

Immigrant communities' integration in Europe through multilingual schools and education

2004/2267(INI) - 12/07/2005

The committee adopted the own-initiative report by Miguel PORTAS (GUE/NGL, PT) on integrating immigrants in Europe through schools and multilingual education. The report looked at the rights of children in the school system and the duties of the Member States, and also examined the role of the Union in promoting good practice. It stressed that, even when the children and/or descendants of immigrants are proficient in the language of their host country, they should be given the opportunity to familiarise themselves with their mother tongue and the culture of their country of origin, without ruling out public funding for that purpose. It also said that primary and secondary schools should provide educational support to immigrant children, especially when they are not proficient in the language of their host country, to enable them to adapt more easily and prevent them being placed at a disadvantage.

Among its recommendations, the committee urged the Member States to encourage educational establishments to "take measures making for linguistic diversity whereby the choice of alternatives to the official language would not be limited to the most widely spoken European languages".

MEPs also advocated using different methods of promoting integration through multilingualism, such as the "Content and Language Integrated Learning" (CLIL) method, and wanted the Commission to provide increased support for specific training in this and other methods. Under the Leonardo da Vinci, Youth and Socrates programmes, the range of target languages should be widened to cover immigrants' mother tongues.

The committee also wanted to see an EU network of schools employing different methods to promote integration through multilingualism and recommended that funding for this and other initiatives be provided under the horizontal lifelong learning programme. Lastly, MEPs called for special attention to be paid to the dissemination of cultural works from immigrants' countries of origin.