

Commission of the European Communities

Green Paper

Migration and Mobility: Challenges and Opportunities
for EU Education Systems

Summary of Views conveyed to the
Department of Education and Science

by

Stakeholders in the Education Sector in Ireland
during a recent consultation process

December 2008

Introduction

Stakeholders from across the education sector in Ireland were invited to attend the Intercultural Education conference on 1st October, 2008. This conference was organised by the Department of Education and Science (Department) in collaboration with the Office of the Minister for Integration, the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism and funded by the National Action Plan Against Racism. A presentation on the EU Green Paper was given by Georgi Dimitrov, Policy Officer, from the Commission.

Following on from the conference, the Integration Unit of the Department held a series of consultative meetings in November / December 2008 with representatives from different sectors within education, mainly on a sector by sector basis. The stakeholders who were invited to the conference on 1st October were invited, in addition to other representatives and organisations, to these consultative meetings. The aim was to consult as widely as possible. In total, seven consultative meetings were held to cover the following perspectives:

1. pre-school
2. primary
3. post- primary
4. higher education
5. further education
6. youth sector
7. NGO/community groups/other government departments

There was an average of 25 attendees per meeting. The consultations covered three main areas:

- **Intercultural Education Strategy-** The delegates were asked if the proposed principles and actions were appropriate. If not, they were asked for suggestions on how they should be adapted and on whether others should be included.
- **EU Green Paper: “Migration and mobility: challenges and opportunities for EU education systems”-** Stakeholders were asked for their views in relation to the four key questions posed by the Commission. They were also asked to consider the future of Directive 77/486/ EEC, and asked for their views on whether the Directive should be maintained, adapted or repealed.
- **OECD Thematic Review of Migrant Education-** Stakeholders were asked “What policies will promote successful education outcomes for first and second generation migrants?” (Ireland is one of six European countries involved in this review.)

In addition to these consultative meetings, all stakeholders were invited to make written submissions to the Department on the above areas.

Below is a summary of our understanding of the views on the EU Green Paper which were conveyed, between October and December 2008, by the stakeholders at the conference and also at the consultative meetings and from their written submissions. **The views of the Department of Education and Science are provided in a separate report. The views of the stakeholders, as summarised below, may not reflect those of the Department.**

Views of the key stakeholders to the questions posed by the Commission.

There were many common points highlighted by the stakeholders. The opportunity to reflect on the content of the Green Paper was welcomed. The responses from the stakeholders are provided under the four main headings identified in the Green Paper:

- The policy challenge
- Good policy responses to the challenge
- The possible role of the EU in supporting member states to address these challenges
- Views on the future of Directive 77/486/EEC

4.1 The policy challenges as identified by the stakeholders

Terminology and Context of the Green Paper

- The overarching “deficit” tone of the paper is questioned.
- There should be clarity around the terms used, to make the context as accessible as possible to the wider community.
- The background research which informed the development of the Green Paper needs to be highlighted. For example, some of the paper was informed by 2006 German research findings which do not agree with the promotion of heritage language.

Systemic challenges

- Integration must be seen as positive by both the migrants and the host community. There is a need for buy in from all sectors of the host community (majority and minority) and from all migrant communities if integration is to be successful and if it is to be seen as a positive aspect of life to-day.
- The EU needs to give strong leadership in relation to migration and mobility.
- There should be a focus on how policies and strategies are integrated across government departments, state agencies and NGOs. Resources must be allocated in the context of a coherent national integration strategy. For this to happen there needs to be a systemic view taken of integration – it is not the sole remit of education as integration impacts on all aspects of society. It will require the co-ordination of many different policies to create cohesion and yet allow a viable society and economy to develop.
- A point in Ireland’s favour is that there is little educational segregation here compared to other EU countries. This is not reflected in the tone of the Green Paper, which is aimed more towards a problematic migrant scenario. It is important not to generalise.
- The reality of discrimination, racism, bias, stereotyping and xenophobia should be highlighted, particularly cases of active institutional discrimination.

- The focus on migrants in the paper excludes groups within the indigenous community, such as Irish Travellers, who may also face discrimination. It should be more intercultural, and not focus solely on migrants. Lessons could be learnt from the Traveller experience in Ireland. In addition, the needs of minorities within the host culture should not be lost in the desire to integrate migrants.
- Targeting a particular group can produce stigmatisation – resources should be allocated based on educational need and not on identity.
- The experiences of some third country migrants of Europe as an impenetrable entity need to be addressed. For example, long term resident non-EU migrant workers in Ireland resent paying economic fees for third level education for their dependents (unlike Irish and EU nationals who, in general, are entitled to free fees). There can be visa problems for non EU students going outside Ireland on school trips.
- Stakeholders question exactly who or what is underperforming; is it children or is it the system?
- The positive aspects of each culture should be welcomed, with a view to adopting/ adapting/ integrating such practices/ traditions in other cultures.
- Resources are needed, particularly now in these recessionary times. Stakeholders condemned the budget cuts relating to the reduction in the number of English language support teachers from September 2009, teacher training and were also concerned that there would not be resources available to implement the Intercultural Education Strategy.
- There needs to be more focus on outcomes rather than on inputs.
- From an equality and equity basis, there should be opportunities for migrants to become an integral part both of society and the economy on completion of their different levels of education, on a par with their host peers.
- The educational needs of “aged out unaccompanied minors” (i.e. asylum seekers who arrived as unaccompanied minors but subsequently turned 18 and therefore no longer have rights to free education) and adult asylum seekers should be addressed.
- There is a lot of information available on the education system but migrants need to be able to find that information easily. This is partly the role of guidance personnel and other guidance sources (e.g. Qualifax database www.qualifax.ie).

General Education

- Fully inclusive integration will only happen through the adoption of a positive attitude towards diversity, and the elimination of any possibility of segregation or inequality in the education system.

- The experience of the more informal further education, youth work and community sectors should also be included in this debate, as they each have a key role to play, along with the formal education system, in creating an inclusive, integrated system.
- To focus on primary and post-primary education has limitations as it does not highlight the importance of pre-school or of adult and further education and the impact they have on the education of the family, both for the very young and the adults.

Language Questions

- Lack of proficiency in the host language or in the heritage language should be addressed and should not act as a barrier for children or adults. All EU states should strive to be bi-lingual/ multilingual.
- Delegates stressed that the UNCRC gives a person the right to their mother language, and this should be accommodated in the Green Paper, as some significant amount of research has shown the importance of proficiency in mother language as an aid to acquiring further language(s).
- It is vital to ensure that migrants and their children make the most of their potential – in education, at work and in the community. This should be emphasised. Their language skills should be welcomed as adding to the plurilingual pool that the Council of Europe and the Commission are seeking to create.
- Heritage language should be viewed as a positive resource for all.
- There is no mention of translation and interpretation services, which are very important for migrants who are not proficient in the host language.

The Role of Parents and Family

- The role of the family, which is an important one in both indigenous and migrant communities, must be emphasised. Parents have a key role to play in the education of their children and in school life.
- Parents and other adults should be encouraged to be participants in education, as a lifelong process, which is inclusive in its approach.

Pre-school

- Whilst the recognition of the role of the pre-school sector is welcome, the Paper's predominant focus on primary and post-primary education is at odds with the EU's commitment to lifelong learning. There should be provision for universal pre-school. Pre-school is particularly important for children who are disadvantaged since at pre-school the foundations are laid for subsequent learning and achievement.

Curriculum

- Education must provide meaningful opportunities for students to learn about citizenship in a globalised world.
- Education in a host country can be compatible with retaining heritage culture.
- There is no mention of curricula; the paper should provide some guidance on this matter. Curricula need to be updated to reflect the diversity that encompasses European society today. This has implications not only for curriculum content but also for teacher education and, in particular, for how the curriculum is mediated.

Quality Education and Teaching

- Schools should deliver a quality education service that leads to improvements in levels of educational attainment across the whole student population. There must be mechanisms for evaluating and monitoring the quality of the education delivered.
- The importance of the quality of the teaching profession and of training teachers to recognise and deal with all sorts of diversity related topics must be emphasised.
- The qualifications required of English Language Support Teachers and the lack of permanency in their appointments should be addressed.
- There are few teachers from minority ethnic, cultural or linguistic backgrounds in the primary or post-primary sectors.

Human Rights, Identity, Religion and Ethics

- Education is a human right.
- Intercultural education will only succeed if the centrality of ethics (human rights) and religion to education are acknowledged. There is a great variety of persuasions to be found amongst all people living in Ireland
- Centrality of identity receives little attention. There is a balance between the desire to reinvent / evolve ones national identity on the one hand, and a fear of losing the traditional norms of the host society on the other.
- There is a need for inter-religious dialogue, respect for different religious traditions, and a welcome for and appreciation of the value of religious diversity, including the humanist perspective.

4.2 The Policy Responses from Stakeholders

Systemic Responses

- Integration is a two way process which is as important for the host community and all its heterogeneous groups (majority and minority groups), as well as for the diverse groups of people who make up the migrant community. It is imperative that both

communities are involved and made aware of the importance of an integrative approach.

- Mutual respect between the two communities should be facilitated. Minority groups should be empowered through dialogue with majority groups.
- The focus should be more on outcomes, and not concentrated solely on inputs.
- Many ways should be taken to inform migrants about the education system and its nuances which migrants may not understand. For example, it was suggested that information should be given to parents attending the maternity health service.
- National social inclusion policies should include a focus on migrants, with appropriate benchmarking for on-going review and the making of comparisons within the EU.
- Ireland can learn from the experiences of other nations but Ireland is unique and therefore must tailor and adapt policies to meet its own needs and goals.
- The Immigration, Residence and Protection Bill, 2008 should clarify issues that have been highlighted for non-EU nationals residing here for a long time with regard to their accessing free education, like their Irish counterparts.
- Sports, the arts and other extra-curricular activities have a key role to play in the integration of migrants and the host community.

General Education

- There is an opportunity for education systems to revise their goals, values and objectives in the context of diversity and inclusion. Such an opportunity is afforded to all in the education system and not just to migrants. Diversity will enrich our society and our education system. This is a medium to long term process as integration takes time.
- Quality education and standards are keys to positive educational opportunities and outcomes for all students. The importance of outcomes must be stressed since much of the emphasis has been on inputs.
- Positive leadership enables integration to happen in educational settings.
- All learners should be taught in mainstream settings and segregation should not be accepted since it could hinder the academic achievement of the learners.
- It will be necessary to address the fact that children and adults have different ways of learning languages. Migrants, like host communities, are very heterogeneous groups.
- There should be language support for those migrant students who need it before they enrol in schools.

- Interventions should be based on educational needs and not on identity.
- There should be adequate investment in education to ensure the capacity of schools to engage. There should be an intercultural liaison person in schools to cater for the needs of both majority and minority students.
- Racism, discrimination, bias, stereotyping, xenophobia should be tackled in a proactive way by the education system. To this end, there is a need for training on all of these issues and on interculturalism, citizenship and human rights so that the education system can reflect the diversity of peoples' cultures, values, beliefs and traditions. Training provision needs to be extended from the current limited provision.
- The importance of not only the formal but also the non-formal (youth, community and NGOs) sector in integrating young migrants must be emphasised. Youthwork plays a significant role in the provision of services to early school leavers.
- Migrants should be facilitated in progressing from further education to higher education. This will require building links between the two sectors.
- There is a need for close cooperation between the formal and non-formal (youth) sectors as well as parents. There is also a need for support from school liaison personnel.
- The importance of mentoring, tutoring and role models should be stressed.
- There needs to be a focus on the academic achievements of lower performing migrant students, as well as on those who are average or above.
- All service providers, including educators, need inclusion policies and these need to be continually evaluated.
- It is important for schools to take a whole school approach to inclusion. Appropriate professional development is required for all involved in the schools and for the Department's Inspectorate. Such professional development will enable greater appreciation of the cultures and mother tongues of migrants. It will also allow for skills to be developed which will enable bridge building with migrant families to happen.
- Good enrolment practices in education institutions are a precursor to good integration.
- School policies must be directed at the development of the whole child and be inclusive of his / her parents and the community.
- Research should be carried out to ensure migrant students are achieving on a par with their peers from the host community. Evidence based policy is essential, as is data collection, to support the development of appropriate policies and strategies.
- Access for long term resident non EU/EEA migrants to higher and further education needs to be clarified so that they are on a par with Irish and EU/ EEA students.

- Migrants should be aware that they can have their qualifications equivalenced through Qualifications Recognition Ireland and their teacher qualifications recognised by the Teaching Council. The presence of migrant teachers in schools would provide positive role models for migrant students.
- Access to higher education for vulnerable groups is promoted through outreach by access offices in the third level colleges. Migrant students in post-primary are a target group for access offices.
- Initiatives to support cultural diversity are welcomed. However, cultural diversity is not just for a day or a week but is an integral part of education programmes
- The development of the Intercultural Education Strategy is to be welcomed, but it must be followed up by institutional policies that support integration. Such policies need to be sustained through the medium to longer term to be effective.
- There is a need to increase guidance support for migrants so that they understand the education system and all its nuances. With such guidance the migrant students will have the data to make informed decisions and gain the optimum opportunities from their education
- Inter-agency collaboration is vital for successful systemic integration.

Language

- The host country should be twinned with the heritage countries to assist in the maintenance of heritage languages. Proficiency in heritage language leads to better educational outcomes.
- It is important that both host and heritage languages are acknowledged as key to the successful personal and social development of migrants. One of the stakeholders highlighted that Ireland has adopted the revised European Social Charter which is committed to the promotion and facilitation of, as far as is practicable, the teaching of the migrant worker's mother tongue to the children of the migrant worker.
- Standardised interpretation and translation services should be available.

Parents, Family and Community

- The education of parents and children are inextricably linked and this should be strongly supported. Migrant parents and adults should be encouraged to participate in education, to upskill and be a part of the lifelong, life wide and life deep learning spectrum.
- Migrant parents should be supported to participate on parents' councils and boards of management and in other structures or activities in the school. The involvement of all parents in their children's education is a lever to successful educational outcomes.

Some migrant mothers may need special support to empower them to become involved in all education sectors from pre-school upwards.

- It is important to actively involve the communities (host and migrant) that are served by schools.
- The role which the Home School Community Liaison Scheme plays must be acknowledged. It can bridge the gap and enhance the complementary skills of the school team members and the migrant families whose children are attending primary or post-primary schools. The scheme concentrates on the most marginalised. It also assists with the transition to higher or further education and encourages adults to re-enter second chance education.
- Partnership and collaborative working between schools and their communities, volunteers and state agencies can bring coherence to the integration message.
- The youth sector can support heritage language and culture alongside host language and culture through the adoption of an intercultural approach. Youth work can deliver role models and supportive community attitudes for young migrants.

Pre-school

- The importance of pre-school needs to be confirmed in Ireland. The EU should help to progress this agenda. The role of host and heritage language is important for the development of young children from migrant backgrounds.

Curriculum

- The curriculum needs to be more reflective of and positive about students' diverse cultures found within both the host and migrant communities.

Quality Education and Teaching

- There is a need for training not only for teachers working in the schools to assist them in adapting their teaching skills to incorporate co-operative and collaborative teaching and learning to support inclusion, but also for all service providers working in the community.
- Teachers from countries other than the host country should be facilitated in recognition of their qualifications and in gaining employment.
- Teachers must have high aspirations and expectations for all their students

Human Rights, Identity, Religion and Ethics

- The denominational nature of Irish education is not acceptable from a humanist perspective. It can be a concern also for people who hold religious beliefs different to that of the school with a particular denominational character. Greater variety of provision should be prioritised.
- The dominant ideologies of race, identity and culture need to be challenged.

4.3 Principal points on Directive 77/486/EEC arising from the consultations with the stakeholders

- Delegates all agreed that the Directive should be kept, but amended to reflect the current situation. It served a useful role by providing a policy framework for member states and by recognising the contributions not only of host language but also of mother tongue.
- Focus on host culture and language alone will lead to cultural alienation and to failing educational achievement rates amongst migrants.
- From a logistical perspective, school facilities should be made available at weekends, for summer camp, for after core school hours to facilitate support for heritage language learning.
- Migrant parents should be encouraged to use their heritage language at home so that their children remain proficient in their heritage language.
- The language needs of minority disadvantaged groups, such as the Roma, need to be centrally supported as it is unlikely that their language will be supported under specific bilateral arrangements.
- The EU should provide supports to member states to co-ordinate teaching that appreciates other cultures and the mother tongues of the migrant students.
- The Directive states that language support should be in the language of the host country- this is vitally important, particularly when resources are scarce.
- There should be reference to the “Race Directive” 2000/43/ ECC. This directive prohibits discrimination and harassment on “Race” ground and permits positive action to prevent or compensate for disadvantages linked to racial or ethnic origin.
- Both formal and informal education sectors should be included in the scope of the Directive.
- The Directive should be improved by linking in the experience of the further education sector with the role of the formal schooling approach.
- There cannot be prescriptive guidelines without proper resources to support them.

- Whilst delegates welcomed the resources provided by the EU, they also felt that there was too much bureaucracy involved in European projects, particularly with regard to drawing down funds.
- The Directive should be adapted to consider third country nationals.
- The Directive makes no mention of the role of the host population, which is seen as a deficiency. The education of migrant children is shaped by the attitude of the host community.
- The Directive should be amended to include equality for all groups.

4.4 Principal points on the future role of the EU arising from the consultations with the stakeholders

- The peer activities/ projects of the EU are seen as being extremely valuable in fostering links with other people working in the area, lead to a beneficial sharing of experiences, good practices and knowledge. Given this, local networks should be developed.
- EU funding has already helped to promote intercultural initiatives. However, there is a need for the EU to simplify its application procedures and levels of bureaucracy so that more education providers, NGOs etc. will become involved and see the value and potential of the different programmes.
- Greater opportunities for mobility should be available for teachers across the EU and the EU should support more teacher exchanges.
- The EU has a role to play in providing charters for sectors, general paradigms, policies, and frameworks, without being prescriptive and at the same time recognising the relationship of subsidiarity between EU and member states regarding education.
- Delegates felt that, overall, the pre-school sector is excluded from a lot of relevant EU policies; however, the EU could be used to drive the pre- school agenda, given that there is currently a strong EU focus on quality childcare.
- EU embassies in member states could provide an information and translation service for their citizens living in another member state. They could provide information in their own languages on services and on accessing them in the host state. They could also facilitate provision of heritage language classes for their own nationals in the host country.
- Funding for heritage language teaching needs to be clarified
- The EU needs to pay particular attention to work of Council of Europe on multi/ plurilingualism as well as its own work on this topic.

- With regard to indicators, it is important to focus on methodologies and content relating to how schools engage effectively with diversity.
- Encourage reciprocal visiting teacher arrangements between member states – carry out a pilot project in a number of primary and post-primary schools.
- Policy development should involve all partners, as should policy evaluation and monitoring.
- EU key competencies for lifelong learning are keys to successful integration.