

Educating the children of migrants

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The European Parliament adopted by 431 votes to 55, with 94 abstentions a resolution on educating the children of migrants, responding to the Commission Green Paper entitled “Migration and mobility: challenges and opportunities for EU education systems”.

Given that all Member States are facing the same type of challenges in this area, the Parliament calls for efforts to be made, including at European level, to improve the education of children of migrants, above all because there will be more and more of these children in schools in the EU in the future. In addition, workers within the Union may be more willing to work abroad if there is not a risk that their children will suffer educationally. Parliament therefore encourage the development of a model of partnership between schools and communities enabling children whose parents are working abroad to benefit from programmes of assistance, support and counselling from the community.

Learn the languages of the host country – encourage multilingualism: Parliament reiterates that migrant children and adults must have and be willing to take the opportunity to learn the **languages of the host country** if they are to integrate fully in it. It therefore calls on the Member States to ensure education for the children of legal migrants, including the teaching of the official languages of the host country and the promotion of their native languages and cultures. According to the Parliament, preserving and promoting multilingualism should be part of the curriculum of all schools. Language learning should thus be encouraged from pre-school age to help the integration of migrants. However, the Parliament considers that that the place given to teaching in the mother tongue within the curriculum and the organisation thereof must specifically be left to the Member States.

Parliament also suggests that additional financial and administrative support for language courses should be provided to legal migrants, by trained staff who also understand the mother tongue of the migrants. It also recommends that children accompanying parents who move to another Member State for employment **should not be faced with difficulties in registering in school** at a level corresponding to that at which they had been studying in their Member State of origin.

Improving measures for integration: the Parliament stresses the need to integrate migrants and social categories (such as Roma people) in society. Integration must be based on the principles of equal opportunities in education, ensuring equal access to quality education. Any solutions - whether temporary or permanent - that are based on segregation must be rejected. Parliament also considers that, in order to improve the integration into society of children of migrants, it is necessary to involve them in a wide range of extracurricular activities (e.g. sport).

Avoid creating ghetto-type schools: Parliament recommends that the Member States avoid creating ghetto-type schools or special classes for migrant children. Instead, they should promote an inclusive educational policy under which children are allocated to classes on the basis of educational level and individual needs. Moreover, Parliament considers that in schools attended by migrant children the curriculum should pay much more attention to their needs, and that the teachers should be trained in intercultural skills to enable them to deal as effectively as possible with diversity in the school. The Parliament is concerned about the high level of early school leaving of the migrant children and therefore believes that efforts should be made to ensure the completion of the courses by the migrant children, bearing in mind that the earlier and the more successfully migrant children are integrated into schools, the better they will do at school and in the labour market.

Improving teacher training: Parliament stresses the need for quality training for teachers, including special training for teachers that explicitly addresses the special situation of the children of migrants. It encourages, for example, mobility schemes under which teachers are recruited from the country of origin so as to facilitate migrant children's contact with the culture and civilisation of their country of origin. Teachers should also have the opportunity to spend one or two semesters at host universities abroad. It also believes that **schools need immigrant teachers** as they offer an important experience to their colleagues.

Counselling services and support for non-formal education: Parliament emphasises the need for counselling services to help migrant children deal with culture shock and adapt to the host society. To help them integrate better, it proposes that individual Member States develop educational programmes aimed at improving awareness of human rights issues and personal freedom. All migrants and non-migrants should have the same equal treatment and cooperate more intensively with providers of non-formal education such as youth organisations.

Rejecting all forms of discrimination: Parliament calls for discrimination on any grounds, including nationality and residence status to be outlawed in the field of education. Coming round to the Commission's position on this point, it recognises that the current provisions of Directive 77/486/EEC do not correspond to the new social reality of the Union. It therefore supports the consultation process launched by the Commission and calls for the directive to be amended in order to cover the education of children who are nationals of non-Member States or children whose parents are non-nationals of Member States.

Lastly, the Parliament calls for:

- schools with a high proportion of immigrant children to receive the necessary staff and facilities to cope with the challenge of diverse classes;
- large towns and cities to better coordinate policy designed to promote the integration of migrant children with policies and strategies regarding housing, (child)care, the employment market, health and welfare;
- the Commission to report regularly on the progress made in the integration of migrant children in the school system of the Member States.