



MEDITERRANEAN INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS



Gradual Inclusion and Reception Plans

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Section 1: Presentation

Due to the recent mass migratory movement, most European countries have specific regulations to welcome and receive students in their schools under the European Agenda on Migration, published by the European Commission in 2015.

Portugal is no exception. Under the scope of the aforementioned document, a work group was created in order to prepare an action plan to accelerate the integration process of migrant children and youngsters in the educational system, giving special importance to the refugees. The premise is that this group of people is in a situation of bigger vulnerability, given their background. Therefore, exceptional educative measures have been authorized concerning equivalences, curricular programmes, financial aid and learning of the country's language.

The first step to promptly and thoroughly address the inclusion of migrants in schools is to form multidisciplinary teams. These teams should, whenever possible, include the school psychologist, responsible for guiding the student into an option that fits him/her best, accordingly to his/her needs, likes and strengths and the school offers. Vocational Education and Training, for example, is a valued option for migrant students from 15 to 18, once it gives them practical knowledge and competences to perform a profession, if they wish to enter the labour market, while still leaving the door open for them to continue studying at an academic level.

As soon as the team is formed, which is expected to be immediate, the next step is to perceive the migrants' needs, at a linguistic, curricular and relational level, information which should be collected from the very first moment, not only informally but through the filling of specific forms each school should develop (the template used in Portugal will be available at the end as an example). Parents and/or legal tutors should help the student in case some questions/gaps are failed to be answered. Regarding language difficulties, a teacher should mediate and help fill in the form. If no one can perform this task due to linguistic barriers, there are services to bridge this gap, such as the telephone translation (<https://www.acm.gov.pt/-/servico-de-traducao-telefonica>), provided by the High Commission for Migration, which gathers a group of translators that cover most languages. This form will allow the team to have a deeper understanding of the specific background of each student, permitting the development of adequate educative measures.

The information collected this way should be complemented with an informal diagnostic language assessment based on behavioural observation, which is step number three. Some questions the evaluator should ask are: "Does the student interact verbally with its educators and peers?", "Does he/she seem to understand what is being said?", "Does the student seem to feel safe?". After

that, an informal and spontaneous conversation (5-10 minutes) should occur between the migrant student and the evaluator, covering basic topics of socialization.

Once the informal evaluation is complete, there is step number four: a formal interview to properly identify the level of linguistic knowledge (recurring to non-verbal language if needed and based on simple questions about personal topics, as their likes and dislikes). The evaluator should focus, mainly, on the students' comprehension of simple messages, presented slowly and repeatedly, as a positive sign of language understanding. It is also important to notice if the pupil responds in a non-verbal way, through facial expressions and body language, or if he/her barely talks. However, the absence of verbal response may not be directly linked to the lack of comprehension, but also to personality traits, as timidity, or momentary states, as anxiety. This oral interview can be complemented with a written test, if the student already has some linguistic knowledge.

The ultimate strategy to welcome the migrants is the design of a specific curricular plan to each student. Based on the evaluation previously done, the team of educators should now have all the information required to do so. The Portuguese legislation allows that migrant students take only a limited number of school subjects until they are ready to be fully integrated. It is up to the teachers to choose the ones they believe are the most appropriate, supported by the data previously collected. Nevertheless, one condition remains: the migrant students can never be entirely disconnected from the rest of the group/class. The student must frequent a designated number of minutes per week, variable according to the school year and to the applicable legislation. This gradual inclusion plan also predicts that whenever migrant students are not attending regular classes with the rest of the school group, they will be developing other activities concerning the learning of the host country language, accompanied by a teacher that is able to communicate with them, preferably trained in foreign languages, once it is assumed that language is the biggest barrier when it comes to the inclusion and integration of foreign students.

Apart from the design of a specific curriculum and the teaching of the national language to foreigners, which is predicted in most schools, several other strategies should be promoted by the entire school community. Some of these measures may include, for example, mentoring or tutoring sessions; creation of simple and attractive materials aimed at the students and their families to help them with the functioning of the school and its services; and, within schools' autonomy, projects, activities and/or courses to stimulate language and culture learning, while acknowledging and valuing diversity as an opportunity to change points of view and to encourage respect, tolerance and multiculturalism. Ideally, families or tutors should be present during the entire process of integration.

By implementing this good practice, schools will be able to diminish the first impact of changing to a new country, leaving everything behind, hopefully creating support bridges between the different cultures. Thus, the overall goal of this practice is to fully integrate the students in the educative system and to do it as soon as possible, but always assuring that they have the capacities to accompany national students.

Sources:

Direção-Geral de Educação (2016). *Agenda Europeia para as Migrações – Guia de Acolhimento: Educação Pré-Escolar, Ensino Básico, Ensino Secundário*. Available online at: http://www.dge.mec.pt/sites/default/files/Projetos/Agenda_Europeia_Migracoes/Documentos/agendamigracoes_guiacolhimento_dge.pdf [13/12/2018].

Section 2: Resources

To implement this good practice, you will need:

- Human resources: teachers, psychologists, auxiliary staff, to form the multidisciplinary team to accompany each migrant student throughout the whole process and coordinate the related activities.
- Sociolinguistic form to characterize students (attached).
- Telephone translation service: <https://www.acm.gov.pt/-/servico-de-traducao-telefonica> (if needed).
- A room, with dictionaries, exercise books, CDs, radios, pictures from the host country, computer, ... All sorts of age appropriate material, so that the students can learn in an attractive environment when they are not attending regular classes.
- Older students to mentor the newly-arrived migrants, if you wish to establish this practice.
- School supplies to create the guiding materials.

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Section 3: Duration

This good practice should be implemented from day one, step after step, and the room created to receive the students should be available every day during the entire school year, even when the migrant is already fully integrated, so that it becomes a safe space for the students that wish to learn and deepen their knowledge in their free time.

Section 4: Expected results

By implementing this good practice, you will:

- Promote intercultural exchange;

- Stimulate the learning of the host country language;
- Facilitate the integration of migrant students;
- Diminish social exclusion.

Section 5: Final reflection

How can we adapt this good practice to our context?

Please write a small reflection, considering what is doable and positive and what is not. Here are some questions to help you with this task:

- What competences should the professionals have?
- Do we have the resources needed?
- How can we guarantee a thorough and constant accompaniment of students with our schedules?

Sociolinguistic form¹

1. Student's identification

Name: _____

Birth date: ___/___/___

Gender: Male Female

Home country: _____

Country(ies) where the student lived: _____

Native language(s): _____

2. Educative path

2.1. Students that integrate pre-school or 1st grade.

Has the student attended some nursery/kindergarten/other institutions abroad?

Yes No For how long? _____

Information not available

2.2. Students that integrate other grades in basic and secondary school.

Which grades did the student attend abroad? _____

In which country(ies)? _____

¹ Source: Direção-Geral de Educação (2016). *Agenda Europeia para as Migrações – Guia de Acolhimento: Educação Pré-Escolar, Ensino Básico, Ensino Secundário*. Available online at: http://www.dge.mec.pt/sites/default/files/Projetos/Agenda_Europeia_Migracoes/Documentos/agendamigracoes_guiacolhimento_dge.pdf [13/12/2018], p. 19.

3. Linguistic identification

Languages that the student speaks:

- With the educators: _____
- Other languages: _____

4. Tutor

Name: _____

Degree of kinship: _____ Other: _____

Telephone: _____

Address: _____

Languages that the tutor speaks:

- With the student: _____
- With the educators: _____
- Other languages: _____

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5. People the student lives with

Name: _____

Degree of kinship: _____ Other: _____

Telephone: _____

Address: _____

Languages that the tutor speaks:

- With the student: _____

- With the educators: _____
- Other languages: _____

Name: _____

Degree of kinship: _____ Other: _____

Telephone: _____

Address: _____

Languages that the tutor speaks:

- With the student: _____
- With the educators: _____
- Other languages: _____

6. Educational support

Do you consider that the student needs other type of support apart from the one already provided to learn Portuguese?

Yes

No

If you said Yes, please indicate which:

Observations:
