

into

intercultural mentoring
tools to support migrant
integration at school



Project information

The INTO project is a Comenius Multilateral Project that focuses on “Reducing early school leaving, improving the learning of students with migrant background and Roma pupils as well as promoting gender equality and inclusive approaches to learning”.

The project aims to promote strategies and methods that help students with a migrant background at risk of early school leaving to maintain their motivation.

This is accomplished through a peer mentor, who will be able to provide support to their peers in learning, study guidance and homework support.

Understanding migrant integration at school

For the last six months work groups organized by each partner institution have collected information from schools, official websites and various academic and practice based journals about the integration of migrant children into the various education systems. From this research we have seen that generally difficulties arise when the students change from one education level to the next one or when they finish compulsory education. The introduction of the proposed Mentoring Scheme aims to support students in schools during what might be a challenging time.

The country with the highest presence of migrant students, or students with a migrant background was the United Kingdom, where in 2010 1.5 million out of 6.5 million students were classified as a minority ethnic origin and 14% of the entire school population was classified as EAL (English as another Language).

The country with the second highest number of migrant students was Cyprus, where in the 2006-07 school year 12% of all the population in the education system was classified as “other language” students. In Spain, in the 2012-13 school year there were almost 800,000 foreign students, over 9% of the total of students and Italy had a very similar percentage, 9%, with a total number of 787,000 students. However, in contrast, in Poland less than 0.06% (4,000 youngsters) of the total of students in the education system were considered migrants.

Did you know?

In the last two years the number of migrant students in compulsory education has decreased.

This can be attributed to:

- Migrant students finishing compulsory education and entering the workforce or the next level of education
- Families returning to their own country thinking they would have better opportunities there.

Get involved!

- Attend a seminar to learn about the issues facing newly arrived migrants and their education.
- Participate as a teacher or student in the pilot testing stages of the Mentor Programme.
- Assist in the development of specific local INTO resources.

For more information contact

Dr Kiki Messiou

K.Messiou@soton.ac.uk

Recognising peer mentoring

Peer mentoring has received considerable attention in the academic and practitioner literature. David Duran-Gisbert defines it as “a cooperative learning method based on the creation of students couples, with an asymmetric relationship, with a common aim, known and shared (like the teaching and learning process of a subject), that takes place through a relationship between said students, planned by the teacher”.

Unfortunately, even though peer mentoring has an incredible amount of advantages, it is not used as often as it should be. As a matter of fact in countries like Italy its use is described as “not systematic” and “random”, in Spain in compulsory education it is almost exclusively used as part of a program or research. In Cyprus is rarely used in education and depends on an individual teacher’s style and in Poland is not recognised as an official method.

Nevertheless, different types of peer education have been used in the project’s partner countries. In Italy various forms of mentoring have been explored, for instance: Peer tutoring, Admission tutors and “Relational” tutors. In Spain only “peer tutoring” is in regular use.

In Poland projects that make use of peer education tend to use the approach to teach other goals such as safety, rights and obligations of children, healthy lifestyle and prevention of violence at school

Peer mentoring themes

Some of the most common themes that emerged from the focus group meetings in the five countries were:

About Students:

- Poor knowledge of their new language
- A lack of motivation for education.
- Bullying and racism is linked to migration

About Schools

- A whole school approach is needed. We need to include teachers, teaching assistants, administration and even NGOs working with schools.

- Need to consider individuals students and individual schools. One size does not fit all.

About our Model

- Need to be aware of the cultural differences and unique contexts of each country
- Specific training for all stakeholders involved in the programme
- The model needs to celebrate diversity not just seek integration

Peer education in the United Kingdom appears to be the most developed and adopts a variety of approaches such as befriending, mentoring, mediation and counselling. In primary schools in England, befriending is the most commonly used approach and mentoring comes second, for secondary schools mentoring comes first and befriending comes second.

Project partners

CARET, Cyprus

OXFAM Italia, Italy

Oxfam Italia Intercultura, Italy

Universidad de Salamanca, Spain

University of Social Sciences
in Lodz, Poland

University of Southampton, UK

www.interculturalmentoring.eu