barillé & Meckl, 2018). The research findings of Ragnarsdóttir & Hama (2018) among refugee families indicate both positive and challenging issues by teachers, the children and their parents. Most of the children show signs of doing well both academically and socially in school after the first few months while the parents worry that their children are not gaining enough academic knowledge and they would like to have more information about their children’s schooling. They are also concerned about their future in terms of education and if they will be successful in school. Teachers are concerned about the challenges facing the older children, both academically and socially and the fact that support is lacking for the children’s heritage languages as very few teachers speak both Icelandic and Arabic. The researchers claim that multilingual education is generally not in place in schools and the emphasis is laid on teaching Icelandic as a second language. In general, based on their research findings they suggest that schools develop educational and cultural activities, programs,

and support inside and outside of schools to help to overcome cultural barriers between families and schools as this kind of support is needed for refugee children to help them gain a sense of belonging and successfully participate as active members of their school and society (Ragnarsdóttir & Hama, 2018).

These findings and suggestions are in line with another recent study of Gunnþórsdóttir, Barillé & Meckl, (2018) which found some positive signs regarding the welfare and wellbeing of students, as both parents and teachers reported that students feel good in school and in their classes. There is a good relationship between teachers and students, and parents and teachers describe this as friendly and supportive. In Iceland, schools are seen to be responsible for establishing and maintaining collaboration with all parents and according to the teachers, the immigrant parents need a supportive network of other parents to help them be more active and integrated as parents of school-age children. This can be seen as an opportunity for schools and parents of all children to actively contribute to mutual collaboration.

### *Denmark*

Over a long time, Denmark has been at the forefront of promoting asylum policy and the protection of refugees. From the ratification of the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees in 1951 to the Aliens Act promulgated in 1983 in connection with the contemporary asylum crisis, Denmark has fostered a strongly liberal agenda concerning the asylum legislation (de Montgomery et al., 2018). However, starting from 2000 the Danish government has taken a completely different path, as more and more restrictive measures have been carried on to prevent migrants and refugees from either arriving in Denmark and accessing its asylum system. Deterrence policies regarding refugees developed by the Danish institutions have been taken as a model and further supported at the European and international levels. The recent influx of asylum seekers occurred in 2015 has provided Denmark the opportunity to strengthen and expand measures of indirect deterrence, designed to depict the national reception system and protection conditions as unappealing as possible, so as to push forced migrants looking for asylum to target other countries. Therefore, Denmark has been actively sustaining management of country reputation in the form of ‘negative nation branding’, adopting systematic measures aimed to project a negative image of Denmark towards asylum-seekers and, more generally, unwanted migrants (Gammeltoft-Hansen, 2017). Beyond pursuing symbolic purposes and internal political goals, in recent years these policies have been successful in lowering the number of asylum applications to Denmark, which dropped from 21.316 in 2015 to 2.716 in 2019 (Statistics Denmark, 2020). Nevertheless, negative branding has been subject to criticisms. While the medium and long-term effectiveness of indirect deterrence policies is controversial, they strongly affect the rights of asylum-seekers and refugees, have a negative impact on the first- and second-generation migrants integration, and more generally damage the country internal and external image.

In recent years, the literature on asylum seekers highlighted the condition of children as especially vulnerable. Asylum-seeking children are the subject of an ambivalent political discourse that attributes them a dual identity both as asylum-seekers and children. As a result, they appear embedded—and trapped—in two political identity discourses (Vitus & Lidén, 2009). In Denmark, these children are primarily positioned as asylum-seekers—with the possibility of a humanitarian residence permit based only on their or their parents’ illness, with no separate hearings, and with access primarily limited to schooling without credits. (Vitus & Lidén, 2009). In contrast, their situation is different in Norway where they are positioned as both asylum-seekers and children, with rights to normal schooling, being heard in the asylum process, and possible humanitarian residence permits based on attachment to Norway.

Data indicate that, compared to the ethnic minority and native-born peers, refugee children in the Nordic countries suffer more from mental health problems (Norredam, et al., 2018). These problems are connected not only to the traumatic events they have suffered before and during their flight, but also to experiences of discrimination or poor social support they may face in the arrival country. Literature shows that the ability to access the school system (and, later on, labour market) in the arrival country is paramount to ensure refugee children better health and wellbeing conditions (Børsh et al., 2018). However, refugee children perform worse in school than native-born pupils. Only those who live in a context with low discrimination rates and achieve a good command of the new country language usually have higher educational attainment and better opportunities to enrol in higher education. Access to social networks that provide continuous support and guidance is also pivotal for the professional integration of young refugees. Nevertheless, compared with other

immigrants and native-born, a wider share of young asylum-seekers are unemployed or outside the job market (Børsch et al., 2019).

As a consequence of the arrival of asylum-seekers in the country, in the last few years a relevant number of children fleeing from conflict-affected areas or being reunited with parents with a refugee status has been enrolled in the Danish primary school (Danmarks Evalueringsinstitut, 2016). In June 2016, the Parliament passed the “Special Offers Act” on primary education of foreign children, which enables municipalities to organise flexible forms of teaching aimed at newly arrived children (Undervisningsministeriet, 2016). Consequently, beyond being enrolled in mainstream classes, immigrant children participate in reception classes where they are taught Danish as a second language in small groups. Moreover, Danish regulations require that 0 to 6 year-old immigrant children attend daycare services, so that their parents can attend language school or obtain an internship.

The inclusion of refugee children in early childhood and school services poses some challenges to the Danish education system. Thommessen and Todd (2018) present findings that, on the basis of interviews with adults who had arrived as asylum-seekers in one of two countries when they were children, compare Denmark with England on this subject. Qualitative findings based on Interpretative Phenomenological Analyses demonstrate the participants' focus on *Language-based challenges that extend to further difficulties, Choosing to succeed, Gaining strength through social support, encouragement and guidance, Integrating two separate worlds into one and Seeing, hearing and understanding children's needs*. The participants have had time to reflect on their early experiences of integration, so their voices can inform researchers, educators and other practitioners currently working with refugee children and families. The research results suggest that there is an urgent need to facilitate the integration of refugee children by providing appropriate training for teachers when dealing with them.

Other investigation delves into the way cooperation with parents of refugee children is developed in Danish educational services (Bregnbæk & Jørgensen, 2020). On the one hand, the idea of helping children thrive by systematically developing collaboration between parents and practitioners is regarded as a pillar of the Danish education system. Therefore, the expectation from the system is that parents and institutions must work together and communicate in a close way to bring about the best conditions for the joint upbringing of children. On the other hand, in the face of the special circumstances newly arrived families are usually dealing with - poor language skills, limited knowledge of local regulations and practices, multiple demands from the institutional agencies - the way this cooperation should be developed and managed is often unclear not only to the parents, but also to the practitioners themselves. Practitioners have usually a sincere desire to help both refugee children and parents take advantage of the educational experience. However, they frequently are confronted with a difficult choice between taking good care of children without ending up disempowering their parents. As these needs are inherently contradictory, research shows that pedagogical work with refugee families requires special tact and sensitivity in this regard, as there is not an easy solution to this dilemma (Bregnbæk, 2020). Another difficult dilemma pedagogical practices face is the double social identity that, as we noted, current regulations in Denmark ascribe to refugee children. Accordingly, practitioners struggle to find a balance between treating children as individuals whose profile is mainly characterised by their special mental and emotional needs or, vice versa, simply as regular students with their own capabilities and potentials (Moldenhawer & Ruskjær, 2017).

Examination of successful examples concerning the inclusion of refugee children in the Danish education system highlights that school resources play a critical role in this regard. More precisely, good practices that help develop a ‘refugee-competent school’ as a supportive environment encompass four key dimensions: a clear school ethos with regard to inclusion, taking on collective responsibility towards all students, a strong orientation to promote positive intercultural relationships, and the provision of intensive courses on Danish as a second language (Børsch et al., 2019). These dimensions are further investigated by recent research on the condition of refugee children in Danish schools (Shapiro, 2018, 2020). Recommendations from the studies include: developing holistic and coherent psychosocial interventions based on professional strategies favouring a prevention and resilience approach; promoting teachers skills in the field of Danish as a second language, as well as activities addressed to value children mother tongue as a resource; developing educational materials aimed to strengthen intercultural education and understanding in school; fostering refugee parents involvement and cooperation through networking; providing continuous professional development and supervision to teachers that work with children with a refugee background; and ensuring timely identification of mental health problems related to children forced migration, as well as access to specialised resources for examination and treatment.



## Norway

In 2017, The Statistic Norway made a whole series of different aspects of the situation for immigrants in Norwegian (NSD 202). One of the reports focused on the schools roles (Steinkellner, 2017). In 2017 about 16 percent of the students in Norwegian primary and lower secondary education and about 17 percent of the students in upper secondary education were immigrants themselves or children of immigrants, originating from many countries, cultures and languages. Immigrant students, especially those who arrived in Norway as teenagers, face tougher challenges than other students in achieving good results from their education (Thorud, 2017). However, the tendency is that the situation is improving, where the pupils with an immigrant background more often finish high school (Steinkellern, 2017).

In Norway, a comprehensive school system that benefits all students is a central aim for the education policy. The objective is to provide good learning opportunities for all students, with special consideration of the needs of specific groups of children, such as those from language minorities or children who need special educational support. The main legislation for this area is the *Education Act*, the *Act Relating to Universities and University Colleges* and the *Introduction Act* (Thorud, 2017). According to the Education Act, children and youth arriving in Norway as asylum seekers shall have the same rights and duties as their Norwegian peers. Everybody at the age of 6 to 15 years old, who live in Norway for more than 3 months, have the equal right to education in the obligatory school system independently of his or her legal status. These rules apply therefore to every child, including children of asylum seekers, unaccompanied minors seeking asylum and irregular immigrants.

For pupils who have recently arrived in Norway, the local authority may organise their education in separate groups, classes or schools. This applies to both primary, lower and upper secondary schools. If some or all of the education is to take place in such an introductory group-, class- or school, this must be stipulated in the decision to provide adapted language education for the pupil. The decision for such education in specially organised facilities may only be made if it is considered in the pupil's best interest. Education in a specially organised facility may last for up to two years, and decisions about such kind of education may only be made for one year at a time. For this period, the teaching may deviate from the curriculum defined for the pupil in question to the extent it is necessary in order to provide for the needs of the pupil. Decisions pursuant to this section require the consent of the pupil or his/her parents or guardians (Thorud, 2017).

According to the Danish and Norwegian scholars Vitus, & Lidèn, (2013) asylum-seeking children in Norway are positioned as both asylum-seekers and children, with rights to normal schooling, to being heard in the asylum process, and to possible humanitarian residence permits based on attachment to Norway. By contrast, in Denmark these children are primarily positioned as asylum-seekers—with the possibility of a humanitarian residence permit based only on their or their parents' illness, with no separate hearings, and with access primarily limited to schooling without credits.

One important potential is that refugee children and youth express great motivation to attend school. Education is an important asset for access to the labour market and the Norwegian society as a whole. Still, research literature on refugee and migrant children and youth in Norway has documented great disparities of educational experience and performance compared to their Norwegian peers. The dropout rate among pupils with refugee backgrounds in Norway has been high compared to Norwegian pupils (Hernes & Pastoor, 2013). Research examining how refugee children and youth, particularly young unaccompanied minors, experience secondary school, point out that leaving or “dropping out” from school are caused by multitude of reasons. One challenge is the experiences young refugees have when they arrive in Norway, many originate from countries where access to formal schooling was difficult or disrupted (Pastoor, 2017). School attendance from the native country might also make it difficult to understand the Norwegian culture and the Norwegian school culture in particular. Transition from the school in the native country to a Norwegian school might represent a severe challenge for newcomers.

Much research on children and youth with refugee backgrounds has been conducted within disciplines as psychiatry and psychology, focusing on challenges caused by trauma and individual psycho-social conditions. The research points out that particularly many of the unaccompanied minors have been exposed to traumatic events prior to arrival. Worries and lack of family members and friends, concentration difficulties and lack of language competence has a great impact on the participation in the daily activities in school, well-being and the abilities for learning. The young unaccompanied minors have to make a living in the new host country, without the support from parents, well known family members and friends. In such situations, it is of vital importance with psychosocial support and guidance from adults in educational settings. Research point out that access to

adults with almost similar cultural background, as role-models, can function as important “translators”, explaining and documenting the importance of education in the Norwegian society, and to establish a link and coherence between the past and the present situation for children and youth with refugee background (Hernes & Pastoor, 2013).

Norwegian research has also focused on the mediational role of classroom discourse in the development of shared understanding in a Norwegian primary school. Pastoor (2005) points out that successful participation in classroom discourse not only requires linguistic and cognitive competence, but also demands cultural knowledge, and claims that this kind of knowledge often is taken for granted. Based on research carried out in a multi-ethnic third grade class, the research reveals a discrepancy between teachers’ implicit assumptions of what is “common knowledge” and minority pupils’ lack of background knowledge might impede joint meaning construction. Discourse episodes, illustrating various misunderstandings, are analysed and compared. The analysis focuses on how the topical content, the multiple reference frames applied, and the particular forms of discourse used, jointly create the framework within which development of shared understanding occurs or fails to occur. The analysis shows how various discourse patterns create different premises for pupil participation, causing different ways of dealing with the misunderstandings encountered. It is argued that disparities in understanding should not be looked upon as “transmission errors”, as something to be avoided in classroom dialogue, but might be viewed as generators of new understandings. The article is based on qualitative analysis of discourse excerpts, using transcribed audio recordings, field notes and interviews (Pastoor, 2005).

Another article discusses Norway's implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in relation to the field of asylum. The main purpose is to explore the dilemmas and challenges posed by efforts to realize children's right to express their views and have these views given due weight in decision-making processes as stipulated in Article 12 of the CRC. The Norwegian authorities have sought to uphold this right through the introduction of "child conversations" within the asylum process. As the authors explain, children's participation may be crucial in terms of revealing persecution and thus the need for protection in accordance with the 1951 Refugee Convention. The article points out that the early experience of implementing child conversations suggests limited usefulness, claiming that the practice may be questioned in the light of the primary obligation of state parties to the CRC to attend to children's best interests. The article also draws upon experience from Sweden and offers suggestions for how the pursuit of children's participation within the Norwegian asylum system might be developed to ensure that it genuinely serves their best interests (Lidén, & Rusten, 2007).

An European overview written by the European Student’s Union’s Ethnic Minorities Working Group (EMWG) claims that perhaps the most challenging barrier to education for underrepresented groups is the fact that a highly disproportionate majority of policy makers and leaders are from the traditional majority groups. In order to truly adapt to a more inclusive model of governance in education, those responsible for governance must more accurately reflect the groups for whom higher education is available--which should, of course, be everyone.

Another important challenge is that the educational and psychosocial needs of resettled refugees are diverse and complex. According to Pastoor, (2017) it is unlikely that schools are able to meet them all. She claims that participation in diverse settings, activities and practices beyond school may expand young refugees’ opportunities for meaningful learning as well as promote their social inclusion. Facilitating access to adequate learning contexts, along with supporting their own commitment to succeed, is decisive for young refugees’ educational achievement, psychosocial adjustment and inclusion in society. Pastoor, (2017) emphasizes the need for reconceptualising refugee education as inclusive of diverse learning contexts in and outside of school. Based on that, potential opportunities to overcome such challenges might be enhanced collaboration between schools, local community organizations and wider society will facilitate and support resettling young refugees’ opportunities to achieve their fullest potential.

Brinch, Bratsberg and Raaum (2012) have focused on educational policy and examined whether it can alleviate ethnic disparities in attainment. The question posed was whether school capacity constraints might contribute to lower observed attainment among ethnic minority youth. The question was explored through examining the outcome of a major reform of Norwegian secondary education that was implemented in 1994. An important component of this reform was an expansion of upper secondary education, and a promise that every graduate from compulsory schooling became entitled to enrolment in public upper secondary education. The research showed that the largest difference in attainment between immigrant and native youth could be attributed to the transition between compulsory schooling and the first year of upper secondary education. Findings showed that for immigrant youth, and Pakistanis in particular, dropout was substantially reduced by the reform. The

researchers pointed out that this was the major reason for the improved educational attainments of immigrants compared to natives. The main conclusion was that the Norwegian upper secondary school reform implemented in 1994 played an important role in reducing differences in educational attainment between native and immigrant youth. The researchers claimed further that the wider implication was that non targeted reforms, with an emphasis on securing access to secondary education for everyone, might have an important potential for a sharp reduction in educational dropout rates for groups that are constrained by limited access to upper secondary education. Since ethnic minority youth and children from poor families are likely to be over-represented in these group, the evidence from the study is thus in line with findings of other studies of compulsory schooling reforms, such as Aakvik, Salvanes, and Vaage (2010), Meghir & Palme (2005), and Oreopoulos (2006). The studies showed that extensions of years of compulsory schooling have significant effects on the attainment of students from disadvantaged backgrounds and with short expected education careers.

Another study is related to processes of inclusion and exclusion of immigrant students that tend to have less opportunity to access quality education, many leave school earlier and their academic achievements are lower (Hilt, 2015). This group of students have therefore got increased attention and become a frequent addressee for inclusive policy measures. Education in Norway for newly arrived immigrant students is organised in segregated classes called introductory classes. The aim is that these classes will increase minority language students' ability to be included in the general school in the longer run. The main findings of this study suggests that introductory classes, as it is organised, create barriers towards newly arrived students' educational careers, in particular towards the group of students that belong to the basic level of school performances. It is problematic when the barriers to inclusion are as multifaceted as they are with the group of students that are lowest ranked. It is not the organizing aspect but rather the education offered in introductory classes that is based on a construction of newly arrived students as deviant from the mainstream. This research suggests whether newly arrived students might have a better basis for educational careers if the requirements of the systems were more attuned to the language skills, cultural references and competencies that these students already have. It further points out that as a consequence of educational exclusion, informal network systems emerge as alternatives that will include on the basis of mother tongue, and become a means for educational support.

A recently defended dissertation at Uppsala university (Mathisen, 2020) based on qualitative research conducted in four schools with students in introductory classes, language training classes, and also in separate preparatory schools for newly arrived migrants in different places in Norway. The research points out both potential and particularly social challenges concerning placing newly arrived pupils in separate classes. The potential is that placing refugee and newly arrived pupils in separate classes, the pedagogical task becomes more manageable, as language training and diversity work can be gathered in one place. Challenges pointed out by Mathiesen (2020) is that although newly arrived pupils felt comfortable in separate classes, (i.e. introductory classes), they also expressed feelings of being 'out of place' in the whole school setting. They expressed feelings of insecurity in the ordinary classes, because of not knowing the language well enough, and sensing the experience of being different from their peer pupils. The research shows that one important challenge is that newly arrived young people are often given little social support in the transition from introductory classes to ordinary classes.

One important challenge that several scholars have pointed out concerning refugee education is the ignorance of the multiplicity of childhoods that pupils with refugee backgrounds represent. Following this, the Norwegian educational system has been criticised for, even though having a political focus on equality and multiculturalism, several scholars claim that the Norwegian educational system is monocultural (Phil, 2009; Seberg, 2003; Lidén 2001; Mathiesen 2002).

### *Finland*

Compared with many European countries, Finland has a shorter history of immigration. Recent research points out that Finland has become a more multicultural country during the last generation. Together with rising levels of immigration, teachers' concerns regarding how to manage an increasingly diverse school population have arisen. There are an increasing number of students with different cultural and native language backgrounds in

Finnish schools. Still, Finnish research literature claims that the school system is far from being an all-encompassing multicultural environment for all (Sinkkonen & Kyttälä, 2014).

Knowing that Finland has both an indigenous population and other national minorities, as the Roma population, to understand Finland as more multicultural in the last year can be surprising. But research on multiculturalism in education in Finland has demonstrated the discourses in Finland draw a line between multiculturalism between the Samii indigenous people and the national minorities as the Roma population (Holm and Londen (2010). This research shows how identity and language issues are dealt with differently between indigenous and national minorities on one side and immigrants on the other sides. For indigenous and national minorities, the education discourses understand identity as an important aspect of their education, language is treated differently; for the indigenous pupil the Samii language is concerned as important but not for the Roma. For immigrant pupils, it is most important to learn about Finland and the Finnish language. This division between different types of minorities in Finland, are shared by the other Nordic countries with indigenous and national minorities. These differences in the educational discourses for different types of minorities, demonstrate that the education system can be understood as a political tool, not only as a learning institution. The close link between the government's political goal and the education system might be understood in light of the strong welfare state in the Nordic countries. That the education system can be criticized for being a political tool can be understood as a challenge for the school's goal to make the best practice possible for the immigrant pupils. However, as we will see in the discussion of the best practice in the Nordic countries, the level of autonomy for the teachers, make a defence for the patronage of the political integration focus in the civic turn (Boevi, Jensen, and Mouritsen, 2017) driving the immigrant policy. It is the professional teachers' knowledge about good learning strategies and pupils best, heading against the states integration object. This is called a governmentalization of the welfare professionals (Larsen, 2013).

Despite research in Finland demonstrates the challenges for immigrant education in the welfare states in the Nordic countries, the main focus is on multiculturalism as a new dimension in Finland, leading to research that aims to reveal as much as possible concerning educational and immigrant pupils. Issues covers, international relations, the pupils school performance, and the teachers experiences. Korjonen-Kuusipuro & Kuusisto (2019) have studied intercultural relations. Their focus on the process of belonging. Their research is part of the Nordic interest of the children's rights by its attention to the youths' voice. The research also is part of the research paradigm that sees the children as "being", not "becoming". The purpose of the school is not only to prepare a child for the future, but also to treat the child as an agent, being an active part in the making of their own life and a participant of the community. From this perspective, the research challenges the governmentalism that is a result of the civic turn that Boevi, Jensen, and Mouritzen (2017) discussed. Korjonen-Kuusipuro and Kuusisto (2019) discuss how young migrants create belonging and build capacity as being an agent in their own life through meshwork and relations.

Trotta (2005) is another example of Finnish research that draws from an agent perspective. Focusing on the teachers and the learning environment, this study analyses a teacher training course that facilitates transference from homogeneity as the norms, toward a school that works is based on diversity. The theoretical starting point is a figure of how schools might aim towards human dignity and being an agent in the world. This is also a contrast to the governmentalization process, where the schools shall help the governments to integrate the immigrant pupils. The teachers and the volunteers are viewed as capable of assisting a process that creates a diversity-friendly milieu in the schools and in the society. This serves both the schools, and the needs of the immigrant pupils. Both Trotta (2005) and Korjonen-Kuusipuro and Kuusisto (2019) are examples of the significance of the children's rights in the Nordic countries.

The migrant pupils rate of success in the school is another perspective in the Finnish research. Yeasmin & Uusiautti (2019) is an example of this, by their comparative study between Finland and Singapore. The similarity of these two states is the top student achievement. The question they ask is if the two educational systems support the immigrant children's academic success. The article gives an illuminating description of the two education systems and how they differ on many aspects, like free education in Finland versus subsidized in Singapore, the teachers in Finland having more freedom and the Finnish education system being more flexible compared. They conclude that the level of integration enhances educational success. The Finnish educational system shall accommodate the students' needs. The researchers believe that this might provide the Finnish system with a practice that can support learning among immigrant children. The immigrant pupils in Singaporean might benefit from the high aspiration and motivation to strive for success that is characteristic for the education system in Singapore. Research on how to succeed in schools is important knowledge in order to work with the long-term challenges immigrants face; drop-out; lack of stable affiliation to the work-life;

poverty; and social exclusion (Block, 2014). Another research that highlights good school practice is a study by Sinkkonen & Kyttälä (2014), interviewing nine teachers about how they work with immigrant children. The focus was to identify good practice. The results of the interviews was that the teachers believed that through lingual support, co-planning and co-teaching, school assistances, rapidly integration process, social integration, and various and creativity in teaching methods, the schools can offer an equal school for the immigrant pupils. The teachers' voices are both in line with the governmentalisation process, where the schools are a tool in the integration process, and the autonomous teachers, where the teachers' methodical freedom is part of the good practice. This paradox reveals how the education system in the Nordic countries is a straddle-legged between the states integration politics and the teachers professional knowledge of good learning environments.

### 2.3. EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICES ON RE

A report from 1989 Johnson pointed out that the minority populations in Scandinavia, as in all of Europe, increases. This situation creates a greater need for minority education at all levels and will benefit both individuals as well as the whole society. Cooperation among Scandinavian nations (Norway, Denmark, Finland, and Sweden) is important in order to develop an effective policy regarding the education of immigrants and refugees. Each of the Scandinavian countries has a definitive education policy for refugees and immigrants. However, cooperative efforts among the nations through the Nordic Inter-Parliamentary Union, the Nordic Council, and the Helsinki Agreement set no firm policy on refugee and immigrant education. Significant issues for policy makers to evaluate and consider in studying refugee and immigrant education include minority language, culture, and group development (Johnson, 1989). This has indeed happened.

Municipalities and school owners in Scandinavia have both resources and autonomies to pilot promising practice. Additionally have the teachers also some degree of freedom in choice of teaching methods, giving them possibilities and opportunities to work out good practice. Furthermore it provides a working environment in the schools for ongoing bettering processes. On the other hand, freedom can make it challenging to implement promising and evidence based practices. It is not the school owner that chooses the practice, but every school and each teacher based on their knowledge of good practice. Whether or not the practices are documented also depended on the schools and the teachers' time and resources to do so. Having in mind the huge workload for teachers, there is an understandable lack of descriptions and documentation of good practice. Henceforth, the same things that might be an infrastructure for ongoing piloting of good practice (the methodical autonomies for schools and teachers) are also the reasons for the relatively few narratives of good practice (lack of time and possibilities in everyday life to document the practice). In Scandinavia this paradoxical twofold situation regarding innovation in practice, is one of the key challenges for gathering examples of good practice. There are reasons to believe that there are many examples of good practices, but there are few examples showing this. Despite this, there are some good examples, and we will in the following describe some of these. In Denmark, a research review conducted by Olsen et. al (2018) identifies and evaluates promising intervention for immigrant children and families, among them school based interventions. The evaluation measures methodical standard, relevance, and transferability, using three unit measurements; low; medium; high. School based programs receiving the score high on all three dimensions are considered promising. Two programs meet the standard of both good research methods, relevant for Danish needs, and are transferable to Danish contexts. These two, along with most of the others are not, or on the very start, implemented in Denmark and cannot serve as examples of good practice in Denmark. However, it does demonstrate that the Danish government is searching for well described, promising education methods with high research evidence. This is challenging the two folded paradox in Scandinavia where most of the practice is developed by the schools or the teachers. This might be a progression in the practice that benefits the migrant pupils. They will be less exposed to pilot practice that does not work, but can receive practice that is less characterized by testing and more of quality. On the other hand, the Scandinavian teachers autonomies means a system that trusts teachers, leading to practitioners with high levels of self-confidence and creativity. Thus, the implementation of promising methods should not subjugate the local initiatives to work out new models to enhance the practice. There is little documentation of such practice because it is mostly local. Most of the Scandinavian research concerning

migrant children is concerned about different aspects of children's rights, their experiences, and documentation of needs. Less is documentation of models and handling questions that confirm it as good practice.

Some expectations are to be found. The common theoretical basis in practice in Scandinavian schools is to understand the schools as a prevention arena. Not only shall the schools emphasize learning subjects and language, but also serving as an arena for prevention of negative effects that are associated with long-term effects of migration, such as psychological problems, unemployment, social marginalisation, and economical strains (Montgomery & Linnet, 2012). The STROF-model serves as a good example of good practice in the Nordic countries as it clearly defines principles common in Scandinavian schools that are conducting good practice.

The STROF-model: The model's name (an acronym for: structure; speech, time and drawing; rituals; organized play/activities and care; and parent cooperation) summarises the principles for a refugee-friendly school. The model is described by Dansk Flygtningehjælp (2016) based on the work of Montgomery and Linnet (2012) and Hamilton and Moore (2004) and in close collaboration with the teacher Jette Thulin. Structure is important because refugee pupils will be in new countries and contexts that appear chaotic. Structures will help them handle the chaos. Folders in different colours, being the same across different subjects, is one way to create visual structures. Daily, repeating routines is another way to create structure. Ways to escape routines - loopholes - when pupils feel less able to handle the situations, is also important to build into the structures. Speak and time are associated with the necessity of building good relations with the pupil so the pupil can talk about problematic memories and long-term effects of difficult experiences. Children need to talk about these experiences, and the teachers need to be one the pupil can trust with his stories. Rituals are closely connected to structures; the pupil needs to have repeating day rhythm to feel secure and safe. In order to learn, these are essential factors. Organisation of the teaching with activities and alternative work position can help the pupil to handle anxiety and restlessness. Also supporting pupils with traumatic experiences to play is a strategy that also supports educational purposes. It can be to establish rules or playing together to support the process of playing with the other children. Collaboration with the parents is a fundamental part of the Nordic schools strategies to enhance good qualities in the pupils education. Parent collaboration is reckoned as more difficult with parents from other parts of the world. But since it is a cornerstone in the Nordic school system, the collaboration is also important for refugee pupils. Henceforth, the STROF-model stresses the parent collaboration with working with refugee pupils. It builds trust and creates an atmosphere of respect. The teachers can do this by ongoing dialogue with the families.

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