

# Learning Migration – Comenius 3 network

*Transnational seminar group for educational authorities*

## National Report – Portugal (new version)

### 1. Background/history of minorities in schools

Traditionally Portugal was a country characterized by ethnic and linguistic homogeneity. Its peripheral geographic situation and the fact that economically it was not an attractive destiny probably explain why the country did not use to be subject to flows of immigration; on the contrary, for centuries it was a country of emigration. For the last three decades, however, the situation has changed significantly, mostly during the last ten years.

### 2. Recent immigration

During the seventies, in the post-colonial time, people from the former colonies started to come to Portugal. Relevant communities from Cape Verde, Angola, Mozambique, Guiné-Bissau and São Tomé e Príncipe settled mainly in the suburban areas around Lisbon and Setúbal.

In the eighties began the flow from Brazil, and more recently from eastern European countries (Ukraine, Romania, Moldova, Bulgaria ...).

The Chinese community, not very significant in the past, has become more visible since 2000, after Macao changed its administrative status, nowadays other Asian nationalities are also represented, e.g. Pakistan, Nepal, Bangle Dash, involved in commercial and restaurant activities.

### 3. Number of minorities in schools

According to a questionnaire carried out during the school year 2004/05, there were pupils of 120 different nationalities in Portuguese schools. A more recent and thorough survey is being carried out by the Regional Educational Authorities, and it shows that around 25.000 foreign pupils attend our schools in all levels of non-high education.

Anyway, it can not be assumed that all nationalities represented constitute a minority, since a significant part of them may have a very small number of people and they are not organised as a community.

### 4. Provisions in schools

Within the framework of their educational project, which has to be in accordance with the national curricular guidelines, schools can organize special programmes to facilitate the integration of immigrant pupils, namely providing extra lessons of teaching Portuguese as a non-mother language.

### 5. Allocation of resources

No data available.

## 6. Curriculum

Pupils from immigrant families are expected to follow the national curriculum. However, schools are free to make some curricular adaptations until the pupils do not have the necessary language competence. A normative (normative no. 7/2006, 6<sup>th</sup> February) provides the legal framework for integration of foreign pupils in compulsory education. Questions and doubts have been posed by schools, so a new guideline has just been issued (oficio-circular no. 23/DSEE/DES/07, 22<sup>nd</sup> May), clarifying some points and proposing some specific measures to support the integration of immigrant children and to foster a quick acquisition of the Portuguese language.

## 7. Bilingual education

The national language education policy does not favour a bilingual education. In our education system, the principle that lies under integration policies is that they should learn the Portuguese language as quickly as possible. Furthermore, we have no resources to provide bilingual education.

However, the authorities support initiatives taken by the communities to provide teaching of their own language, e.g. the Ukrainian community has created a school where their children can learn their language and culture. There is also an agreement with the Greek government, we provide the logistics (school room and material resources), and they provide the teacher.

As a country of emigration which for decades has allocated significant resources to provide the teaching to the Portuguese communities abroad, we understand how important it is for children to keep a link with their roots.

## 8. Action plans

The Ministry of Education has produced the *Documento Orientador* with **Curricular Guidelines** and another document showing the **linguistic profiles** of the immigrant pupils as well as **diagnostic tests** following the level-scale of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for Languages of the Council of Europe. A new document on language competences is being prepared by a group of experts in Portuguese as a 2<sup>nd</sup> language. It will help teachers assess the pupils' progress according to the level-scale of the CEFR.

Three models of the European Language Portfolio have been prepared, two of them are already validated, the latest (designed for younger learners) is undergoing a process of experimentation before being submitted to the Council of Europe for validation. As a tool to motivate for language learning it can also contribute to give visibility to linguistic and cultural diversity in our schools.

A network of schools with good practices in teaching Portuguese as a non-mother language is being constituted; we believe their example can help other schools to implement projects favouring intercultural education

Not only for minorities, but for all, since we are aware that improvements in the whole system are needed, some national Programmes have been launched:

- National Reading Plan – to promote reading habits
- National Programme for the teaching of Portuguese
- Programme for supporting the teaching of Mathematics
- Programme for supporting the teaching of Experimental Science

\* The 3 last programmes involve high resources in in-service teacher training in order to promote innovative practices aiming at improving pupils' attainment.

## **9. Teacher training**

Both high education institutions (Universities and Polytechnics) and the Ministry of Education (both the central service and the network of teacher training centres) have provided teacher training in intercultural education and teaching Portuguese as a second language. However, we are aware that the initiatives taken in this field may not be enough to respond effectively to the needs. New problems/challenges always demand new approaches, above all creativity and flexibility.

## **10. New initiatives**

A new normative is being prepared for upper-secondary education, proposing a special regime for learners until they have not acquired the language competence (B2 or C1) that is required to enable them to follow the national curriculum.

Another priority is the production of teaching materials, also for adult education. It is agreed that an adequate social integration implies a good command of the Portuguese language.

## **11. Examples of best practice**

Some schools, where the pressure is most felt, have been particularly active in reorganising themselves in order to respond to this new challenge.

In some schools free courses of Portuguese as a 2<sup>nd</sup> language are offered to adults.

Also relevant are the initiatives to give visibility to the cultures of the guest pupils, thus contributing to the intercultural dialogue in our schools. We believe this will foster a deeper understanding among people from different cultural backgrounds, since intolerance normally grows from mutual ignorance.

## **12. Challenges in the field of education for minorities**

Let us point out the most relevant:

- to be able to work for a more cohesive society, adopting measures against social exclusion
- to improve the educational system in order to reduce school failure and dropout
- to improve teacher training so they are more capable of dealing with diversity
- to provide all students conditions to develop key-competences, e.g. good command of the Portuguese language; mathematical and scientific literacy
- to provide educational and training opportunities that may respond to the needs of the country and to needs and interests of the students
- to expand vocational guidance services that may help students to make conscientious choices as far as their professional careers are concerned
- to foster intercultural dialogue in our schools in order to prevent ethnic conflicts in the future

*Note:* The integration of children from the eastern European countries is not very problematic: they learn the language quickly; the fact that they come from countries where school is valued and where the population has high levels of schooling is a favouring factor.

The integration of Chinese children is more complex because of linguistic difficulties: languages belong to such different systems, that it makes it difficult for them to distinguish the sounds. Being good in visual memory, they tend to develop writing competences much more quickly than oral communication.

The integration problems of African children coming from the former colonies were not sufficiently valued in the past, because Portuguese is the official language in those newly independent countries. However, they normally speak another language at home (several forms of Creole or other national languages).

Among this population high levels of school failure and drop out do not contribute for a successful integration in society. Generally speaking, one can say that the difficulties of integration are more related with socioeconomic and cultural factors, since most of them come from economically deprived families, with low levels of schooling.

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