



**EUROPÄISCHE FRAUEN-UNION
UNION EUROPEENNE FEMININE
EUROPEAN UNION OF WOMEN**

International Education, Culture and Science Commission

Margaret Hales, *Chairman*

:

Integration through education: how do we integrate our immigrants?

1. Immigration itself is the topic for other EUW Commissions but this Commission can make a contribution in a particular way by looking at education as a means to integration. The face of immigration has changed across Europe (some of it because of enlargement), not just in the sheer size of the numbers involved but in the *cultural and educational challenges that the 'new' immigrants place on the host countries*.
2. All countries report difficulties in responding to immigrants' needs, though some suffer more than others. Examples are those where there is a large percentage of immigrants as a total of the population (Britain, France and Austria reported this) or those where the burden of immigration is felt because of the economic downturn (Spain). In response to these difficulties some countries, notably Austria, have had (since 2011) a requirement that those from non-EU Countries who want to settle permanently must acquire sufficient German language skills within two years to pass a test- or leave. Britain is implementing a test before taking British nationality which includes an understanding of historical and cultural facts.
3. The last 20 years of immigration in Europe have seen a change from single adults to family migration. In Ireland, Italy and Spain the percentage of school children who were born in another country has multiplied by three or four times since 2000. In Britain, the number of students attending schools after arriving from abroad grew by 50 percent in the two years 2008-09. The children of immigrants now constitute a significant percentage of the population of the European Union and their integration (through the educational process) is needed if these children are to become citizens able to contribute to the advancement of their societies and to use the benefits of the host society.
4. The last 10 years have seen an increase in many countries (reported by Spain and Poland) of Asian immigrants from China and Vietnam. Spain has nearly 200,000 Chinese (less than 3% are registered unemployed) and Poland has a Vietnamese community of some 50,000 near Warsaw. Britain has 400,000 Chinese, 30% of them in London. Minority groups cause problems for the education authorities; investment in teacher training is expensive and long term. In Austria they are currently investing 30M€ specifically for the integration programme for pre-school children.
5. Countries vary in their policy towards the education of migrants. Some, like Britain, leave school education to local authorities. Others, such as Austria, have a system of coordinated state regulation, as does France. The EU has produced several studies mapping the different systems and evaluating their success through achieved educational outcomes and these should prove helpful to the different national strategies.
6. The challenges of educating children from many different cultures and with different languages, as well as the low socio-economic position of many migrants, have financial and educational policy implications. For example most countries report over 100 languages being spoken by the children in their schools. Spain has 143 nationalities. Britain reports that there are over 35% of secondary school pupils for whom English is not their first language. They have the support of the

Ethnic Minority Achievement Services (EMAS) funded by the National Department of Education and Skills which provides teams of experienced teachers who work in partnership with schools, parents and communities. France uses specialist teachers in a two year programme for migrant children (Classes d'Inclusion, CLIN) and monitors this carefully through the Programme de Réussite Educative.

7. Schools in particular have had to change the structure of teaching and have had to decide how to provide appropriate support systems to enable children to access the curriculum. Not all countries report these changes as either easy or satisfactory. Those whose cultural requirements are different from a previously Christian-based system are a particular challenge. For example, Switzerland has had pressure for traditional Swiss laws to be changed to accommodate the large numbers of Muslims.
8. Programmes and projects designed to welcome immigrant parents to the school are present in many countries, at least according to the policy makers! The 'Welcome School Programme' in Spain has not produced the cultural interchange that was expected. France has a welcome programme as well but in towns with large immigrant populations (for example Besançon, 15% Arab) additionally have in place a welcome website. This encourages interaction between immigrants and the school authorities.
9. There are five strategies for teaching immigrant children. The integrated model or main stream 'immersion' system and separation with translation support are the two main strategies used. Immersion is seen to work at primary school level, with young children picking up the host language (Spain). Austria restricts the number of immigrants in a class. In addition, Austria has been identified (by the OECD) as spending too much on translation and is changing its focus to training and teaching the German language. England provides a system of classroom assistant to support children with language difficulties and other 'special needs'. France uses a system of support mechanisms outside the school (including special houses and 'educational villages')
10. Immigrant children face tougher challenges in achieving a good education. The lower the socio-economic group the lower the achievement. The less of the host language spoken by both the child and the parents, the lower achievement of the child. So countries which have a large low-skilled immigrant workforce will have more children who don't achieve and they are a challenge for innovative teaching. In recognition of this, France has a programme for the education of parents in French culture, history and the acquisition of the French language.
11. Integration, as well as economic, educational and social achievement are all assisted by the acquisition of the host language. It remains the case across all our countries that if the child's parents speak the host language the children will too, but more than that, statistically they are likely to achieve well at school and progress to tertiary education. Some countries (Poland) provide free language classes for children and adults alike. Spain and Britain subsidise courses through their integration programmes. Some French towns with high numbers of migrants have dedicated specialist websites and are working to reduce the high levels of unemployment among the children of immigrant parents.

Immigration of people across Europe and indeed across the world is not going to stop. In addition, one of the first principles of our European Union is the free movement of people. This has provided the powerhouse for the growth of the last 20 years. With increased immigration comes increased nationalism as citizens wish to preserve the customs and habits of their childhood. Governments will struggle to keep the will of their people in these hard financial times as anger and resentment grows against groups of people who are not seen as 'one of us' and yet are seen to be given special facilities and treatment. Only investment in integration programmes, insistence on the speaking of the host language and achievement of the immigrant children will alleviate this difficult situation.

In our Commission we would wish to continue this work by looking at the innovative ideas coming from different countries and investigating their success in integrating not just the young but the old as well. In addition, we wish to examine in more detail the cultural aspects of integration of immigrants. However,

as EUW, we will make specific reference to the problem of women and girls and how their education can be improved. This is where EUW has special value.

I thank the Austrian, French, British, Polish, Spanish and Swiss sections for their work in providing me with this information and especially my two vice chairmen, Jacqueline Boullier and Lynn Mazzotti.

Margaret Hales
margaretgeraldhales@gmail.com.