



**COUNCIL OF EUROPEAN MUNICIPALITIES AND REGIONS
CONSEIL DES COMMUNES ET REGIONS D'EUROPE**

CEMR Response

**To the Green Paper on migration and
mobility: challenges and opportunities
for EU education systems**

Brussels, December 2008

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Summary

On 2 July 2008, the European Commission launched the so-called Renewed Social Agenda, a package of initiatives and reports in the areas of employment and social affairs, education and youth, health, information society and economic affairs. It aims to ensure that the EU and its citizens are better equipped to tackle today's new social realities shaped by globalisation and technological and demographic change. One of the initiatives is the Green Paper on *Migration and mobility: challenges and opportunities for EU education systems*.

The consultation opens a debate on how education policies can address the challenges posed by immigration and internal EU mobility and how EU level support could help Member States develop policies to improve equity in education, accommodate linguistic and cultural diversity, adapt teaching skills and build bridges with migrant children and families. Integration of migrants concerns municipalities and regions in their unique role of service providers and planners, as well as local employers. For this reason, the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) have elaborated the present response to express our members' views on the proposals outlined by the Commission in its Green Paper.

The Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) is the umbrella organisation of local and regional authorities federated through over 50 national associations of towns, municipalities and regions in 38 European countries.

Key points of CEMR's response

1. Integration takes place at the local and regional level. Municipalities and regions have to take into account the special needs of migrants.
2. Migration is a very complex phenomenon. Immigration patterns differ very much from one region to the other and therefore require tailored policies and measures.
3. The role of education is of utmost importance for integration. In this context education should be understood as a concept that is not limited to schools only, but include day care facilities for children, family centres, cultural and sport centres, etc.
4. Language knowledge is crucial to integration and children should get all the support they need to learn the host language and, where possible, to strengthen their knowledge of their language of origin.
5. Every child, regardless from its socio-economic status or origin, has the right to receive good education and should be supported according to its needs.
6. Migrant children and their parents might have extra needs, including other social services and care.
7. For education institutions it is a challenge to meet these special needs and support migrant children without neglecting the other children.
8. Successful integration of migrant pupils requires additional financial means for education institutions, local and regional authorities.
9. Exchange of good practice and networks or partnerships should be promoted to help local and regional authorities and education authorities to learn from each other.
10. The context of migration and integration changed considerably since the 1970s. Therefore the Directive on the education of the children of migrant workers from 1977 should no longer be the basis for future integration policies. Instead, especially the teaching of pupils' language of origin should be based on voluntary arrangements.

Introduction

1. CEMR welcomes the Green Paper, which stimulates the debate on the importance of education for the integration of migrant children.
2. Integration takes place at the local level. Municipalities and regions are providing a wide range of services and need to take into account the special needs of migrants. Even when the content of education is not within the responsibility of local and regional authorities, these are responsible for the operation of educational institutions and as a consequence are very much affected by the challenges of integration of migrants to the education system.
3. Education is a key factor of integration. CEMR would like to stress that although schools are a major part of a country's education system, education should be seen in a wider perspective. Education is more than schools; other institutions such as day-care facilities for children, family centres, cultural and sports centres are part of the system.
4. Every child, regardless from its origin, has the same right to education. However, studies show that in many Member States the socio-economic status still decides about the children's success in the education system. CEMR would like to stress that all these children, migrant children as well as others, should get the support they need to receive good education.

The policy challenge

What are the important policy challenges related to the provision of good education to children from a migrant background?

In addition to those identified in this paper, are there others that should be taken into account?

5. The Green Paper gives a reasonable overview of the policy challenges associated with educating and integrating migrant children. CEMR would like to add that immigration differs very much from one region to the other; in some municipalities and regions the challenge is the lack of experience in dealing with the integration of migrants because migration is a recent phenomenon, in other parts the challenge consists of the number of different (cultural) backgrounds.
6. Schools and other institutions such as kindergartens are in the front line in responding to migration. When a new child arrives at a school, he or she needs to be welcomed, assessed, offered appropriate support and integrated into the school and school life, without adversely affecting the education offered to all the other children in the school.
7. It is important to note that due to several waves of migration, schools are having to deal with increased numbers of children from different countries.
8. Some migrant children have extra needs due to traumatic events in their recent lives (i.e. war and violence). Specialist staff is needed to deal with this. These children and their families might also need other social services and care.
9. Schools with many migrant pupils face additional costs such as those arising from additional language teaching or staff training. Also the local and regional authorities

concerned have additional expenditures for example for learning support services, health services etc. It has thus to be ensured that educational institutions as well as local and regional authorities will have the necessary financial means to provide the support to migrant children and their families needed to better integrate them.

The policy response

What are the appropriate policy responses to these challenges?

Are there other policies and approaches beyond those listed in this paper that should be taken into account?

10. Language knowledge is of utmost importance to integration. CEMR and its members would like to support the statement in the Green Paper that migrant children should be included in the prevailing education system and that they should be given additional support to adapt to the society of the host country and where possible they should get support to strengthen their knowledge of their language and culture of origin.
11. Teaching in a cultural diverse environment should be included in the teachers training and should be offered for professional development.
12. To receive good education, children need the support of their parents. For migrants, it might be difficult to give this support due to unfamiliarity with the education system. It is therefore of major importance to better include families into the education of their children, for example via specialised staff acting as contact persons between the institution and the family.
13. Educational institutions and local authorities can learn from other institutions and authorities. CEMR welcomes the exchange of good practice and partnerships or networks between the actors.

The role of the European Union

What actions could be undertaken via European Programmes to impact positively on the education of children from a migrant background?

How should these issues be addressed within the Open Method of Coordination for Education and Training? Do you feel that there should be an exploration of possible indicators and/or benchmarks as a means to focus policy effort more strongly on closing the gaps in educational attainment?

14. CEMR welcomes the dissemination of good practice and information in the context of the Open Method of Coordination for Education and Training.
15. Funds and programmes can also be a way in which the EU can help to support the development of new measures to ensure that more migrant children and young people receive a good education.
16. There is also a role for the EU to strengthen initiatives which directly benefit local authorities, schools, teachers and pupils which promote the creation of voluntary networks and exchanges, for example professional development opportunities for teachers working in culturally and linguistically diverse schools.

The future of Directive 77/486/EEC

How can Directive 77/486/EEC, taking into account the history of its implementation and bearing in mind the changed nature of migration flows since its adoption, play a role in supporting Member States' policies on these issues?

Would you recommend that it be maintained as it stands, that it should be adapted or repealed?

Would you propose alternative approaches to support Member States' policies on the issues it addresses?

17. The directive from 1977 on the education of the children of migrant workers outlines that Member States should:
 - Ensure free tuition in their territory, adapted to the specific needs of such children, in particular the teaching of an official language of the host state; and
 - Promote the teaching of the mother tongue and culture of the country of origin, in co-ordination with normal education, in co-operation with the Member State of origin.

18. Migration patterns, numbers and profiles have changed considerably since the 1970s. Member States have also developed their own approaches to and policies to the teaching of the host language during this time. This has rendered many parts of the directive either irrelevant or redundant. Another present day limitation is that the directive only applies to EU citizens and not to third country nationals.

19. Local and regional authorities are strongly committed to respect and promote cultural and linguistic diversity. Notwithstanding, CEMR considers that the teaching of the pupils' language of origin should not be implemented via legislative instruments, but that such principles should be promoted via voluntary arrangements. Schools and education authorities should retain the flexibility and freedom to assess the feasibility of, and decide upon, whether and how they provide this in the education system.

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