Multicultural Diversity and Special Needs Education

MULTICULTURAL DIVERSITY AND SPECIAL NEEDS EDUCATION

SUMMARY REPORT

European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education

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CONTENTS

FOREWORD

This report is a summary of the results of the analysis conducted by the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (the Agency) focusing upon the topic of Special Needs Education and Immigration – a priority area for the Agency's member countries.

In 2005, the representatives from the ministries of education involved in the Agency expressed their interest in an investigation exploring this sensitive topic, with the centre of attention placed upon how to respond in the best way to the special educational needs of pupils coming from different cultures and very often using a different language than the one used in the host country.

A total of 25 countries were involved in this analysis – Austria, Belgium (Flemish and French speaking communities), Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland (French and German speaking communities) and UK (England).

One to two experts per country were nominated to participate in the analysis. Without their expertise and competence the analysis would not have been possible. They have provided very valuable information at local and/or national level and have contributed with their reflections to the final result. Experts' contact details are available at the end of this report and also on the project web page. Their input, alongside those from the Agency Representative Board members and National Co-ordinators, is greatly appreciated. All of their contributions have ensured the success of the Agency project.

This summary report presents the main findings from the project. It is based on information from country reports submitted by all participating countries and analysis of practice. All of this information is available on the Multicultural Diversity and SNE project web page at: http://www.european-agency.org/agency-projects/

Cor J.W. Meijer
Director
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INTRODUCTION

This report is a summary of the analysis conducted by the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, at the request of member countries' representatives on the topic of Special Needs Education and Immigration. Agency representatives asked to receive information from the different countries about the combined effects of this double issue. Concrete recommendations formulated as a result of the analysis were also asked for.

The term special needs education (SNE) refers to the provision addressed to pupils with special educational needs (SEN). UNESCO (1994) defines SNE within the framework of inclusive education as educational intervention and support designed to address special educational needs. The term has come into use as a replacement for the term 'special education'.

Migration is a sensitive topic that can be perceived as having a negative connotation. Migratory movements have always been a feature of European society – mainly due to economic reasons with citizens looking for better life and work conditions – and more recently, a new type of emigration, resulting from conflicts and wars, has been evident. However, it can appear that people in European societies do not always view populations with different cultural backgrounds as a source of enrichment for their society, or for their education systems. Instead, this difference is seen as a challenging situation.

This is the reason why key European and international organisations have highlighted this issue and encouraged national authorities to support and provide high quality education for all pupils despite their origin and cultural situation. UNESCO (1994) has clearly expressed that: 'schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. This should include disabled and gifted children, street and working children, children from remote or nomadic populations, children from linguistic, ethnic or cultural minorities and children from other disadvantaged or marginalized areas or groups' (p. 6).

The Council of Europe Action Plan 2006–2015 also recommends that 'people with disabilities from minority groups, disabled migrants and refugees may experience multiple disadvantages because of

discrimination or lack of familiarity with public services. Members states should ensure that support for people with disabilities takes account of their language or cultural background and the particular needs of such a minority group' (Appendix 4.6, p. 32).

The United Nations Convention on the Right of Persons with Disabilities says that persons with disabilities shall be entitled on an equal basis with others, to recognition and support of their specific cultural and linguistic identity (Article 30, 2008).

The term 'immigrant' is differently defined in countries. Differences correspond to national situations in relation to the population concerned. Definitions also correspond to the countries' history and their political and economic situation. Countries use the term immigrants or foreigners according to the pupils' or their parent's place of birth, or according to the first language used at home – sometimes different from the one of the host country.

The OECD (2006) and Eurydice (2004) use the term immigrant pupils referring to 'foreign pupils' or 'first-generation pupils' when pupils and their parents were born outside the host country. 'Second-generation pupils' corresponds to those born in the host country, but whose parents were born in a different country. Third or fourth-generation pupils correspond to 'natives': they may have citizenship of the country of residence, they have been born in the host country and at least one parent was also born in the host country. In countries with a long tradition of immigration, third, or more generation migrants are not considered as immigrant pupils, but rather as pupils with a different ethnic background, belonging to minority groups, or coming from ethnic minority groups.

It is important to highlight that the analysis conducted by the Agency has not focused upon general educational issues relating to pupils with immigrant backgrounds, but solely on educational issues related to pupils with SEN and an immigrant background. The main purpose of the analysis has been to investigate how to respond to the educational needs of pupils with SEN with different cultural backgrounds and who in some cases use a different language than the one used in the host country, in the best possible way.

This dual consideration has highlighted the following key issues:

a) To which extent language problems are considered as learning difficulties;

b) How the abilities and needs of pupils with an immigrant background are assessed;
c) How to support teachers and families in the best way.

For the purpose of the analysis, the group of nominated Project Experts identified the characteristics of the project target group as pupils:

- With all types of disabilities/special educational needs;

- Who are 'immigrants' in the sense of:

    i) being first, second or third generation migrants;

    ii) who use a different, or perhaps only similar language from that of the country of residence;

    iii) with/without the nationality of the host country;

    iv) with/without low educational and/or economic background in comparison to the host country;

- Who have a different cultural background than that of the host country.

During the analysis the need to clarify the term 'immigrant' became increasingly clear. Such a definition needed to take into consideration the whole school population concerned, that is, newly arrived pupils (corresponding to the term of 'immigrants') and those pupils who are citizens of the country, but who belong to ethnic minority groups. Therefore the target group for the analysis covered pupils with special educational needs who are immigrants, or who belong to ethnic minority groups. The term immigrant background used in the document covers the defined target group.

In spite of the differences among countries, the analysis has tried to draw attention to five core areas. These areas were identified as being central for the collection of information and the subsequent practical analysis regarding the education of pupils with the combined characteristics of SEN and an immigrant background:

1. Target population, as defined at country level;

2. Data existing at local (and/or national) level;

3. Educational provision offered to pupils and families;

4. Support measures;

5. Assessment tools used in order to initially identify the needs and abilities of pupils with special educational needs and an immigrant background.

The lack of existing data in relation to the topic was an important challenge that had to be addressed during the analysis. It can be considered that the situation of limited or no data is a positive result and consequence of non-discrimination policies implemented in countries' educational systems.

It is felt that the Agency project has resulted in the collection of information that leads to a more nuanced reflection of reality, which is described in the following chapters.

The overall project analysis is the result of a process involving several steps:

- A synthesis of studies and published results from research upon the topic was undertaken, taking into consideration the five core areas outlined above. Chapter 1 presents this review of key literature.

- A questionnaire was prepared jointly with the project experts in order for them to collect essential information from the local level, relating to the five areas listed above. An extended questionnaire for collecting information at the national level was prepared as an optional task. Local/national country reports were drafted by the experts using the questionnaire findings. These reports were then used as the basis for the global synthesis presented in chapter 2.

- The five key areas of the questionnaire also constitute the basis for the practical analysis conducted in the project. Six locations were selected in order to examine how education is implemented in countries with long immigration traditions, or with newly arrived pupils. Results of this practical analysis are presented in chapter 3.

- The findings from research, country reports and the examples of practice, have been summarised by the Agency project team and were then the focus of discussion together with the group of project experts. Proposals, as well as the main conclusions from this joint reflection are presented in chapter 4: Conclusions and Recommendations.

1. ELEMENTS OF THEORY FROM RESEARCH

1.1 State of the art at the European level

The purpose of this chapter is to summarise the key elements highlighted by several European studies, analyses and research studies upon the education of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) and an immigrant background focusing on the five areas already outlined in the introduction (definition, data, educational provision, support measures and assessment procedures). A list of references detailing the existing European, international and national documents taken into account in this analysis is available from the Agency web area dedicated to the thematic project: www.european-agency.org/agency-projects

The methodology used for this literature review was to systematically search databases (such as ERIC, EBSCO Academic Search Elite, Google Scholar, Libris, etc.) and printed publications mentioning or focusing upon the education of pupils with SEN and an immigrant background. Due to the growing use of information and communication technologies for disseminating information, an extensive Internet search was conducted, in order to identify relevant websites, online abstracts, reports and dissertations studying or referring to the link between pupils with SEN and an immigrant background.

For the purpose of this analysis, the search focused primarily on results from research and work carried out within Europe, as this geographical area was the focus for the Agency project. However, important work has also been undertaken outside of Europe and interesting input from American and Canadian sources was also taken into account (e.g. AMEIPH, 1998 and 2001; National Research Council, Committee on Minority Representation in Special Education, 2002; Losen and Orfield, 2002).

Besides analyses undertaken by individuals, or with a national or local scope, attention was paid to surveys and reports published by international institutions with a European focus, such as the European Commission, the European Monitoring Centre against Racism and Xenophobia (now the European Agency for Fundamental Rights), Eurydice, or with a wider geographical coverage, such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and

Development (OECD) or the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO).

Findings and research up to 15 years old have been taken into account: this broad time scale appeared necessary due to the very high level of specificity of the topic being considered and the limited existence of literature on this subject.

Before detailing the main findings highlighted in the analysis of previous work related to the five key areas defined for the Agency project, it is important to outline the important factors providing the context of the analysis.

Most European countries are experiencing significant immigration flows and for some countries, this trend is taking place within a long tradition. For other countries, immigration is a new phenomenon; in some parts of Europe where previously emigration was predominant, countries are now seeing foreign populations settling within their borders. A recent OECD study on migration (2006) highlights that immigration is 'likely' to remain high and even to increase within European countries. These multifaceted demographic changes have modified the identity of the European population: European society is becoming more multi-cultural.

This diversity is reflected in the current school population in Europe. Schools are welcoming pupils with many ethnic origins, who originate from a country different from their country of residence, or have parents who were born abroad. They have a culture and sometimes a language different from those of the host country where they receive education.

Educational systems and legislation have a role in supporting the integration of the population with an immigrant background into the host society. The European Commission Green Paper on migration (2008) underlines that: 'the presence of a significant number of migrant pupils has important implications for education systems. Schools must adjust to their presence and build their particular needs into the traditional focus on providing high quality and equitable education … Schools must play a leading role in creating an inclusive society, as they represent the main opportunity for young people of migrant and host communities to get to know and respect each other … Linguistic and cultural diversity may bring an invaluable resource to schools' (p. 3). Addressing this new population and meeting the

needs of pupils with an immigrant background at school is a major concern for policy-makers and an important challenge that education systems are trying to face all over Europe.

In the area of special needs education, practitioners, researchers and decision-makers at EU and national levels have shown a growing interest in the situation of pupils with SEN and an immigrant background. However, despite the fact that all European countries show concern for adjusting their education policies and practice in order to take into account the new multi-cultural identity of the school population, no large scale study has been carried out to analyse the impact of this change for special needs education in Europe.

The thematic project carried out by the Agency is the first initiative attempting to analyse the situation of pupils with SEN and an immigrant background in schools within Europe.

Information from the existing literature in this field reveals that some European-wide studies have been conducted focusing either on the issue of special needs education (e.g. Meijer, Soriano and Watkins, 2003, 2006; OECD, 2004) or on the question of the education of pupils with an immigrant background (e.g. Eurydice, 2004; OECD, 2006). However, no analysis has focused on the combination of both topics with a European scope.

The only references found relating to work carried out at the European level on the conjunction of these two areas are: a Comenius Action 2 project (entitled 'Development of Conditions for Disabled Children of Gypsies and Migrant Workers – the SEN Project') conducted between 1996 and 1998 involving nine countries; a Comenius Action 2 project (entitled 'Teaching materials for pupils with disabilities and immigrant background') carried out from 1999 to 2001 and involving three countries and the European Conference on Migrant Children with Special Educational Needs, which took place in Copenhagen on 7 and 8 June 1999.

Bearing this in mind, it would be totally wrong to conclude that no research has been conducted within Europe examining the potential double educational disadvantages faced by pupils with SEN and an immigrant background. Some relevant studies and analyses have indeed been carried out, but these are limited to a local or national focus.

The remainder of this chapter details the main findings that can be highlighted by examining these pieces of work. It should be emphasised that the analysis has intentionally focused upon work addressing the very combination of the two issues of immigration and special needs education. Therefore, although of interest for this project, the massive amount of research conducted and published on the situation of pupils with an immigrant background at school has been filtered out as far as possible when it did not also address the question of special needs education.

Before detailing the common findings from the published work considered for the Agency project (section 1.3) aspects where controversy prevails, or questions on which different approaches and outcomes have been identified in the literature will be described (section 1.2). In both the following sections all findings are described in line with the five key areas identified for the project analysis.

1.2 Controversies and debates

1.2.1 Target population

There is no European agreement on the terminology used to identify pupils with an immigrant background. Some analyses use the term 'ethnic minority' or 'minority ethnic groups' (UNESCO, 1994; SIOS, 2004; Lindsay, Pather and Strand, 2006; Rosenqvist, 2007) whereas others use the terms 'migrants' (OECD, 2007; European Commission, 2008), 'immigrants' (OECD, 2006; Eurydice, 2004), 'bilingual pupils' or 'minority groups' (Council of Europe, 2006). Currently in Europe, most children are born in the country of residence and schooling. However, in areas located near European borders, transient immigrants (who may not intend to stay in a European country which is their first landfall, although they may well stay there for a long time) are a growing reality. Therefore, using terms related to some forms of 'migration' can be problematic.

This diversity in and absence of agreement on the terminology used, reflects different approaches – at the level of policy and practice – to the migration phenomenon that European countries have chosen to follow. These differences also reflect the distinct historical background of each country. The goal of this analysis has not been to explore differences existing at the level of definitions. Instead, the focus has been upon how to meet the educational needs of pupils with SEN and an immigrant background.

1.2.2 Existing data

The project literature review has revealed that it is currently impossible to have a global and comparable statistical picture of the number of pupils with an immigrant background in special needs education in Europe. Studies reveal that it is hardly possible to compile country statistics about migration at an international level, as the national statistical systems are not harmonised with each other.

As Poulain, Perrin and Singleton (2006) highlight: 'it is widely recognised that migration data are not easy to collect, and that data-collection systems, as well as definitions used to define migration events in countries, vary significantly' (p. 77). They continue: '… From a statistical point of view, no appropriate indicator has been adopted at international level to enumerate the population with a foreign or immigration background … Data that may be considered reliable are not necessarily comparable at EU level, because of the variety of data sources, definitions and concepts used' (p. 373).

According to Fassmann (in Pflegerl, 2004) at present – and in contrast to the 1950s – immigration concerns a lot more people than just a small population. Statistics focusing on immigration flow should be treated with great caution because the true extent of immigration is often underestimated. Fassmann has stated that in 2002 the positive EU net migration was higher than in the USA, although the USA is often considered as a main country for immigration.

The analysis conducted by the Agency has tried to establish a picture of the real situation. Data, mainly from the local level, is presented in chapter 2.

1.2.3 Educational measures

Opinions differ about strategies to improve the quality of education provided for pupils with SEN and an immigrant background.

The main controversy apparent in the research analysed for this review concerns the place and the role of the pupil's mother tongue at school. There is no overall agreement about the use of pupils' mother tongue at school: while some researchers are in favour of bilingual education, others argue that pupils should only use the language of the host country within the school (and even sometimes within the family).

Similarly, the use of a pupil's mother tongue at school can be viewed as a support for the pupil, but it can also present the risk of excluding pupils who speak the same foreign language from the group who speak the host country language. The pluri-linguistic approach for all pupils (Candelier, 2003; Perregaux, de Goumoëns, Jeannot and de Pietro, 2003) is a new social and didactic way to recognise all languages at school and to open all children to diversity.

Another debate in the literature on the topic focuses on professionals' profiles. Some research concludes that it is not necessary for professionals to know a lot about the pupil's or their family's cultural background to have good interaction with them: 'One does not need to know everything about a person's cultural background to create a good meeting and to allow work to turn out well … One does not need to be an expert on "culture" or different languages. But one does need to meet a person and his/her culture unconditionally … what weighs heavier is that which people share in common, that which is the same for everyone' (SIOS, 2004, p. 64).

In contrast, other documents strongly support intervention by professionals having the same ethnic background as the pupil or the family: 'Bilingual children should exclusively be dealt with – if not bilingual or bicultural professionals, then at least – by workers with a broad understanding of the key features of the children's cultural background and language' (Report from the European Conference on Migrant Children with Special Educational Needs held in Copenhagen in June 1999, p. 7).

Leman (1991) mentions the presence of teachers from the immigrant community as an important inter-cultural factor: these teachers can have a bridging and language function with the community of origin. Verkuyten and Brug (2003) also highlight that teachers with different ethnic backgrounds can bring an additional perspective to the school and can function as role models.

Despite these differences, European literature on the educational situation of pupils with SEN and an immigrant background reveals a number of common findings and conclusions. These are presented in the following section.

1.3 Key common findings from the research work analysed

1.3.1 Existing data

The first element upon which the research and studies analysed converge is the fact that there is discrepancy in the proportions in which pupils with an immigrant background are represented within special education. Some local and national research work (Leman, 1991; Manço, 2001; Henriot, 1996; Lindsay, Pather and Strand, 2006; Werning, Löser and Urban, 2008) highlight a significant bias in the assessment of pupils with an immigrant background that leads to their over- or under-representation in special education. International surveys confirm the same trend that 'immigrant and minority groups are disproportionately streamed into special education institutions' (OECD, 2007, p. 156).

As the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia has highlighted, 'in several EU Member States, an over-representation of migrant and ethnic minority pupils in schools for special education is common … If one assumes that the distribution of pupils with disabilities is similar across all ethnic groups, an over-representation of migrant and minority pupils in these classes indicates that a portion of these pupils is wrongfully assigned to such classes' (European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, 2004, p. 28). Studies conducted in the USA replicate this trend. As Losen and Orfield (2002) argue, 'inappropriate practices in both general and special education classrooms have resulted in over-representation, misclassification, and hardship for minority students, particularly black children' (p. xv).

Disproportions in the representation of pupils with an immigrant background in special education occur mostly when intellectual impairments and learning disabilities are involved. The possible reasons for these disproportions highlighted in the literature are: more frequent problems of social behaviour within the immigrant population and minority ethnic groups; the lack of early intervention or health care among these groups; the existence of prejudices within the host society about people with an immigrant background; and finally, problems when assessing the needs and abilities of pupils with an immigrant background.

Distinguishing learning difficulties from language difficulties remains a challenge. For example, 'the under-representation of all Asian

groups and Chinese pupils for Specific Learning Difficulties and Autistic Spectrum Disorder could suggest that there are sometimes problems in distinguishing learning difficulties from issues associated with English as an Additional Language' (Lindsay, Pather and Strand, 2006, p. 117). In addition, as Salameh (2003; 2006) states, 'bilingualism never causes language impairment. A bilingual child with language impairment is impaired in both languages: mother tongue and language of the host country'.

Research also highlights the fact that poverty has a strong impact on the placement of pupils in special education. In relation to the low socio-economic conditions some immigrants and ethnic minorities live in, health problems might occur that affect the development of such children. Poverty is therefore a risk factor for the later emergence of some special educational needs. This is the basis of the socio-economic deprivation theory, which argues that pupils with an immigrant background face the same problems as native students with a similar socio-economic status (Nicaise, 2007).

It can be deduced that the disproportionate representation of pupils with an immigrant background in special education could be explained by the fact that the representation of ethnic minorities is greater in the lower socio-economic levels of European society. As Werning, Löser and Urban (2008) state, 'the situation of children and their families from immigrant backgrounds can be conceptualised as multi systemic exclusion. The families' exclusion from citizenship and their marginalisation in the possibilities to participate in the economic system and in their access to the labour market are linked with strong restrictions in their children's potential for educational success.' (p. 51)

However, such situations need to be carefully analysed, as highlighted by Lindsay, Pather and Strand (2006): 'Socio-economic disadvantage (poverty) and gender have stronger associations than ethnicity with overall prevalence of special educational needs and of certain categories of special educational needs. However, after controlling for the effects of socio-economic disadvantage, gender and year group, significant over- and under-representation of different minority ethnic groups relative to white British pupils remain.' (p. 3)

The disproportionate representation of pupils with an immigrant background in special schools may indicate that in some cases

mainstream education has failed to meet these pupils' needs. This has led researchers to question the quality of the education provided to pupils with an immigrant background in the mainstream school system, with particular scrutiny in the literature being placed upon two aspects: on the one hand, referral and assessment exercises and on the other hand teaching methods implemented with pupils with an immigrant background.

Analyses carried out in different European countries on this subject identify another major trend; individual people with SEN as well as individual people with an immigrant background are both considered by other people (social workers, school professionals, other pupils, etc.) as representatives of their groups. In other words, there seems to be a tendency for categorising and dealing with pupils with an immigrant background or pupils with SEN on the basis of preconceptions about the 'groups' they belong to. These preconceptions hide the real person, as the individual pupil becomes a symbol for the collective group and the group is associated with care and support (in the case of people with SEN) or with culture and religion (in the case of immigrants and ethnic minorities). This tendency is regrettable, as of course people are not representatives of an entire culture or of an entire group. Categorisations and preconceptions about the 'group' obscure the real person in question and render him/her insignificant; a process of marginalisation occurs (SIOS, 2004).

1.3.2 Educational provision

Analysed research and publications on the topic also suggest that the disproportionate representation of pupils with an immigrant background in special education may reflect the fact that the pedagogy and teaching methods implemented within mainstream classrooms fail to address the educational needs of this specific group.

Literature on the situation of pupils with SEN and an immigrant background suggests that teachers do not realise how much their teaching is embedded within their own culture. Indeed, learning methods and pupils' attitudes vary a lot according to cultures. In some societies, it is normal that pupils learn by interacting with teachers, whilst in other cultures, children are not supposed to speak directly with adults, but learn by listening to adults talking together. Therefore, teachers should explain – as far as possible – the cultural

background to their teaching and clarify what is expected from pupils. Instead of having the tendency to lower the complexity of tasks given to pupils with an immigrant background (especially when they are not native speakers of the language of the host country), teachers should aim to increase the familiarity of pupils with an immigrant background with the activities undertaken in the classroom (Report from the European Conference on Migrant Children with Special Educational Needs, Copenhagen, June 1999).

1.3.3 Support measures

Literature dedicated to the education of pupils with SEN and an immigrant background also emphasises the important role of families. Analyses reveal that families of pupils with SEN and an immigrant background generally do not use the support services as much as they could. The most frequently highlighted reasons for this are, among others: the pupil's family does not speak the language of the host country; the pupil's family does not understand the system and the services offered to this population well enough, or is not used to being provided with this support in their country of origin; the pupil's family is afraid of being sent away from the country of residence if it makes 'excessive demands'.

Therefore, providing comprehensive information to families of pupils with SEN and an immigrant background is crucial. Information should aim at ensuring that parents understand how the country of residence views special educational needs and the system of education and educational approach in that country of residence. From the beginning, clear, accessible, direct information should be provided to families. If necessary, this should be done via an interpreter or a staff member speaking the family's language. Using different types of material (photos about pupil activities, etc.) may also support the smooth information flow between the school and a pupil's family. Discussion groups among families are also good practice and present the advantage of creating bonds between parents and avoiding the isolation of families of pupils with SEN and an immigrant background.

Research suggests that the information flow should not take place only in one direction i.e. from the school to families. Families should also provide schools with information on their child and be consulted and involved in the decision-making concerning their child. As highlighted at the European Conference on Migrant Children with

Special Educational Needs in Copenhagen in June 1999, 'a successful education of a pupil with ethnic minority background depends on a great deal of co-operation, consultation and mutual understanding between parents and teachers. The profession of the teachers must be demythologised and the parents must be granted access to the bottom-up decision-making in the school' (Conference Report, p. 15).

Overall, families should be involved as partners. Studies on this topic insist that the whole family should be taken into account by schools, not only parents, but also siblings as well as grandparents and the extended family. Some analyses also show that, particularly within the context of families with an immigrant background, having a child with SEN has a strong impact on the family structure; at times it leads to changes the family members' respective roles (SIOS, 2004).

The role of the professionals is in summary to ensure good interaction with families and to avoid cultural clashes. As stated by Moro (2005): 'for the children of immigrants any … technique that does not take their cultural singularity into account only contributes to reinforcing the cleavage that exists between their two referential worlds. We thereby contribute to their de facto exclusion from the receiving society, to their marginalisation. Taking their cultural background into account leads on the contrary to favouring individual treatment strategies, the learning process and participation in the receiving society' (p. 21).

Literature suggests that positive approaches to engaging pupils and their parents, focusing on successes should be considered. Celebrating the socio-cultural, cognitive and language diversity of families and pupils is fundamental not only to fighting against possible discriminatory attitudes, but also to enhancing self-esteem and motivation of pupils with SEN and an immigrant background.

Finally, literature highlights the fact that in order to achieve this task and successfully take on the challenges faced by the new school population, professionals need to be well trained. All analyses conducted on the educational situation of pupils with SEN and an immigrant background show the crucial importance of professionals' training in order to improve the assessment process, the quality of education provided and the co-operation with the families of pupils with SEN and an immigrant background. In order to meet the needs of the new school population, there is a growing demand for in-

service training, as well as the development of teaching methods from school staff. Moreover, different practitioners are required to co-operate to meet the needs of pupils with SEN and an immigrant background; not only teachers, but also psychologists, support staff, health professionals, etc.

The main conclusion that can be drawn from the analysis of work published, mainly in Europe, on the education of pupils with SEN and an immigrant background is certainly that despite the fact that this field is increasingly visible and on the agenda of policy-makers and practitioners active in the field of special needs education, the amount of research and analysis dedicated to this specific issue is proportionately very limited. Typically, attention is paid to either one of the factors involved or the other: the education of pupils with SEN, or the education of pupils with an immigrant background. Very few studies have examined the combination of these two educational aspects.

Educational policy and practice in European countries seems to follow the same one-track approach. Analyses show that provision to support pupils with SEN and an immigrant background often addresses only one of the two characteristics of the target group. Attention is paid either to the pupil's special needs, or to his/her immigrant background. For instance, programmes proposed to pupils with an immigrant background to learn the language of the host country do not usually address SEN. On the other hand, assessment tools and methods aiming at identifying the pupil's abilities do not usually take into account the pupil's cultural identity.

All of the research work carried out on the educational situation of pupils with SEN and an immigrant background concludes that further developments are needed in this field: this requires reflection about new policies and new practice to meet the needs of pupils with SEN and an immigrant background. To achieve this, it is necessary to conduct more research and analysis in this field.

1.3.4 Assessment

Taking the significant disproportionate participation of pupils with an immigrant background in special education as a starting point, studies have questioned the quality of (mainly initial) assessment procedures carried out with pupils with an immigrant background (Andersson, 2007; Rosenqvist, 2007). Such assessment tools and

methods are often rooted in the culture of the pupil's country of residence and schooling. The assessment process is therefore culturally biased; children with a culture different from the country of residence have less chance than pupils having the culture of the country of residence to access and decode the cultural references implicitly present in the assessment material they are tested with. Therefore, the literature suggests that assessment material and processes should be reviewed in order to clarify as far as possible, any cultural references they may contain.

One of the main and most obvious cultural barriers pupils with an immigrant background might face when they are assessed – and one which is repeatedly highlighted in the literature – is related to the language used for assessing a pupils' abilities and needs. As Landon (1999) illustrated using the example of dyslexia at the European conference on Migrant Children with Special Educational Needs organised in Copenhagen, 'we need to remove the difficulties that these students experience before we can find those who have perceptual or cognitive problems. The number of bilingual children suspected to be dyslexic is much lower than among natives: in reality, pupils have reading difficulties but no one makes a clear diagnosis ... Teachers do not see the problem because they do not know how to make an assessment' (Conference report p. 18).

Some insist that bilingual pupils with an immigrant background should have a full bilingual initial assessment and/or that it should be conducted by professionals having a broad understanding of the pupil's language and cultural background (Cline, 1999; Andersson, 2007; Rosenqvist, 2007).

Certainly, in some cases, an initial assessment may also be carried out without using language. However, there are cultural differences (for instance at the level of definition of colours or of the learning context, as stated by Salameh, 2006) that may impact upon non-verbal assessment processes if they are not taken into account. Chapter 2 details in more depth the use of non-verbal assessment.

Finally, analysis of research shows that assessment should be comprehensive, in the sense that it should take into account the whole situation of the pupil; circumstances at the origin of the family's migration, language, culture, situation of the community in the country of residence, environment at home, etc.

The analysis conducted by the Agency (Watkins, 2007) upon Assessment in Inclusive Settings has revealed that there has been a change in the understanding of formative[1] assessment in most European countries during the last years; the weaknesses of the 'testing' approach have been revealed. As a consequence, the focus of formative assessment has been broadened in order to cover more than just academic based contents. At the same time, instead of being carried out by professionals from outside the classroom, formative assessment procedures are developed more and more in collaboration with the pupil, his/her family and the teachers together. The Agency project has revealed that for most countries, this approach is still an objective to be reached with regards to initial assessment of special educational needs.

[1] As defined in the Agency assessment project, 'formative assessment' (also called 'ongoing assessment') covers procedures carried out in classrooms, mainly by class teachers and the professionals that work with class teachers that inform decision-making about teaching methods and next steps in a pupil's learning. 'Initial assessment' or 'initial identification' covers the recognition/detection of possible SEN in a pupil, leading to the process of collecting systematic information that can be used to develop a profile of strengths, weaknesses and needs the pupil may have. Initial identification of SEN may be linked to other assessment procedures and may involve professionals outside of the mainstream school (including health professionals).

2. COUNTRY INFORMATION

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a synthesis of the country reports prepared in relation to the five key areas for the project analysis – definition of the target population, data, educational provision, support measures and assessment. The chapter is based on information and data collected – through a questionnaire – by country experts in co-operation with the different services involved, municipalities and schools, about the education of pupils with SEN and an immigrant background, reflecting local and/or national situations. Although issues reflecting national situations are taken into account, the information collected is mainly focused on information representing local situations. This chapter also presents some data on the percentage of the population with an immigrant background and the percentage of pupils with an immigrant background in the school population, in the different countries. Data on the percentage of pupils with SEN and an immigrant background is not presented due to limited information provided in the country reports.

More detailed information about specific national and local data, issues and debates regarding the situation of pupils with SEN and an immigrant background in the different participating countries is available in the country reports, on the Agency web area dedicated to the thematic project: www.european-agency.org/agency-projects

A synthesis of the replies to the questions is presented below.

2.1 Target population

There is a significant immigration flow in Europe and issues on 'migration' are becoming of growing interest in many countries. According to the country reports, there are different definitions of the term 'immigrant' in Europe. Most countries use the term 'immigrant' or 'foreigner' or 'alien' in relation to the place of birth of the person and his/her parents, their nationality and their language spoken at home.

Countries with long immigration traditions make a distinction between:

- Newcomers and/or first-generation immigrants, when pupils and/or their parents are born in a country different from the host country;

- Second-generation immigrants that refers to those born in the host country, but their parents were born in a different country; and

- Third or fourth-generation immigrants, who were born in the host country and at least one of whose parents was also born in the host country and who might have the citizenship of the country of residence. In most cases, the third, fourth (or more) generation are not considered as 'immigrants', but as 'pupils with a different ethnic background', belonging to 'minority groups' or 'ethnic groups'.

Within the educational context of many countries, legislation referring to immigrant pupils as well as practice is based on a more educationally oriented approach that corresponds to a pupil's language skills: bilingual/multilingual pupils, or pupils with another mother tongue than the one of the country of residence. This definition corresponds to all pupils who need to master more than one language during their childhood.

For the purpose of the analysis – and as already outlined in the introduction – country experts were asked to provide information regarding all pupils with SEN and an immigrant background (newly arrived immigrants, as well as pupils belonging to ethnic minority groups).

In line with the immigration flow patterns in Europe, countries can be divided into different groups:

- Countries with long traditions of immigration, related to their industrial and economic characteristics and/or colonial past (e.g. Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, UK).
- Countries where immigration is a comparatively new phenomenon, arising in the last decades of the 20th century, as in Finland, Iceland, Norway, or countries that were previously countries of emigration such as, Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Spain.
- New EU member States such as Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, that mainly receive asylum seekers or refugees from the Middle Eastern countries and immigrants from countries of the former Soviet Union.

Immigrants having settled in Europe originate from many countries, but they can be grouped into three main categories: former citizens

of the European Union (EU), European Economic Area (EEA) or Switzerland; asylum seekers, refugees and former citizens from North Africa; and former citizens from other countries.

The percentage of the population with an immigrant background varies a lot among European countries, with some countries having around 1% immigrants (e.g. Poland, Lithuania) and some countries with around 40% of the population having an immigrant background (e.g. Luxembourg). Country data is not easily comparable due to:

- Different definitions of the term 'immigrant';

- The different procedures for naturalisation within countries;

- The fact that data refers to either local or national situations or both;

- There are different years of country data collection (2005 or 2006 or 2007).

Having these reservations in mind, in Table 1 it is possible to see that in the majority of countries, between 6–20% of the total population has an immigrant background.

Table 1 Percentage of the population having an immigrant background (data based on country reports for the year 2005/2006/2007)

1–5 %	5.01–10%	10.01–20%	> 20%
Czech Republic Denmark Finland Hungary Lithuania Malta Poland Portugal	Belgium Cyprus Greece Iceland Italy Norway Spain	Austria Estonia France Germany Latvia Netherlands Sweden UK (England)	Luxembourg* Switzerland

*more than 40%

The number of different languages spoken by pupils and their families with an immigrant background varies considerably in the

different countries and municipalities: from 18 to more than 100 different languages in some countries.

A high percentage of the population has an immigrant background – in some countries/municipalities more than half of local populations originate from non-European countries (e.g. Turkey, Iraq, Somalia, Russia, Pakistan, Brazil, Ukraine, Morocco, etc.).

For some countries such as Sweden, until the 1970s and for other countries up until 1990, the majority of immigrants in Europe were economic migrants looking for better working and living conditions. During the 1990s the number of refugees coming from the Middle East and citizens from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union grew considerably.

This data is different according to countries involved, but the underlying fact remains that Europe is currently experiencing a growth in socio-economic immigrants. A contributing factor to this is also the free mobility of European citizens within the EU borders.

2.2 Existing data on pupils with SEN and an immigrant background

Many countries involved in the project reported that there is a current lack of data on pupils with SEN and an immigrant background. Different government agencies have different responsibilities and there is no co-ordinated data collecting approach. There are other reasons for the lack of data. Some countries do not keep official statistics regarding people's ethnic origin other than their citizenship and country of birth on the principle that processing personal data that identifies race, ethnic origin, disability or religious belief is prohibited. In other countries there is no systematic data collection concerning pupils with SEN or pupils with SEN and an immigrant background at national or local level. In some municipalities the number of pupils with an immigrant background is so small that it is not necessary, nor relevant to collect information. The most reasonable and practical way to access data is at present from schools – they have the children. Some municipalities collect such data, but national statistics are not dependable.

On the basis of the local and/or national data collected by the country experts, it appears that the percentage of pupils with an immigrant background varies a lot between European countries as well as

between different municipalities and/or schools of the same country. Again, country data is not easily comparable, due to different definitions of the term 'immigrant' and the fact that data may represent either local or national situations, or both.

Having these reservations in mind, in Table 2, it is possible to see that in the majority of the participating countries the percentage of pupils with an immigrant background is between 6–20% of the compulsory school population (in Luxembourg it is above 38%).

Table 2 Percentage of pupils with an immigrant background in school population (related to pupils in compulsory education at local level, school year 2005/2006/ 2007)

1–5%	5.01–10%	10.01–20%	> 20%
Czech Republic	Belgium	Austria	Germany
Finland	Cyprus	Estonia	Luxembourg
Hungary	Denmark	France	Switzerland
Lithuania	Greece	Latvia	
Malta	Iceland	Netherlands	
Poland	Italy*	Sweden	
Portugal	Norway	UK (England)	
	Spain		

*In Italy the data is from the school year 2007/2008

The numbers and proportions of families/pupils with an immigrant background vary considerably from one municipality to another within the same country and are often related to the geographical location and the size of the municipality concerned by the data collection. Most families with an immigrant background live in big cities, or in the suburbs of these cities, due to the perceived better working and educational opportunities in urban areas. Consequently, the concentration of pupils with an immigrant background in capital cities (e.g. Amsterdam, Athens, Brussels, Lisbon, London, Madrid, Paris, etc.) can be double or even three times as much as the percentage nationwide.

Although within this study there is no data on pupils with SEN and an immigrant background in all the participating countries, some countries provided some data at national, federal, regional, and/or local level. Countries (e.g. Austria, Cyprus, Germany, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland) have provided some data at both national and federal, regional or local level. Other countries (e.g. Belgium, Finland, France, Greece) have provided some data at regional or local/school level. In other cases, (e.g. Czech Republic, Portugal, UK (England)) the data provided refers to the national level. The country data collected by the experts refers either to the general number and percentage of pupils with SEN and an immigrant background at national, federal, regional and/or local level, or to specific numbers and percentages in different municipalities and/or schools. Consequently, this data is not easily comparable and cannot be presented in the form of a table.

More detailed information about specific national and local data in the different participating countries is available in the country reports, on the Agency web area dedicated to the project.

On the basis of the above-mentioned information, many country reports reveal a significant disproportion that affects pupils with an immigrant background leading to their over- or under- representation in special needs education. This has been a cause for great concern for over 30 years in some countries, for example in the UK (England). In the 1970s there was evidence of an over-representation of children who had emigrated from the Caribbean Islands into the UK (England) being placed into special schools. Other countries (e.g. Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden) have reported that in many municipalities, there are comparatively more pupils with an immigrant background in special needs education and their number grows with higher educational levels (end of primary and post-primary levels). A study carried out in Oslo in 1998 revealed that pupils with an immigrant background were over-represented in all forms of special education (Nordahl and Øverland, 1998).

In addition, the percentage of pupils with SEN and an immigrant background in special schools is higher than pupils with SEN of the host country – and consequently the reverse is true in mainstream schools. The country report for Switzerland highlights that this over-representation has increased continuously during the last 20 years and that the average increase of pupils with an immigrant

background in special schools is much higher than the total increase of pupils with an immigrant background in compulsory education.

A paradox seems to arise when statistical information from participating municipalities/schools (e.g. Austria, Finland, Greece) is examined. It becomes apparent that in some schools, there are more pupils with SEN and an immigrant background than pupils with SEN who do not have an immigrant background. In other municipalities/ schools, the reverse seems to be indicated.

One possible explanation, reported by the countries, might be that coincidence alone determines how many pupils with SEN study in each school. Another possibility might be that some schools assess pupil progress more effectively than others. Other reports stress that the increasing offer of special classes and the growing number of special personnel affect the demand for these offers – if an offer is available, teachers tend to use it especially if they do not have any other support. Finally, another possibility is that in some schools, pupils with an immigrant background might be thought to have SEN, when in reality there might only be a communication language-related difficulty. Over-representation often occurs in relation to difficulties with language speaking and reading (but also other factors).

On the other hand, pupils with SEN and an immigrant background may not be identified as such because the school explains difficulties in learning, language, reading and spelling as a lack of competence in the language of the host country. The main challenge seems to be the distinction between pupils with an immigrant background who have a need for linguistic support in education and pupils with an immigrant background who have special educational needs.

A recent national study in the UK (England) examined the total pupil population in English state schools (about 6.5 million pupils) and found a much more complex situation (Lindsay, Pather and Strand, 2006). Briefly, the pupils from any particular minority ethnic group being designated as having some SEN, or a particular type of SEN, varied in a complex fashion. A few conclusions are considered important: firstly, this study showed that there was a substantial variation between different minority ethnic groups with respect to socio-economic disadvantage. For example, whereas 14.1% of white British pupils were eligible for free school meals (a school support programme for children from lower socio-economic backgrounds,

used as indicator of poverty), this was the case for 30% of Black Caribbean pupils and 43.8% of Black African pupils.

Secondly, once the influence of the socio-economic disadvantage, gender and age had been taken into account, the likelihood of pupils from different ethnic minority groups having SEN showed interesting patterns. Compared with the likelihood of white British pupils having SEN, the percentage of black pupils with SEN was *not* substantially different. However, black Caribbean pupils were still 1½ times more likely to be considered to have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Pupils of Pakistani and Bangladeshi heritage were less likely than white British pupils to have a range of different types of SEN. However, Pakistani pupils in particular, were about 2½ times more likely to have a hearing impairment, visual impairment and profound and multiple learning difficulties.

2.3 Educational provision

On the basis of the country reports, the general tendency in most countries regarding the increasing immigration flow in Europe is the promotion of an integration policy based on the principles of human rights and equal opportunities. In more operational terms this policy is enacted in a range of different provision offered to people from an immigrant background and their families, focusing upon learning the language of the host country, getting a job and being integrated in the local community. Such provision includes, amongst other things: language courses, adequate educational and vocational training opportunities, improving the social and educational situation for girls and women, integration in the local community, living in multicultural settings and enhancing intercultural competences, integration through involvement in sports activities, etc.

Consequently, within the framework of the general education policy, in most European countries pupils with an immigrant background have the same rights to pre-primary, compulsory and upper-secondary education as the pupils of the host country. In other words, the same educational legislation and regulations apply to all pupils including pupils with an immigrant background.

In line with general educational policy, the country reports clearly indicate that the range of provision offered to pupils with SEN applies also to pupils with SEN and an immigrant background. So, according to the educational legislation and regulations in most European

counties, pupils with SEN and an immigrant background are entitled to the same kind of special needs education and are offered the same types of educational provision and services at national, regional or local level, as the pupils of the host country. Pupils with SEN and an immigrant background receive the same services as other pupils in most of the countries reported here.

In addition, they are also entitled to extra provision that can be grouped into two categories: the provision addressed to all pupils with an immigrant background and the provision addressed specifically to pupils with SEN and an immigrant background**.** In both cases, a variety of provision is offered at national, regional or even local level in the different countries. The types of provision evident in each of these categories are described in the sections below.

2.3.1 Provision addressed to pupils with an immigrant background

- Special reception department: at local or even at school level to welcome and deal mainly with the newcomers;

- Preparatory or reception classes for pupils with an immigrant background: usually addressed to newcomers and pupils who lack skills in the language of the host country. Pupils receive extra language tuition to learn the language and get acquainted with the culture of the host country, usually for a period up to one year. Afterwards, they move on to the type of education that suits them best;

- Asylum centres: for asylum seekers and refugees where there are also schools for their children;

- Language screening: addressed to all bilingual pupils starting school, in order to map out their level of ability in the language of the host country and adapt lessons according to the results;

- Intensive language courses: to learn the language of the host country;

- Centre of expertise for multiculturalism: usually at the local level one school is designated to receive pupils with an immigrant background;

- Cultural interpreters: usually teachers of pupils' mother tongue who build a cultural bridge between families with an immigrant background and the school community;

- Homework activities: pupils have the opportunity to get support in doing their homework after school hours;

- Supported education: pupils have the chance to get more individual guidance and support in a smaller group;

- School assistants: some of the school assistants have an immigrant background and can give support in the pupil's mother tongue;

- Interpreting services: available for discussions between school personnel and parents with an immigrant background;

- Intercultural programmes for all children: implemented at different educational levels with the aim being to develop social, cognitive, affective and instrumental skills, multilingual awareness, language and communication capabilities;

- Information distribution to parents concerning schooling and educational services: such information leaflets are usually translated into different languages (mainly into the most common foreign languages);

- Supplementary teaching support: use of materials for cross-cultural education, provision of educational and vocational guidance, development and use of adapted books and materials, interactive materials on the Internet, etc.;

- Initial and continuing intercultural training of all teachers.

Country reports highlight the recognition of the resources brought by pupils with an immigrant background and their families to nurture their self-image and the components of their identities to develop their motivation to learn.

In some countries mother tongue assistance and mother tongue instruction in pre-school, compulsory and upper secondary education is legally guaranteed. This follows research that has suggested that mother tongue teaching improves pupils' performance and educational outcomes, especially in early childhood. In addition to this, if necessary, pupils may also receive instruction in their mother tongue for other subjects. The aim is to help pupils build their self-esteem and promote their development as bilingual individuals with a multiple cultural identity.

Although in many country reports bilingual instruction is considered a very positive initiative, the gap between legal commitments and

current practice in this field is also highlighted, as well as various differences in implementation strategies among different regions/ municipalities within the same country.

2.3.2 Provision for pupils with disabilities/SEN and an immigrant background

In addition to the provision listed above, pupils with SEN and an immigrant background are also offered extra services related to their specific needs. These are usually the same services as offered to other pupils with SEN and can include:

- Pupils attend mainstream classes and are supported by a special education teacher in the classroom;

- Pupils attend mainstream classes and are supported by a special education teacher for limited periods outside the classroom;

- Pupils attend mainstream classes, but they also attend a smaller group with a special education teacher, for a shorter or longer period;

- The pupil and the class teacher can get support from the local resource service or other specialists;

- Pupils are subject to the development and implementation of individual educational plans;

- Pupils attend full or part-time special classes in mainstream schools;

- Pupils attend special schools.

The main challenge clearly stated in most country reports is that these measures, actions, or provision deal separately either with the 'immigrant background' aspect or with the 'SEN' component. There are not many initiatives and measures combining competence and expertise in both areas ensuring that action taken is mutually supportive and responds to all the needs of the pupil. Service providers, schools, teachers and specialists have little experience regarding pupils with an immigrant background in general. Even fewer are competent with both areas of the education of pupils with an immigrant background and special educational needs. More work needs to be done in order to develop the skills and working methods that ensure support for the double challenge of having SEN and an immigrant background.

2.3.3 Responsible services

A variety of services are responsible for measures, actions and initiatives in favour of pupils with SEN and an immigrant background. The provision of these services is in line with the centralised or decentralised general political and administrative system, as well as the educational system in the different European countries.

In most cases, the overall responsibility lies within the Ministry of Education, which defines the national general objectives of the educational policy and activities, evaluates the results and supports quality developments in this field. In some cases this work is carried out in co-operation with other relevant ministries (e.g. Ministry of Immigration and Integration affairs).

According to the level and extent of decentralisation of the education system in the different countries, the distribution of responsibilities is based on the main principle that the Ministry concerned defines the national goals for education, while central or federal authorities, municipalities and schools are responsible for ensuring that educational activities are implemented in relation to the legislative framework and that the national or federal goals are achieved.

In most cases, the country's curriculum guidelines and frameworks specify the leading educational values, the responsibility of the different aspects of school activities and the educational goals. Within this framework, each municipality or school sets up a plan for the educational system at local level. In many cases, each school is free to organise the means and resources to reach these goals and there are a variety of different ways of putting the curriculum into practice.

A number of different services and agencies are involved in the education and support offered to pupils with SEN and an immigrant background, at national, regional or local level. The most common ones are:

- National agencies for education;
- National agencies for school improvement;
- National institutes for special needs education;
- National agencies for special schools;
- Universities (e.g. for teacher training);

- National organisations of ethnic minority groups;
- Health and social services centres;
- Diagnostic, assessment and counselling centres;
- Centres for developing educational materials;
- Resource centres;
- Educational-psychological advisory services;
- Networks of schools, welfare agencies and organisations, municipalities, etc.;
- Rehabilitation centres;
- Intercultural centres;
- Religious associations.

In some municipalities where there are a large number of pupils with an immigrant background, special co-ordinators specifically plan and develop the education of these pupils. In other municipalities, this is carried out by a special team of different experts for multicultural education, coming from various levels of education: early childhood education and care, primary education, vocational training and adult education. The team works to create effective forms of support for the developmental and educational conditions of pupils with an immigrant background within the perspective of life-long learning.

Often in big cities where there are a large number of families with an immigrant background, a few schools welcome the vast majority of these children, coming from all over the city. Consequently in a few schools more than 80% of the pupils have an immigrant background. This runs the risk of creating 'ghettos'. An example of a strategy to avoid these so-called school ghettos is in Denmark where legislation allows pupils with different ethnic backgrounds to be referred to schools other than the local one.

2.3.4 Co-operation between services

The importance of co-operation between the different sectors, levels and actors within the educational administration concerning the education of pupils with SEN and an immigrant background, is clearly mentioned in all country reports. Active inter-sector collaboration between educational, social and health services; between the sections of youth work, early childhood education and care, child

welfare, health care, social work, etc., are considered a basic prerequisite. In practice, the lack of sufficient co-operation between the services involved seems to be one of the main obstacles to the efficiency of education for pupils with SEN and an immigrant background in many countries.

2.3.5 Information to and involvement of parents

Regarding the provision of information to parents and the extent of parents' involvement, different measures are in place in European countries, in order to assist pupils with an immigrant background and their families at the level of enrolment and of settling in and accessing information on choices regarding the school system. Little emphasis has been placed on educational provision for immigrant parents, most emphasis being placed on disseminating information. In this respect there is a great deal of difference in the methods used by different countries, different municipalities and even schools within the same country with respect to how active parents are.

The various types of provision include:

- Written or multimedia (i.e. DVD) materials in different languages (usually in the most common foreign languages) about the mainstream and special needs education system, the services provided, the curriculum, etc.;

- Organisation of information days at municipal or school level with the support of interpreters to give information about the educational system, the services provided to pupils with an immigrant background, the curriculum, etc.;

- Interpreters in situations when school and home communication takes place and in some cases, including parent-teacher meetings. Interpretation is also provided if necessary at special introductory meetings held with newly arrived families in order to explain their rights with regard to pre-school and school education, as well as to explain the basic values underpinning the national curriculum;

- Mother tongue teachers or assistants to co-operate with families;

- Meetings together with organisations active for immigrant families, where families can get information and ask questions in the beginning and during their child's schooling;

- Language courses in the language of the host country;

- In a few cases, parents' associations contact parents of pupils with an immigrant background.

Most country reports emphasise the importance of collaboration between schools and families for the best and most balanced development and integration of pupils with an immigrant background within the educational community. They also highlight the fact that this takes up a lot of time and more work is needed regarding the actual involvement of parents in the school activities.

2.3.6 Financing of services

It is difficult to describe in detail the financial implications regarding provision available to pupils with SEN and an immigrant background and their families. This is mainly due to the fact that in most countries provision is offered to all pupils with SEN, irrespective of their origin or status. The Ministry of Education and other ministries responsible for integration and inclusion policies for pupils with SEN and an immigrant background provide funds to support additional relevant activities and projects. In most cases local authorities and schools are best qualified to determine priorities and receive grants from the central or federal government for all necessary services – with certain restrictions on what can be spent.

An additional budget is provided for integration activities and programmes aiming at eliminating educational disadvantages and language difficulties. Among others, this investment covers the expenses for preparatory/reception classes, pre-school, primary and secondary school, special educational needs provision, support for language training courses and support for teaching the mother tongue. It also covers projects in primary and secondary education to eliminate language difficulties with newly arrived pupils with an immigrant background, projects for parental involvement, measures supporting transition into the different educational levels, qualifications for linguistic teachers, initiatives for the control and reduction of the large number of early and unqualified school-leavers, etc.

A new financial initiative, implemented in a few municipalities (e.g. Netherlands), the 'pupil-bound budget' seems to be efficient in the case of pupils with SEN and an immigrant background. The idea behind this initiative is to change from supply-oriented financing to a system in which the means are forwarded to the person requiring the

services; in other words demand oriented financing. Pupils can take the funding with them to the school of their choice, or the one they will attend.

However, in other country reports the demand-oriented approach to financing is judged critically. Some authors (e.g. Bleidick, Rath and Schuck, 1995) refer to the problematic 'labelling-resource-dilemma'; schools only get resources to tackle challenging situations (such as increased immigration) if pupils are labelled with a deviance, deficiency or a special need.

An alternative financing system has been introduced in some Swiss cantons: instead of labelling individual pupils with deficiencies or SEN, schools receive funding according to the socio-economic status of their school population. Hence, this gives the priority to schools in neighbourhoods with high unemployment and less single-family housing welcoming more pupils with an immigrant background. The social-index that lays the basis for distributing resources has been developed on an empirical basis (Milic, 1997, 1998). Schools then decide for themselves on what they want to use the additional money e.g. for reducing the size of mainstream classes, for employing special needs education teachers, or for sending individual pupils for special programmes.

Teaching other subjects in the mother tongue appears to be subject to controversy in some countries. Some professionals as well as researchers point out the high cost of bilingual education and challenge the legal obligation of the state to organise it. In addition, it is difficult to reasonably guarantee the right to mother tongue tuition if more than 100 languages are being spoken in a country. Some professionals also emphasise the lack of teacher training in this field, while others claim that there is a need for individual pathways, with a gradual transition from mother tongue education to schooling in the language of the host country.

It is important to distinguish between:

- Mother tongue provision separated from mainstream provision;
- Provision of explanations in the pupils' mother tongue (e.g. through the use of interpreters) during language teaching;
- Bilingual provision for all subjects.

In some countries, the above-mentioned bilingual issue is considered not only in financial terms, but also depends on the education policy as well as ideologies concerning a country's national identity.

Various types and quality of provision are offered in countries as well as between regions and municipalities within the same country. According to the country reports this variation is due to reasons such as: the national or federal educational policy; centralised or decentralised responsibility for educational provisions; the adequacy of human and financial resources; the co-operation between services and service providers; the adequacy and coherence of strategies; the competence of the educational community and commitment, etc.

2.4 Support measures

On the basis of the different support measures provided by the countries to pupils with SEN and an immigrant background, the country reports highlight the main challenges faced by schools, teachers, pupils and their families as well as the positive results regarding support measures.

2.4.1 Main challenges faced by schools/teachers

A variety of factors, reported by the countries, interact to create the main challenges faced by schools, teachers, pupils and their families. All country reports have clearly stated that initial assessment of the needs of bilingual pupils causes major challenges for schools and teachers. The results of standardised assessment and/or psychological tests do not seem to be very reliable and do not give exact measures of the pupil's abilities and potential. The main reason is that they have been developed and standardised, based on monolingual children in the host culture, or even in other countries e.g. U.S.A.

Findings from research were mirrored in many countries reports, for example the discrepancy in the proportions in which pupils with an immigrant background are represented in special education. The disproportion leads to over-representation or under-representation in all forms of special education. Over-representation often appears according to difficulties with language, communication and reading. On the other hand, pupils with SEN and an immigrant background may not be identified because the school explains difficulties in learning, language, reading and spelling as a lack of competence in

the language of the host country. The main challenge for schools and teachers seems to occur when distinguishing between pupils who have a need for linguistic support and pupils who have special educational needs.

In many municipalities and also at country level, country reports suggest that there is not enough support available in schools to help pupils with SEN and an immigrant background to achieve the objectives of the curriculum. This is particularly difficult when pupils are still learning the basics of the language of the host country. Country reports suggest that there is very little material for teaching different subjects in the pupils' mother tongues as well as for pupils with SEN and an immigrant background. Pupils who arrive in the host country at the age of 13–16 years and who have received limited schooling and may have literacy problems, experience serious difficulties when meeting the challenge of schooling. The mismatch of schooling between the country of origin and the host country is a challenge, and schools have huge difficulties in supporting pupils in these situations.

Another issue is related to the insufficient competence of schools and teachers regarding pupils with an immigrant background in general. It seems that even fewer schools have experience with pupils who both have SEN and an immigrant background.

Some countries report obstacles embedded in the attitudes of some teachers, who consider having pupils with SEN and an immigrant background in their class as an additional burden. Teachers often adapt to only one of the two characteristics of the pupil: either the pupil's SEN or the pupil's immigrant background. Sometimes, teachers present these two aspects as separate or opposite; for instance cases of pupils with autism being refused access to teaching in their mother tongue were highlighted in country reports. In these cases, the pupil's special needs were put first and were presented as an obstacle for accessing provision dedicated to pupils with an immigrant background. Teachers need to reflect upon and adapt their teaching approach to the new educational situations. This involves re-considering the content, methods and processes used in teaching, learning materials and equipment, involvement of parents, etc. In addition, teachers working with pupils with SEN and an immigrant background often forget about the pupil's background while they have so many other things to handle during the day. Thus

they focus on managing how to teach the pupil from a disability-perspective.

In some country reports, there are indications that pupils with SEN and an immigrant background, in secondary special education in particular, run a high risk of being influenced by other pupils. Therefore, schools need to face the challenge of avoiding the possibility of pupils becoming involved in crime. One positive approach to this is actively preparing them for the labour market. In addition, according to the Swiss report, a further challenge that can be identified is social segregation in/within schools, especially if schools establish special classes for pupils with SEN, or for pupils for whom there are expectations of lower achievement. Pupils in such groups risk learning things from other students that are not always viewed as socially acceptable, hence developing undesirable behaviour. To avoid this result, the social inclusion of all pupils could be the solution.

Finally, insufficient co-operation between the services involved in the identification and implementation of intervention strategies that address pupils with SEN and an immigrant background, is also an issue reported by many countries. In addition, in many municipalities there seems to be a lack of systematic monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of intercultural pedagogical methods.

Forms of educational homogeneity – as is the case with separate classes – can be seen to lead to more social difficulties, whereas an inclusive approach that promotes educational diversity can be seen as a chance to develop social competences with all pupils.

2.4.2 Perception of stakeholders

In some schools there appears to be racism and negative attitudes towards pupils with an immigrant background. From examining the country reports, it seems that there has not been enough work done on mutual adjustment between pupils with an immigrant background and pupils raised in the host country, there are insufficient intercultural approaches at school level. It is reported that at times, pupils with SEN and an immigrant background feel isolated as it is often difficult to integrate a pupil with an immigrant background into a mainstream class after s/he has followed a preparatory class.

The integration process demands a great deal of flexibility from mainstream teachers. Country reports mention that pupils with SEN

and an immigrant background often also experience being bullied at school.

Country reports highlight that parents sometimes have difficulties in helping their child with homework because of their lack of competence in the language of the host country, lack of education and/or because they are illiterate. Parents with an immigrant background do not always actively co-operate with the school. Parents might also have beliefs concerning special needs education and remedial instruction different from the ones of people raised in the host country. They may consider special education as a form of negative labelling. Parents can also have different expectations for girls and boys; some might think that the education of girls is not as valuable as the education of boys and consequently difficulties can arise between home and school values. A common understanding must therefore be reached, although it is important to underline that it is also the responsibility of the school or system to enhance collaboration with the home, so as to even out social differences.

According to the country reports, the relation between cultural and religious issues might also cause difficulties for pupils with SEN and an immigrant background and their families. For example the style of teaching in a host country can be very different from how teachers work in the pupil's country of origin. In certain cultures children with SEN are not encouraged at all in their development – or parents are ashamed of their child having a disability. Teenagers, girls in particular, are also kept at home in order to help with the housework. In addition, the parents' adjustment process is often very complicated and parents often have to deal with social difficulties. The children's problems might reflect these difficult family situations.

Other country reports stress that the major challenges lie with schools that do not adjust to their changing environment and their specific school population. This results for example, in situations where school neighbourhoods are multicultural, but schools and teachers still direct their teaching towards a monolingual audience, preparing all pupils for a static and mono-cultural future.

Housing policies concerning inhabitants with an immigrant background in many municipalities result in many families with an immigrant background living in the same areas. An increased population with an immigrant background in one local area may have negative consequences for the integration of pupils within the local

community. On the other hand, other municipalities welcome only a few pupils with an immigrant background and as a consequence these schools have very little support for such pupils. In many cases, there is a lack of qualified teachers and resources to support pupils with an immigrant background.

Finally, most country reports state that the cultural and language difficulties of one or both of the parents – and often of the child as well – can create challenges when communicating with the school.

2.4.3 Achievement/positive results regarding support measures

Beside these challenges, a number of positive results regarding support measures provided to/by the schools, to/by teachers and to pupils with SEN and an immigrant background in the different countries can be highlighted. A few examples are presented below.

In many countries at municipal level, there are co-ordinators within different educational levels responsible for planning, organising and developing the education of pupils with SEN and an immigrant background. There may also be experts who are specialists in immigration: psychologists, social workers etc. Many municipalities also have consulting and co-ordinating personnel who work with schools, teachers and families with an immigrant background.

At the school level special staff, such as mother tongue teachers and assistants, teachers of the language of the host country as a second language, preparatory class teachers, co-operating pedagogical experts acting as cultural interpreters and special needs teachers for pupils with an immigrant background, are considered fundamental.

Individual Educational Plans developed and implemented for pupils with SEN and an immigrant background are considered a very important support measure. Bilingual teaching is also used in some municipalities and it is seen as a very effective way of support. A pupil with an immigrant background can progress in accordance with his/her own personal study programme instead of a syllabus organised by year group progression – this seems to be very effective especially with newly arrived pupils. This means flexibility in study time and content and also that the pupil is not forced to repeat a school year if he/she has not achieved all the goals of the year group. In many schools, additional support and support for homework after school is available for pupils with an immigrant background.

When teaching pupils with SEN and an immigrant background, the support of the school head teacher is considered very important. The teachers also regard teamwork and support from the whole teaching community as essential for the success of their work with pupils with SEN and an immigrant background. Teacher's skills also play an important role in the success of the support provided. Some teachers have followed inter-school courses and school training and coaching on how to support pupils with SEN or with an immigrant background (or both).

Research carried out in some countries (e.g. Hungary) has reached the conclusion that incidental and individual factors – primarily teachers' attitude, professional mobility and suitability – are very important to determine the successful adaptation of pupils with SEN and an immigrant background. Success of the pupils' school integration depends primarily on the personality, professional commitment and pedagogical experience of the teachers.

Early language stimulation of pupils with an immigrant background (e.g. children aged between 3–5 years old) has positive effects on children's later linguistic development. In addition researchers acknowledge the fact that language stimulation leads to earlier detection of bilingual children with SEN. In some cases (e.g. Sweden), resource teams have developed a programme on how to support young children in their language acquisition. This programme is based on recent studies and research.

Some of the programme's principles are to: encourage children to speak the language of the host country as well as their mother tongue; help children to reach a good language level; talk to them a lot and let them speak themselves; listen and have an open attitude; support interaction with adults and peers; have dialogues; create an environment which is rich and stimulating; work in small groups; recognise the resources of children and their families.

In others cases (e.g. in Zurich, Switzerland), results of external evaluations show that the image of multicultural schools improves if schools as a whole receive support in dealing with the increasing population of pupils with an immigrant background. Parents and the wider public have a better opinion of these schools; the learning of all pupils – not only those with an immigrant background – improves; teachers develop their skills considerably; teachers improve their teamwork and develop common educational strategies.

In some countries, the schools take an intercultural approach in order to strengthen the social community between all children, and multilingual programmes to strengthen their cognitive, social and affective skills. In other cases (e.g. Portugal), all provision, support and assessment is the responsibility of the individual pupil's class teacher so that all kinds of provision meeting the needs of the pupil are co-ordinated at mainstream school level. Supporting language skills is co-ordinated with supporting SEN through an individual education plan. This policy is considered inclusive and enhances good practice in the framework of a child centred approach.

2.4.4 Success factors in relation to an inclusive learning environment within the framework of a multi-cultural class

Regarding references to planned or already conducted evaluation of support measures addressing the double challenge of SEN and an immigrant background, most countries have reported that although there are not many complete research studies on this double issue, there are a few small scale studies and evaluation reports that have been/are being undertaken at national or local level. The main success factors and obstacles related to either an inclusive or segregated learning environment within the framework of a multi-cultural classroom reported by the countries, and derived from these small scale studies and evaluation reports, are presented below.

To begin with, the principle of inclusive learning has been successfully achieved in many schools where pupils with SEN and an immigrant background attend a local school together with their peers. It needs to be underlined that this kind of success requires the provision of sufficient additional resources and support for pupils with SEN and an immigrant background. Diversification of the curriculum, incorporating contents and teaching materials that acknowledge the experiences of pupils with SEN and an immigrant background, is also considered very important. Smaller teaching groups in some subjects seem to be advantageous.

The intervention of mother tongue teachers or assistants, bilingual teachers, or special needs teachers in the classroom, alongside the class teacher, has proved to be good practice.

The support of the head teacher and a positive attitude from the school staff are also positive factors for an inclusive learning environment. The initial and in-service training of teachers is

considered important. School professionals have celebrated the openness of schools where teachers co-operate with one another and with organisations and professionals outside education. Some municipalities consider that preparatory classes should welcome multicultural groups and not groups of pupils with only one or two ethnic origins. It is considered that school staff with an immigrant background are an important asset.

Finally, using on-going formative classroom-based assessment – for example, observations and portfolio assessment – as an alternative to standardised tests, seems to be very important in the process of inclusive education.

2.5 Assessment[2]

A lot of attention is currently being paid in most countries to assessing bilingual pupils' linguistic abilities in the language of the host country. This also concerns the pupils' needs for support in developing their language skills at preschool level or when they are enrolled in the education system. Language abilities are considered crucial for successful schooling and many countries use language-screening materials for this purpose.

In all countries, a number of assessment tools and tests have been developed, adjusted to the national context and used to assess a pupil's development, his/her basic academic skills and identify the pupil's special educational needs. Most of them are standardised assessment tools and tests, developed to be used mainly with monolingual pupils. Some of these tests are translated into different languages, but when language tests are translated, they are altered – they may become more complex (or easier), sentence construction and inflected forms differ from language to language. Also, the degree of difficulty of a word or expression may not be the same in all languages, even though the word has the same apparent

[2] 'Assessment' refers to the ways teachers or other professionals systematically collect and use information about a pupil's level of achievement and/or development in different areas of their educational experience (academic, behaviour or social). This section considers both *initial assessment* aiming at identifying the pupil's abilities and possible special educational needs, and *formative assessment* aiming at informing teachers about pupil's learning and guiding them in planning the next steps in teaching.

meaning. Moreover, even if materials are translated into the pupil's mother tongue, cultural differences with the culture of the host country may create a barrier and affect the test's results.

In other cases assessment procedures take place with the support of an interpreter, who either only translates what is written in the test and what the instructions are, or he/she also explains a lot more about the test, in order to reduce the effect of differences related to cultural and socio-economic factors. Sometimes parents may also be asked to perform this task, although the intervention of someone being emotionally very close to the pupil has been highly criticised.

In order to reduce the cultural influence and the implications of language skills in the assessment process, some countries also use non-verbal tools to assess the pupil's cognitive abilities.

The main challenge stated in a number of country reports (e.g. Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Greece, Sweden) is that assessment tools are not developed or adjusted for pupils with an immigrant background and cause many problems. Professionals must be very careful when interpreting the results of these tests. Pupils with an immigrant background do not have the same chances to achieve good results as the pupils from the host country because of their reduced language skills and/or other skills required by the assessment tool. Psychological tools and tests are rarely adjusted to correspond to the needs of pupils with an immigrant background in Europe.

Therefore, assessing effectively pupils' individual needs depends highly on the professional responsible for the assessment process and his or her knowledge and ability to consider bilingualism as well as multicultural aspects when using the assessment tools and evaluating the results. Even though in many countries, at national level, bilingual pupils represent more than 10% of all pupils, there are no specific rules or requirements concerning the education and knowledge of professionals within the field.

To overcome this challenge, a holistic approach to assessment with concentration on the process of learning and development is considered crucial in assessing pupils with SEN and an immigrant background. In many cases, the teachers use continuous assessment and dialogue with pupils and parents as assessment tools. Targets set for the pupil's learning are based on the pupil's

level of basic skills, his/her learning history and his/her life situation. In the assessment process the information derived from parents and the pupil him/herself is fundamental. When further assessment is needed the school uses multi-professional assessment teams. It requires information from all teachers who are involved in teaching the pupil (class teacher, subject teacher, language teacher, preparatory class teacher, mother tongue teacher and special educational needs teachers). Social workers and psychologists are also involved in assessing and identifying special educational needs and learning difficulties.

Within some countries and/or municipalities (e.g. Finland) some psychologists choose to combine traditional assessment methods with inter-language analyses of the child's second language development and in some cases also descriptions of the mother tongue skills.

In most countries, if extra assessment is needed to identify the pupil's SEN/learning difficulties, the pupil is referred by the school and/or the parents to special services for assessment, diagnosis and then support (e.g. educational-psychological advisory service, resource centres, medico-pedagogical centres, assessment and support centres, etc.). The assessment procedures are performed on the basis of statements from the school and the parents plus observations, studies and tests of the child, carried out by specialists (e.g. psychologists, pedagogues, etc.) who provide advice and counselling to schools and parents about the child's development and the support required regarding his/her specific needs.

In most countries, although documents related to the pupil's education in the country of origin (school reports, results from assessment processes, etc.) are requested when the pupil starts school in the host country, many parents do not have these records anymore. In cases where there is a lack of sufficient information or doubt about a pupil's SEN at the time he/she is enrolled in the school system of the host country, an educational-psychological assessment based on documents from the country of origin that are available and/or additional tests take place in order to identify the pupil's abilities and decide on the necessary support to meet his/her needs.

In some countries, e.g. United Kingdom (England, Scotland and Wales) parents have the right to appeal to a tribunal – or some other form of dispute resolution body or organisation that deals with special

educational needs and disability – if parents are not happy with local authority decisions on assessments and extra provision for their child's SEN. This can be in terms of refusal by the local authority to carry out an assessment or draw up an SEN 'statement' setting out the extra special educational provision a child needs, the provision proposed, or placement of the child in a particular school.

A number of services and professionals are involved in the assessment of pupils with SEN and an immigrant background, in line with the different regulations and assessment methods in the countries. Usually, the needs and abilities of pupils are first observed by the class teacher; special needs are identified in co-operation with the special needs teachers.

In many cases, a team consisting of all the teachers involved in the teaching of the pupil with an immigrant background (preparatory class teacher, mother tongue teacher, teacher of the language of the host country, special needs teacher, etc.) take part in assessment procedures. If needed, more professionals (psychologist, nurse, social worker, speech therapist, medical doctor, etc.) from the municipal/school welfare services or local resource centre can also participate in the assessment process. It is also considered important that parents participate in the assessment process. If needed, the school can advise and guide the pupil and the parents to get further help from assessment services, rehabilitation services outside the school, social and healthcare services, local resource centres, assessment/diagnostic/support centres, institutes for special needs education, etc.

On the basis of the results from the assessment process, a decision is taken, in most cases by the local school authorities in co-operation with the services concerned about the special educational support needed by the pupil. Subsequently, an action plan detailing the adequate support necessary to meet the pupil's needs is formulated.

All the information included in this chapter refers to the information provided in the country reports and highlights the complexity of the relationship between SEN and an immigrant background. Different parameters, such as socio-cultural background, norms, religious belief, gender, economic factors, etc. can also have a significant effect on this complex relationship.

3. SUMMARY RESULTS FROM THE PRACTICAL ANALYSIS

The practical analysis for the study has been based upon the results of the presentations and discussions during the six visits organised within the framework of this project in: Malmö (Sweden), Athens (Greece), Paris (France), Brussels (Belgium), Amsterdam (the Netherlands) and Warsaw (Poland). The location of the visits were guided by three main criteria:

a) Countries volunteered to organise practical analysis work during study visits;

b) Geographical location of countries demonstrating diversity in their culture and educational approach;

c) Immigration tradition – combining locations with a long immigration tradition and those with a relatively new immigration situation.

The purpose of the visits was to see in practice how the situation of pupils with SEN and an immigrant background was in different educational settings, in relation to the five areas of the project analysis.

All professionals involved in hosting the visits were informed beforehand about the project and about the five areas the group intended to analyse and discuss with them at a practical level. All visits followed the same model: introduction to the topic by local and/or national experts; presentation of the locations by hosts; visits and discussions with host professionals, followed by discussions and preliminary analysis by the expert group.

Although all visits used the same model, being aware of the importance of the different actors involved in the education of pupils with SEN and an immigrant background, each location involved the participation of one of the following stakeholders during the visit: families, non-teaching professionals, professionals from assessment centres and policy makers.

Before proceeding to summarise the main characteristics of the different places visited, it is necessary to highlight that professionals from all sites visited were very open and willing to share their experiences of successes and difficulties with professionals from other countries. They all showed a high level of professional commitment.

3.1 Presentation and main characteristics of the locations visited

Results from the visits will be presented first by a short introduction of the different locations, followed by some general comments. More detailed information as well as contact details of the visited schools and centres in the six countries can be found in the dedicated Agency web area where the complete country information is available: www.european-agency.org/agency-projects

Contact details concerning the places visited are also listed at the end of this report.

3.1.1 Malmö (Sweden)

The first visit took place in Malmö. This was the only place where the expert group did not go to visit educational centres, but instead met and discussed with professionals from mainstream primary schools – welcoming pupils from 7 to 16 years of age – and from a support centre.

The host professionals were all based in Rosengård, an urban area of the city of Malmö, one of the main multicultural Swedish cities where approximately 34% of the inhabitants have an immigrant background. A high unemployment rate is found among them. In Rosengård this can reach 80% of the population. In Sweden, pupils with an immigrant background are mainly from Middle-Eastern countries and the countries of the former Yugoslavian Republic. There is a high concentration of pupils from these ethnic backgrounds in Rosengård schools. In addition, pre-school education in Rosengård is mainly attended by children with an immigrant background; pre-school classes are offered from the age of 6.

Sweden has a very decentralised education policy; municipalities are very autonomous and competent regarding the implementation of education. In the case of Malmö, the City Council provides additional funding to support the foreign population. Quite a lot of services are offered to all pupils and their families, with some services specifically addressed to those with an immigrant background: migration board; local health centre for very young children; health centre for refugees and immigrants; mother tongue centre, etc. The involvement of parents is highly prioritised, but professionals reported that they sometimes have communication problems with parents. Families with an immigrant background do not always understand the structure

and functioning of schools and of the education system. As a result, pupils and families sometimes report that they feel segregated. Another important issue for the families is that they need to follow a long procedure before being allowed to stay in the host country.

As far as schools are concerned, the law states that children and youths whose mother tongue is not Swedish are entitled to mother tongue instruction in compulsory and upper secondary education. The aim is to help children and youths to develop their mother tongue and to give them an opportunity to learn more about their own culture as well as the differences and similarities between both cultures. In addition, if necessary, pupils may also receive support for other subjects in their mother tongue. Professionals commented that it is sometimes hard to find teachers who speak the mother tongue, especially when it concerns a small minority group. Furthermore, professionals insisted that teaching and assessing pupils in both languages, mother tongue and Swedish, is very important. Different cultural backgrounds need different ways of teaching and communicating. Cultural diversity is to be presented in the schools and supported in a positive way.

As a principle, pupils with an immigrant background attend mainstream schools, with the exception of pupils with a hearing impairment who often receive special support and might join special provision or programmes. A special programme is offered to pupils presenting intellectual difficulties: they attend special classes in mainstream schools where intervention mainly takes place inside the classroom, through support teachers and a mobile team. Schools have teacher support materials and tools of good quality.

Clear priorities were presented by teachers and also by professionals from the support centre. These included: high priority on early intervention; the importance and need to work with parents; co-operation with/among professionals in the school; the creation of a good atmosphere in the school. They were also aware and suggested that high concentrations of people with an immigrant background might lead to the creation of ‘ghettos’.

3.1.2 Athens (Greece)

The second visit took place in one primary and one secondary mainstream school in Athens. Pupils attending these schools were

aged between 5 and 16 years. Additionally, an assessment centre was also visited.

The primary school had a total of 110 pupils; including 40 with an immigrant background. A few of these 40 had slight learning problems. The secondary school had 270 pupils, including 25 with an immigrant background and two of them being recognised as having special educational needs. The majority of pupils came from non-EU countries – namely Albania, Moldavia, Ukraine, Russia, Africa, Pakistan, the United Arab Emirates and Turkey – as well as from Romania, Poland and Bulgaria.

Both, the primary as well as the secondary schools have recently started receiving a significant number of pupils with an immigrant background from different countries. It is very often difficult to recognise pupils with an immigrant background due to the fact that families have the option to change their names into Greek ones. This possibility has been offered to families with an immigrant background in order to avoid any type of discrimination and on the whole seems to work well for those having a good knowledge of the Greek language. Both schools were open and sensitive towards multiculturalism and had a flexible educational approach. The primary school tried to approach families in order to welcome them and their children. Furthermore, the staff receive the required support in order to implement inclusive practice. Although schools need to follow a National Curriculum, teachers provide an individual educational plans for all pupils. For newly arrived pupils, a slow and flexible integration process is offered in order for them to learn the Greek language. During the first one-and-a-half years pupils do not have any written examinations, only oral ones.

Pupils with SEN and an immigrant background are assessed by an assessment centre. This centre gives advice to teachers on how to make the required curricula adaptations. Support is also provided by a psychologist as well as a specialised teacher, teaching mainly mathematics and Greek, with not more than five pupils in a separate classroom for a maximum of ten hours.

The assessment centre that was visited is new. It provides services to pupils in 250 schools in Athens with a staff of 18 professionals, working in an inter-disciplinary manner. It is a public service under the Ministry of Education, free of charge, but with a waiting list of one to two years. There are no differences regarding the type of service

offered to pupils (Greeks or those with an immigrant background) with SEN. However, tasks are modified and adapted taking into account differences in relation to language and culture. Professionals use observation at home or at school, non-formal, non-verbal and formal tests when pupils with SEN and an immigrant background are concerned. Sometimes when pupils have been assessed in their country of origin, the result is translated into Greek, but pupils are also re-assessed. A follow-up is planned with a new assessment procedure starting after three years. Assessing pupils with an immigrant background always takes place in the school.

The centre co-operates, mainly in an informal way, with parents, schools and the Ministry of Education. As far as parents are concerned, they receive the final statement of a pupil's needs and are free to give it to the school or not. Professionals mentioned that families lack information available in their own language and this might cause some communication problems. The co-operation between schools and the assessment centre is based upon recommendations provided to the school professionals; however, there is no obligation for the schools to implement these recommendations. Sometimes teachers suggested a lack of resources, or the fact of working in overcrowded classes as a reason for this. The centre also provides recommendations to the Ministry of Education regarding the required type of resources required to be provided to pupils and schools.

Although dealing with an increasing number of pupils with different cultural backgrounds was rather a new situation, commitment from head teachers and teachers played an important positive role in both schools. Schools implemented a flexible curriculum, developed co-operative learning, co-operated with and shared responsibilities with other services.

3.1.3 Paris (France)

The third visit took place in Paris in four mainstream pre-primary and primary schools. Pupils attending these schools were aged between 3 and 11 years. One of the schools had a 'CLIS', a special integration class ('Classe d'Intégration Spécialisée'). This class follows an integration programme providing support to pupils with SEN in mainstream classes combined with separate support whenever required.

The four schools were located in the same area, a Priority Educational Area, with a high density of population with an immigrant background. A large number of families are living in difficult economical conditions and facing a high unemployment rate. Around 680 pupils attended the schools, among those 85% had an immigrant background. The majority of pupils with an immigrant background were from Northern and Western Africa, namely from former colonies, but also from Asia and a lower proportion from European countries. 50% of the pupils were being supported by special teachers in the school or by medico-psychological centres outside the school and 12 pupils were attending the CLIS. A large number of leisure activities were organised by the schools together with the local services after school hours or during school holidays in order to provide pupils with activities that families cannot ensure. There was a fee reduction for any school activity addressed to families with lower socio-economic status as well as free lunch during school time. Even so, teachers felt that the financial support was not enough to respond to the needs that the schools face.

The schools visited work closely with the 'Centre of Support, Interaction and Research in Ethno-Psychology', partly financed by the municipality. A psychologist and four cultural mediators work there, whose roles are described as being a bridge between parents and school. Staff from the centre support the school staff and offer their services to the families when children present learning problems. They receive the families in the school, twice a month, outside of school hours. The knowledge and understanding of the culture of origin is considered of great value in order to better support the child, the family and consequently the school. Schools were open for parents' participation. Parents were involved and participated in the visit providing information of great value when trying to understand pupils' reactions. Pupils are assigned to the school (according to where they live). Parents do not have the freedom of choice.

Pupils with an immigrant background attend mainstream education. In cases where they have learning difficulties**,** they remain in the school, but receive the required support from special teachers and other professionals. The school provides school-books simplified for pupils with SEN. Support stops as soon as the pupils reach the expected educational level, but if their problems persist, the school

psychologist who works in the school together with the special teacher offers, in agreement with the parents, to assess the pupil's needs. In cases where what is offered by the school is not sufficient or is not accepted by the family, external social and medical services might intervene. These services receive the family and the pupil, assess the pupil's needs and may proceed with some therapy (for example, in the case of pupils with hearing impairment). Other types of external interventions are available in case of mobility problems or psychological disorders. Assessment can also result in the pupil attending special classes.

French is the language used in the school as far as lessons and books are concerned. Taking into account that some pupils have poor language skills in French, a few schools in the area have some preparatory classes aiming to improve the acquisition of the language of the host country. Pupils can attend French lessons there for three months and up to a maximum of one year, before returning to their school. Learning the mother tongue was not perceived as relevant, even for teachers with an immigrant background. To learn the language of the host country seems to be the main priority.

There was a good atmosphere in the schools with enough, well-arranged space for pupils to move around in. The organisation of school activities was carefully planned according to pupils' needs. The teachers raised a few challenging issues: more financial support, more in-service training and the problem of recruiting teachers to join the schools in an area considered as being 'difficult'.

3.1.4 Brussels (Belgium)

The fourth visit took place in two French-speaking schools in Brussels – one mainstream primary school, one special school – and in a Flemish speaking assessment centre. Pupils attending both schools were aged from two and a half to 14 years.

Before the visit, the group had the chance to listen to two testimonies from a family and from young people with an immigrant background, and to discuss with them. The obstacles faced by families in order for their child to get the best support in special education and move into mainstream education, as well as the fight against indirect racism were expressed. The young people's views were much the same, although they also had some concerns about their identity: to which culture do they belong? They sometimes felt rejected by both the

host country and their own ethnic group. They suggested that they in fact have two different cultures and this needs to be accepted first by them and later on by others.

The mainstream school was a primary and secondary school, located in an area where a large number of the immigrant population lived, mainly from the Northern part of Africa, but also from Asia, non-European Union countries and with a few immigrants also from South America. There was a lot of focus by the school on this situation, where there were approximately 400 pupils from 57 different countries. The school has set up five 'bridge' classes for newly arrived pupils, who will stay there for a maximum of one year before they join the corresponding class according to their educational level. Pupils can join these classes at any time of the school year. 80 pupils were attending these classes, with almost no knowledge of the French language. Language skills are the main criterion for the composition of the class. It seemed that pupils had no special educational needs, but only needs related to language problems. Pupils spoke different languages and there was a mixture of ages and competences. In the primary education section comprising three different levels, staff included an intercultural teacher. The secondary school had five levels and only French teachers.

The atmosphere was very friendly, pupils and staff seemed motivated. Discipline and fixed rules are part of the traditional way of teaching, but they are well accepted as part of the school education, with a combination of authority and with full respect for differences. The school was involved in a pilot project called 'Language and Culture of Origin' incorporating the French language into the culture of learners with an immigrant background. The pilot project aims to support – if results are positive – 80 other schools in the French community of Belgium.

The teachers had a very positive attitude towards pupils' diverse cultures. They used different methods and didactical approaches in order to teach the language of the host country and they also used all possible educational tools to facilitate the communication and learning process. Some comments need to be stressed: the selection of materials should take into consideration not just the language level of the pupils, but also their age; the use of adapted texts might be required for some specific subjects; more common activities with 'peer classes' might also facilitate their further transition to the

mainstream class. Learning together creates a non-discriminatory climate in the 'bridge' classrooms and the school fulfils its role as the first contact point between cultures and countries. It should also facilitate the involvement of parents and families. It is important to ensure that there is room for dialogue and to provide any required support to teachers.

The special school was a primary and secondary vocational school with 300 pupils. 60% of the pupils were reported as having an immigrant background. It was quite a large building presenting some architectural barriers. Pupils had learning and behavioural problems and some had physical disabilities. Furthermore, professionals reported that there was often a lack of communication with families because of language barriers. In some cases, there were also communication problems with pupils with an immigrant background as all education was provided in French. In order to overcome this difficulty, teachers communicate through picture books. The same difficulty might affect pupils' assessment, although the professionals were aware of the situation. Contact with mainstream schools was reported as being quite limited.

The VCLB Koepel (Vrije Centrum voor Leerlingenbegeleinding) organisation is an Association of Centres for Pupil Support and Consultation. The main task is to work, co-ordinate and support the 48 associated regional centres (CLB) and not to work directly with pupils and families. All centres are free of charge, organised and financed by the Department of Education of the Flemish community. The CLB centres offer support and consultancy to pupils, parents, teachers and primary and secondary schools. The objective of the VCLB is to empower schools, teachers and parents. It aims to strengthen mainstream schools, to reduce barriers affecting/impeding consultancy, to look for preventive strategies, undertaking various steps in order to proceed to a fair diagnosis – eliminating disturbing factors, highlighting positive factors. According to the staff, both pupils from the host country and pupils with an immigrant background have similar problems when they share a low economic background; and, what is good for a child with an immigrant background is good for every child. No special emphasis was paid to pupils with SEN and an immigrant background.

3.1.5. Amsterdam (the Netherlands)

The fifth visit took place in Amsterdam in two special primary schools, in one special secondary and vocational school spread over five different sites and in two assessment centres. During the visit the group had the chance to listen to a member of the Dutch Parliament explaining the difficulties encountered and the measures required to avoid discrimination and to ensure the improvement of quality of education for those more vulnerable pupils. Among other issues, the provision of pre- and early school education, of language classes and an extra budget for pupils with a language deficiency were highlighted.

One of the primary schools had 320 pupils aged 3 to 13 years with approximately 70% of them having an immigrant background. The school offered provision for pupils with speech and language disorders and also provided peripatetic support to 180 pupils based in other schools in Amsterdam. The development of good speech and language skills was the main goal. Some of the pupils had started in a mainstream school, but due to language problems were referred to the special school. Although some pupils return to their mainstream school, many stay throughout their primary education.

Parents have the freedom of choice regarding schools, although this may not be so easy for parents with an immigrant background. In the near future, local schools will be responsible for assessing and finding the most appropriate school for pupils in co-operation with parents.

As far as learning materials are concerned, the school used all kinds of visual tools. All possible means were used to enlarge pupils' vocabulary and facilitate communication with the families. The school worked closely with mainstream schools providing in-service training, support and a follow-up service. Professionals raised the importance of early assessment followed by early intervention measures.

The other primary school had 153 pupils aged 4 and 12 years. Pupils in this school had severe learning difficulties and serious problems of communication (e.g. autism). Of those pupils, 85% had an immigrant background; they were mainly from Africa, Asia and a few from European countries. 40 pupils were integrated into mainstream classes. The school supports parents in their choice for close-to-home education at primary schools, providing peripatetic support and

supervision. In the case of pupils with autism integrated in mainstream education, specialised teachers provided in-service training to their colleagues in the mainstream schools. Teachers are paid for this task.

The school had an ‘inclusive practice’, in the sense that pupils with autism were integrated in mixed groups. They were not in special groups; all pupils followed an individual educational plan. The use of ‘nonverbal’ communication was well selected and implemented throughout the school.

The school attached great importance to parents’ involvement for all school activities – education, leisure, etc. Where needed, interpreters are invited to facilitate the communication among teachers and parents. Similarly a ‘contact book’ exists in order to facilitate communication among teachers, pupils and parents. Even so, some children were not attending the school, but stayed at home. Learning the mother tongue seemed not to be a priority in the school, although three staff members had an immigrant background. Strong emphasis was placed on assimilation into the host culture.

The secondary and vocational school was located in five different places. It welcomed youths presenting light and moderate learning problems often associated with behavioural problems. The school had about 300 pupils aged 12 to 20 years. A high percentage of pupils (80% or more) with an immigrant background attended the school. One of the schools had an important concentration of pupils from Surinam, a former Dutch colony. The majority of these pupils would be able to attend mainstream schools if they received extra support. In many cases professionals reported that serious cultural deprivation affects language acquisition and learning. These pupils lack sufficient control, lessons on subjects they can understand and more practically oriented programmes. Each young person has an individual curriculum tailored to her/his own abilities. After 4 years at school, they start having regular work experiences in companies.

The ambiance in the different locations was good; rules were clear and respected and the environment appeared secure. The teachers seemed very committed and paid a lot of individual attention to the young people; they even worked during their free time. Materials and equipment were well adapted. In the case of supporting youngsters to join the labour market, a well-structured practical approach was in place and connected to the labour market.

Relations with parents were reported to vary: some places seemed to pay a lot of attention to the exchange of information with families, but this situation did not seem to be the case in all of the schools. Parents from the school with a high concentration of pupils from Surinam reported experiencing strong discrimination from society.

Schools offered special language programmes for students whose mother tongue was not Dutch. Contacts with mainstream schools seemed to be rather limited.

The two assessment and rehabilitation centres were mainly working with young people presenting serious behavioural and social problems. The majority of the youngsters had an immigrant background – mainly from the Northern part of Africa. Some of them had been in contact with the police and justice departments. The centres aimed mainly at getting to know the history of these youngsters, to plan an observation period together with them and to train them in order to find employment. Work with the family was of high priority and included the use of translators and/or mediators in order to clarify and understand the situation of the family.

3.1.6 Warsaw (Poland)

The sixth visit took place in Warsaw in five mainstream schools – two primary and three secondary schools – and in an Association of Legal Intervention. The primary schools were public and the secondary ones were non-public.

More than 700 pupils aged 6 to 14 years, were attending the two primary schools. One of the schools had 35 pupils, coming mainly from Chechnya and Northern Caucasia. The number of pupils with an immigrant background varied a lot taking into account that very often families arrive to (and leave) Poland as a transit country. Language difficulties were the main challenge that these pupils face, along with the traumas of war that they had experienced. Educational local authorities provided Polish tuition twice a week. The school was co-operating with the Association of Legal Intervention in the framework of the pilot project 'Multicultural School' supported by the office of education of the city of Warsaw. The aim was to facilitate the integration of pupils with an immigrant background into the school community. There was an assistant from Chechnya helping as intercultural mediator and interpreter, and also providing lessons in the mother tongue. This was considered of importance regarding

pupils' cultural identity and their further integration. No pupils with SEN have been identified in these schools.

At the second primary school approximately 10% of pupils had an immigrant background, mainly from Vietnam. They did not present any SEN; on the contrary, their school performance was successful. Families were willing to pay for additional lessons in order to support their children as soon as a need was identified.

The secondary schools visited were new, with a pedagogical orientation very much influenced by relevant national educators or politicians. Two of the secondary schools had 420 pupils aged 13 to 16 years. 30 pupils were identified as refugees from Chechnya and other countries from Asia and Africa. 27 other pupils had an immigrant background. Two pupils were identified as having disabilities/SEN. Parents and teachers jointly ran the schools.

Pupils are accepted into these schools through an entrance examination, except for those with SEN. Parents pay a fee, 6% of the fees are reserved to provide loans to pupils from families with economic difficulties. Less than 10% of the pupils are exempt from paying any fee. The schools are partly supported by the educational authorities.

The main objectives were to learn to live in a democratic society and to encourage pupils to have an open attitude towards other cultures and environments. The teachers were closely supported by parents. Responsibilities were shared by all: teachers, parents and pupils. Two of the educational methods used by the schools were tutoring method and formative assessment. Extra lessons in Polish or other subjects were provided as soon as a problem was identified. Chechen pupils were given some lessons in their mother tongue.

The third secondary school had 103 pupils aged 16 to 19 years. 9 pupils had an immigrant background. There were no pupils with SEN. This school, as well as the other two secondary schools aimed to prepare pupils for an active participation in a modern, multicultural and democratic society.

The Association for Legal Intervention visited is an NGO aiming to provide free legal assistance to people who are marginalised and discriminated against, namely migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. The Association represents them as mediators in front of the local authorities; it also supports them as/with interpreters. The

association was fully involved in the pilot project with one primary school, described above, providing a mediator to support the language and social integration of the pupils.

3.2 General comments

The visits provided the opportunity to see different practice, to exchange and discuss with professionals from the field as well as with families and very importantly, to highlight some reflections. It is impossible to report the results from these discussions in detail, but the observations below constitute a summary of the main issues discussed with professionals and within the group. They are presented according to the five areas considered for the project analysis and they only concern the places visited.

3.2.1 Target population

The visits have provided the opportunity to see a variety of situations at local level: on the one hand, schools from countries with a long immigration tradition and on the other hand, schools from countries that only recently started to receive families from other countries for economic or political reasons. A significant number of different countries of origin were represented in the different locations. In only one school was there a majority of pupils from a former colony of the host country. The professionals from all the locations were under the impression that the number of newly arrived pupils was increasing. This perception was more significant in countries with no immigration tradition.

Cultural diversity does not seem to be perceived by the schools in a negative way. Generally there is a positive attitude in the schools and professionals try to highlight the value that other cultures bring to the host country, although sometimes diversity is also associated with problems ‘to be solved’. This was mainly highlighted by schools located in areas where a high concentration of the population had an immigrant background and where families usually face difficult socio-economic situations. Some professionals also reported having problems in handling the new education situation they faced.

3.2.2 Existing data

Concerning data, two aspects need to be considered: location and type of schools visited. As far as location is concerned, schools located in areas with a significant concentration of the population

having an immigrant background, presented a high density of pupils with an immigrant background, with as many as 85% of pupils (or even more) in such schools. The professionals reported that this situation could lead to the creation of 'ghettos' or 'immigrant dominant schools'. These schools were mainly located in socio-economically disadvantaged areas.

The type of school that the pupils were placed in – mainstream or special – is another aspect of information that needs to be carefully considered in this report, because information collected is only related to a few number of schools. The mainstream schools visited with or without a high number of pupils with an immigrant background had a limited number of pupils recognised as having SEN compared to the (obviously) high number of these pupils in special schools. Mainstream schools were integrating and supporting the pupils using specialised staff and the different services available. In a case where the school could not meet the pupils' needs through the resources available, they were transferred to special provision.

The percentage of pupils with SEN and an immigrant background in the special schools visited was between 60 to 80% of the total number of pupils in the school. Staff were aware of the situation. In some places, special schools were co-operating with mainstream schools, integrating and supporting pupils to remain in mainstream provision, although this was not the general situation. The special schools visited received mainly pupils with learning difficulties and behavioural problems.

3.2.3 Educational provision

The majority of schools and services visited were public and free of charge, although this was not the case for one of the sites. Schools were diversely financed, according to different country situations: either centralised at state level, or decentralised at municipal, or even school level, or else mainly financed with private donations.

Families and pupils with an immigrant background have the same rights as the population of the host country. The importance of having full respect for the pupils' and their families' human rights as well as fighting against discrimination was highlighted by the professionals involved in the visits. However, issues were raised regarding some potentially discriminatory situations. There is not always a free school choice for parents and even in the countries where a free choice is

possible, it can be 'biased' by communication problems between families and services. This can lead to 'over placement' of pupils with an immigrant background in some areas, or within some forms of special provision. Families also reported that they often feel segregated, not really accepted by the host population.

Families can receive, if required, some extra financial support similar to that available for the local population. In some cases, there are some cost reductions or free extra school activities – such as lunch at school – for families with a lower socio-economic status. However, professionals reported that funding is not enough in order to cover all pupils' needs. This was mainly raised by professionals from schools located in disadvantaged areas and seemed to apply to all pupils and not specifically to those with an immigrant background.

Various services are involved and co-operate with schools. It mainly depends on the type of school, but generally health and social services were involved. One particular situation was in Paris with the involvement of the ethno-psychology centre and in Malmö with the presence of the support team for the local schools.

Collaboration between schools and services seemed too often to be informal. Professionals from schools indicated the need to increase co-operation with other types of organisations such as ethnic associations. They also highlighted the potential value offered by assistants with various ethnic and cultural backgrounds. This is not only for practical reasons – to avoid language barriers and facilitate communication with families – but also in order to better understand how different cultures perceive disabilities/SEN.

Information and communication with parents as well as their full participation in any decision concerning their child was a clear priority in all of the locations. However, school professionals were aware of serious communication gaps due to language problems.

3.2.4 Support measures

All of the schools visited have implemented several measures in order to facilitate the integration of pupils with an immigrant background. The professionals were very much aware of the importance of learning the host language as soon as possible, mainly for newly arrived pupils, and of reaching a good level in the language of the host country. As the school professionals stated, schools play

a crucial role as a meeting point among cultures and as a first step for further integration into the host society.

To overcome potential language barriers using different means was the main objective reported by professionals from the schools visited. Some schools set up 'bridge' classes to support in the best possible way and for a fixed period, language acquisition; in a few places, bilingual education is offered; in other cases, teaching support – also in the mother tongue – is provided for main subjects. The use of monolingual books was quite widespread, although alternative ways of learning were used, using pictures, simplified books, etc. Working to a flexible curriculum was mentioned by the majority of professionals and in some schools an individual educational programme was set up. Paying individual attention to pupils' needs was highlighted by all professionals.

The positive attitude of staff certainly appeared to play an important role in the results achieved by the schools, although school staff raised challenges, particularly the need for in-service training.

Despite the efforts and commitment observed in the schools visited, there were still questions relating to:

- How to make a clear line/distinction between language problems and learning difficulties?
- To what extent do mainstream schools ensure that they will take responsibility in supporting all pupils, and to what extent do special schools make enough effort to help pupils return to mainstream education?
- To what extent do schools use reliable and sufficient tools to identify the pupils' real needs and then provide the required support?

3.2.5 Assessment

The assessment centres visited were public and free of charge. They were available for pupils, parents, teachers and schools. Their main objectives were to identify pupils' needs, to inform and guide parents about their child's needs and to strengthen and support the work of mainstream schools. Professionals from the centres mentioned the importance of implementing preventative strategies and their role in helping school staff with this issue. One particular example of preventative strategies concerned two centres involving

professionals from justice related services, as it involved young people presenting serious behavioural problems. One of these two centres was using cultural mediators and had implemented an observation programme for two months regarding these young people.

Although professionals from assessment centres were aware of the importance of (initial) assessment in two languages – mother tongue and language of the host country – in order to better understand the needs of pupils with an immigrant background, few centres put this into practice. In order to overcome the language barriers, they used informal as well as formal assessment tools, verbal and non-verbal methods. Regarding newly arrived pupils, the professionals indicated that few pupils bring information with them resulting from assessment procedures undertaken in their country of origin.

Assessment was a delicate issue, raising many questions. Language barriers seem obvious and affect all processes – contact and communication with families, identification of pupils' needs, etc. – to the extent that it may limit the value of the assessment processes being implemented. According to the assessment centres visited, it seems that pupils with an immigrant background are under-represented in the population attending the assessment centres. This could be because parents with an immigrant background may not receive appropriate information about this type of centre (as well as from other services). It might also be related to the fact that different cultures have different perceptions about SEN. As a result, a number of serious issues need to be considered regarding the identification of SEN of pupils with an immigrant background.

It is obvious that the results from the visits provide only a limited picture of local situations – it is not implied that they are necessarily representative of national situations, but should be considered as examples that may help to understand local circumstances.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of the analysis highlight some general issues that confirm the relevance of the questions raised by the countries' representatives at the beginning of the project:

a) To which extent language problems are considered as learning difficulties;

b) How the abilities and needs of pupils with an immigrant background are assessed;

c) How to support teachers and families in the best way.

It seems certain that schools in Europe are becoming and will become more multicultural. This implies the need to respond to new educational situations – often perceived as complex, as they are new or relatively new. Countries have in the past received families from former colonies, or countries associated with their economic and industrial growth. More recently two new situations can be identified: families arriving into the European countries as refugees or asylum seekers and families who are in a transit situation arriving into a European country. Schools play an important role, as they are sometimes the first contact point for these families with the host society.

The main conclusions in relation to four core areas are listed below, along with key recommendations addressed to professionals and policy-makers.

4.1 Existing data

The data collection exercise was, as expected, not an easy task. Within the framework of the project it has been possible to collect relevant information, mainly at local level. In some countries, a new data collection system was initiated on this issue as a result of the project request for such information. It is important to highlight that the data collected provides only a limited picture of the situation in the participating countries. Data provided is not necessarily representative of national situations.

Many countries' reports revealed a significant disproportion of pupils with an immigrant background leading to their over- or under-representation in special education. According to the country reports,

the percentage of pupils with an immigrant background represents 6 to 20% of the compulsory school population for the majority of the countries involved (for the 2005/2006 school year).

Country information and the practical analysis suggests that there is an over-representation of pupils with an immigrant background mainly in provision addressed to pupils with learning problems, and also to some extent with behavioural problems. This situation needs to be carefully analysed and cannot be interpreted in a simple way. Several factors are inter-related and need to be considered: the type of special need – namely learning problems; and the type of population – namely pupils with low socio-cultural and/or economic status. The fact that pupils with an immigrant background are, sometimes, over represented in special provision for pupils with learning problems seem to highlight that there is confusion in distinguishing between language difficulties and learning problems and it is clear that more research on this issue is needed.

Recommendation relating to data

More data should be collected and more research is needed in order to investigate the apparent disproportion of pupils with an immigrant background in special education settings.

The main goal will be to have more evidence regarding the existence of significant disproportion of pupils with SEN and an immigrant background in special provision.

4.2 Educational provision

All countries offer a variety of educational provision corresponding to their national special education and/or inclusion policy. Country laws are different and responsibilities also vary according to the countries; provision varies, but respect for human rights and policies in favour of equal opportunities are key principles in all countries. The range of provision available to pupils with SEN also applies to pupils with SEN and an immigrant background.

Three main challenges are apparent. Firstly, the various professionals and services involved do not have the necessary combined expertise in special needs education and dealing with pupils from an immigrant background in order to provide the best educational response to meet the combined needs of the pupil.

Secondly, some countries report that instruction in both languages, the mother tongue and the language of the host country improves pupils' performance – particularly if provided at an early age. This helps pupils to build their self-esteem and promotes their personal development as bilingual individuals with a dual cultural identity. However, bilingual instruction is reported to be implemented in an uneven way both across different countries as well as and within individual countries. Thirdly, all countries suggest that co-operation between services as well as parents' involvement are fundamental in this area. With respect to this, both professionals and families need to take into account the cultural differences of each other.

Project experts also highlighted the need to implement and improve co-operation with organisations representing the different ethnic minorities/immigrant groups pupils come from. Co-operation with families and associations needs to be implemented in a more satisfactory way.

Recommendations relating to provision

Policy makers should ensure that principles such as full respect of human rights and equal opportunities, guaranteed by country law, are implemented. The main policy objectives are to fight against discrimination, racism and xenophobia, whilst raising awareness and supporting and extending positive practice at local and national level. Such positive practice should promote integrative and inclusive policies that are open to diversity, highlighting the educational values brought by all pupils, whatever origin or need they might have.

Schools should have adequate guidelines and resources in order to implement inclusive practice. The school should aim to:

a) Understand and respect diversity;

b) Avoid any admission and registration policy that promotes segregation;

c) Recognise, support and implement educational strategies responding to the needs of pupils with SEN and an immigrant background;

d) Be actively involved in co-operation with services, including associations of and for immigrants;

e) Encourage communication with as well as participation of families.

Schools should have an intercultural policy that fits in with and meets the needs of the local context. Such a policy would require that mainstream as well as special education teachers increase their knowledge and skills and take advantage of necessary training programmes in order to better understand and then deal in the most appropriate way with multicultural diversity.

The overall goal will be to increase inclusive practice whilst providing the required resources to schools and professionals. 'Ghetto' situations will be reduced by avoiding segregation and exclusion.

4.3 Support measures

A wide range of educational support measures are provided for pupils and teachers in the different countries. They mainly focus on supporting the acquisition of the host language through bilingual education, 'bridge classes', teaching support, additional support and support for homework after school among others. The development and implementation of individual educational plans are mentioned as being very important support measures. The support and commitment of the head teacher and the staff of the school as well as implementing teamwork are considered important factors. Teachers' competence, commitment and experience play a key role. Investigations in some countries identify some additional successful support measures, such as: pupils attending a school in their neighbourhood together with their peers; to have small teaching groups for some subjects; the presence in mainstream schools of teachers or assistants with the same immigrant background as the pupils, working together with the class teacher.

Finally, it is reported as positive to incorporate content and teaching materials in the framework of the individual educational plan, acknowledging the experiences and cultures of pupils including those with SEN and an immigrant background.

Recommendations relating to support measures

Educational authorities, taking into account the local context, should consider what form of bilingual education or multicultural approaches should be provided in order to ensure pupils' educational development, social inclusion and self-esteem.

Schools with a high percentage of multilingual pupils need to be encouraged to develop a school-specific language policy. This requires:

a) Making an analysis of the school situation;

b) Creating an 'in-school' plan and proposal, the aim being to increase the quality of support measures provided.

Teachers should adapt their teaching methods, facilitate parental involvement and be supported by qualified professionals as well as assistants with different cultural backgrounds.

The overall goal will be to support mainstream schools in order for them to be able to address the needs of a heterogeneous pupil population regardless of their special educational needs and ethnic origin.

4.4 Assessment

A number of services and professionals are involved in the initial assessment of pupils with special educational needs and an immigrant background, according to the different regulations and assessment methods used in the countries. Most of the assessment processes involved are standard measures, addressed to pupils from the host country. Some of these assessment tools and tests are translated into different languages; in other situations, the assessment procedure takes place with the support of an interpreter; the use of nonverbal assessment tools is also encouraged. Despite the efforts made by professionals, the impact of the cultural aspects embedded in these tools is still a barrier for pupils with SEN and an immigrant background.

In order to overcome linguistic and cultural barriers and potentially biased results of standardised assessment procedures, a holistic approach focused upon the pupil's learning processes and development should be considered. In many cases, teachers use continuous assessment and dialogue with pupils and parents. Within this process, information and documentation provided by parents, even if not always available, is essential. The main elements to be focused upon in such an assessment approach are the pupil's level of basic skills, his/her learning history and his/her life situation. Information from all teachers involved (class, support, special, etc.)

as well as other professionals, such as social workers and psychologists, as well as parents should be taken into account.

Recommendations relating to assessment

Assessment procedures should facilitate the distinction between difficulties related to the acquisition of host country language and learning difficulties. All school actors must be involved and share responsibility regarding the assessment procedures.

The main goal will be to develop appropriate assessment materials for pupils with SEN and an immigrant background.

The information collected through examining the existing documentation on the topic, as well as through the questionnaire and the practical analysis, has provided some responses to a few questions. Many other issues have emerged and – this being a first attempt to compile this type of information – more questions have been raised than answers given. Hopefully, this first analysis and overview will open the door to further investigations and in-depth analysis on the topic.

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This report is a summary of the analysis conducted by the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, at the request of member countries' representatives, on the topic of Special Needs Education and Multicultural Diversity.

The aim has been to respond to three key questions:
a) to what extent second language learning issues are linked to and confused with learning difficulties, b) how the abilities and needs of pupils with an immigrant background are assessed, and c) how to support teachers, families and pupils in the best way.

During the three-year project, national experts from 25 European countries were involved in the collection and analysis of country information. Their collective work has led to some very interesting initial responses to these questions.

As this is the first attempt to compile this type of information at the European level, many more issues have emerged and more questions have been asked than answers given. It is therefore hoped that this first analysis and overview will open the door to further investigations into this topic.

European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education