# Youth and Inter Ethnic Schools

## Actions Against Inter Ethnic Violence among Pupils at School

## A practical handbook

# Introduction

This booklet has been written within the Daphne project, funded by the European Commission. Daphne deals with preventive measures to combat violence against children, young people and women.

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# Content

# YOUTH AND INTER ETHNIC SCHOOLS

## Actions Against Inter-Ethnic Violence among Pupils at School

Schools deal every day with conflicts and with the presence of adolescents from ethnic minorities and new ethnic minorities due to migration[1].This implies that schools have to pay particular attention to conflicts involving adolescents belonging to different ethnic groups.

Conflict is a situation in which an individual or a group is in conscious opposition to one or more individuals or groups because of opposite positions[2].

Some people tend to believe that conflicts are an indicator of dysfunction and disorder within the social system or, especially in schools, that it is an expression of strong opposition. Conflicts may also be interpreted as an expression of uneasiness. Nevertheless, conflicts are unavoidable and they should not be repressed.

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[1] Analytical report on education, EUMC Italian report
[2] Wimmer & Schetter, 2002

Therefore, they must be understood and elaborated: solving a conflict does not mean decreasing differences.

In this work, *ethnicity* refers to a population or a group that identifies itself with a particular community or that is identified as such by others. More specifically, ethnicity is connected to a group of people identifying with "we" on the basis of common features. In general such common features are related to shared nationality, cultural background, language, history, religious faith, habits or physical appearance.

There is a consensus in social science that *ethnic identity* is socially constructed. Subjective criteria are considered in defining ethnic communities and studying inter-ethnic relationships. According to Max Weber, ethnicity is a group of people with a subjective belief to be of common descent. This belief is based on similarities in habits and customs or on shared memories of colonisation and migration.

Inter-ethnic conflicts are those where ethnic differences are the basis for opposing positions[3].

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[3] ibidem

This does not necessarily allow the conclusion that every conflict where members of different ethnic groups are involved is necessarily an inter-ethnic conflict: opponents in a conflict can be part of different ethnic groups, while differences in their interests could be different from cultural values[4]. It is quite important to distinguish genuine inter-ethnic conflicts from others if parties from different ethnic groups are involved.

School should therefore acquire the appropriate tools with which to identify ethnic elements of those conflicts that seem not to apparently have an ethnic dimension in order to elaborate and solve them. Unsolved conflicts can lead to their extreme manifestation, violence. Violence can take physical, psychological, social or verbal forms, it is used by those in a position of power and it is formally or in each situation applied on those who are powerless to resist. In this work we consider different forms of violence, from discrimination to stigmatisation and exclusion, from verbal violence to physical violence.

Adolescents in schools indeed suffer from these kinds of violence and both their education and their personal development are at risk. Diminishing violence is not only

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[4] Garhammer, 2003

important in order to avoid physical harm. Due to violence, young people may lose self-esteem, experience emotional and social difficulties and develop socially unacceptable behaviour.

The role of schools is to protect the right of each child as stated in Article 29 of the Convention of the Right of the Child. Education of the child has to support the development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their full potential. Its goal is the development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It has to take into consideration the development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for cultural values different from his or her own in order to prepare him/her for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance and friendship among all people, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of different origin.

This work aims at introducing good practices on strategies and tools to deal with inter ethnic conflicts at school as a result of the study carried out in four European countries where both ethnic minorities and new ethnic minorities generated by migration live. The analysis has been carried out through a participative

approach by involving teacher and students and has resulted in the identification of good practices at the European level. Strategies, working methods and tools for preventing and managing inter–ethnic conflicts at school are herewith presented in two macro categories, conflict solving and conflict prevention.

**Methodological note**

Project partners implemented the analysis in different contexts where ethnic minorities and migrants live leading to different problems and solutions. In order to underline  those experiences that could be considered valuable for all the partner countries and transferable in other context, project partners decided not to mention in this work contexts where practices are implemented.

# COUNTRY PROFILES

## GERMANY

While ethnic minorities play a minor role, immigrants and their children constitute a large and growing part of the population in Germany. Especially in the 1960's, labour migrants were recruited in the Mediterranean region. Although most left Germany after some years, many decided to stay. Since the late 1980's there has been further immigration from East European countries; many refugees too arrived in Germany. Even though there were severe restrictions on immigration and to the right to asylum, Germany became the second largest immigrant receiving country (after the USA) during the 1990's. Migrants of a German ancestry coming from Eastern European countries quickly received citizenship. However, for refugees and labour migrants from Mediterranean countries, and even for their children and grandchildren, it was very difficult to receive German citizenship or a secure immigration status. After a reform of the citizenship law in 2000, access to citizenship has became easier. Nevertheless, in 2004 there were 6.7 Mio. persons – 8% of the population - living without German citizenship in Germany: one third has lived for more than twenty years in Germany while 1.4 Mio. were born in the country.

## The German School System

The German school system is regulated by the federal states and thus there are some significant disparities between different regions. Usually, pupils enter secondary school after four years of elementary school. Based on recommendations of the elementary school, the pupils (or more likely the parents) have to choose between three different types of secondary schools: *Hauptschule* (secondary general school), *Realschule* (intermediate school) or *Gymnasium* (grammar school). *Hauptschule* ends after grade 9 or 10 and is characterized by the lowest level of academic requirements. *Realschule* ends after grade 10 and usually prepares for technical or administrative tasks. Finally, *Gymnasium* ends after grade 12 or 13 and prepares for an academic career or for highly skilled jobs. In many states there also is a *Gesamtschule* (comprehensive schools) which combines the other three types of schools.

## Children of Migrants in School

Overall, there were about 960,000 non-citizens in all types of public schools in Germany in 2002; equivalent to 9.8 % % of total pupils. Not all children of a migrant background are mirrored by this figure, though, because some have already received German citizenship. If all pupils who migrated themselves to Germany or whose parents are migrants are taken

into account, their proportion in German schools is substantially higher. In 2002, the three major groups of non-citizens in school were Italian citizens (6.8 %), pupils from countries of the former Yugoslav Republic (11.4 %) and Turkish citizens (43.4 %).

It is worth noticing that the share of migrants differs greatly between the different types of schools. In intermediate and grammar schools, migrants are underrepresented, whereas in secondary general schools, they are heavily over-represented. In 2002, migrants were 18.2 % of the total of *Hauptschule* students and 12.5 % in *Gesamtschule*, while in *Realschule* they were 6.8 % and in *Gymnasium* only 3.9 % of the total.

Based on this asymmetrical distribution of non-citizens, experts talk about "institutional discrimination" of migrants in the German school system. They are institutionally discriminated, because income and employment opportunities heavily depend upon the educational attainment. Job opportunities for graduates of secondary general schools are rather low while the employment rate among grammar school graduates is significantly higher. As the OECD PISA studies in 2000 and in 2005 confirm, in no other OECD country the educational opportunities are more influenced by the social status and the migration background of the parents than in Germany.

Cultural Differences, Discrimination and Violence at Schools

Apart from "institutional discrimination", children of migrants often have to face inter-personal racism, social exclusion and at times even physical violence. These forms of discrimination are not only practiced by right-winged German pupils and teachers, but they are part of the mainstream culture, i.e. part of the social structure and hierarchies in many schools. Even though intercultural friendships are quite common, many migrants have to deal with a low social status in class or are maltreated because of their parents' descent.

Even though children of migrants are mostly victims of violence stemming from cultural differences, they can take other roles in conflicts, too. Frustrated with the disintegration in school and society and the lack of opportunities, some isolate themselves from other pupils, develop nationalistic identities and form groups threatening others. Also, conflicts from their parents' countries of descent are transferred to the German context, such as for instance the conflict between Kurds and Turks. Many teachers observe that anti-Semitism is not only a serious problem among German pupils, but children of migrants also develop specific forms of anti-Semitism.

It has to be stressed, though, that violence at school is most often not based on cultural, but on social and interpersonal issues. Nevertheless, both schools and government reacted to this situation in the 1990's and started various efforts to end

violent conflicts in school and to sensitise for appropriate ways through which to cope with cultural differences.

# ITALY

The presence of foreign pupils at school is constantly increasing. In the 2003 – 2004 school year pupils not having Italian citizenship[5] were 282.683 - 3.5 % of the whole school population; this number in  the 2004-2005 school year has increased to 360.000, equal to 4.2% of the whole school population[6]. Schools with foreign pupils in attendance are 60.7 % of the total.

For the 2004-2005 school year the most representative non-Italian component is from Albania, Morocco, Rumania and China.

<u>The Italian school system</u>
The Italian schools system is currently based on three cycles: primary (or elementary) school (age 6-11), lower-secondary (or middle) school (11-14) and upper-secondary (or high) school (14-18). Education is compulsory for children from 6 to 14. In March 2003, the Italian Parliament approved a reform of the schools system with Law no. 53/2003, implemented in March

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[5] Children born of non-Italian parents (in Italy or abroad) enrolled in Italian schools.
[6] Pupils with non-Italian citizenship – school year 2004/2005, MIUR (Ministry of Unversities and Research)

2005. Main changes include a new combined school/work path for students between 15 and 18, personal choice and decentralisation and school autonomy.

<u>Migrant students in the Italian school context</u>

The Italian Constitution affirms the right to education for all children on the national territory. Art. 34 states "Schools are open to everyone. Elementary education, imparted for at least eight years, is compulsory and free". Art. 38 D.Lgs. n.286/1998 states the right – duty to study for all foreign minors on the national territory, with no discrimination based on their status or residence permit. Foreign pupils under the age of 18 should attend compulsory education, elementary as well as lower secondary school. State, Regions and local entities have to guarantee the effectiveness of the right to education through implementing courses of Italian with the aim of supporting non-Italian pupils attending public compulsory courses.

To guarantee integration in didactic activities as well as the social integration of pupils from different cultural background, the Italian school system has developed new teaching and pedagogical strategies and tools: an intercultural approach is employed to handle the consequences of this phenomenon[7].

From the 80s the mission of schools is twofold:

- improving integration in didactic activities

- improving social integration to prevent structural and interpersonal discrimination

An intercultural approach aims at guaranteeing  integration of non-Italian students while being respectful of their linguistic and cultural background. Therefore, school activities are mainly focused on improving integration rather than on conflict management.

Integration and school progress

School progress is one of the key indicators to measure integration of foreign students in the school context, even though it is not an exhaustive one. Data on progress in school career among foreign pupils makes the gap between native and foreign population clear at all levels and reveals the uneasiness of non-Italian students. Gaps in success rates between natives and foreigners are in primary school - 3,36, in lower-secondary school -7,06 and in upper-secondary school -12,56. It is important to say that 40% of all 45.000 foreign pupils attending upper-secondary schools are enrolled in vocational courses.

Teachers' and students perception of ethnic conflicts

Teachers' approaches to cultural diversity are strictly connected with the perception of their job:

- Focus on didactic activities: teachers do not consider foreign students so different from their classmates; teachers believe their

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[7] Ministerial memoranda n. 301/1989 and n. 205/1990

job consists in teaching a particular subject: They think it is important to guarantee Italian students the right to education that in fact could be denied them if the problems of foreign students became the focus of school activities.

- Focus on integration considered as a "mission" – teachers support foreign pupils by passing them on to the next higher class even though they have not reached the adequate level, implementing a strategy based on "positive discrimination".

Teachers and students viewpoint on perception of inter-ethnic conflict in the school context varies visibly. In interviews, teachers frequently deny the presence of inter-ethnic conflicts in the school context. From the teachers' viewpoint diversity is a key issue in the development of identity and that includes all adolescents. In focus groups, students identify the presence of inter-ethnic conflicts in the school context as well as limited forms of violence, particularly verbal violence. From the students viewpoint the most common episodes of violence are discrimination, exclusion and stigmatisation based on prejudices and stereotypes.

As the phenomenon of the attendance of non-Italian pupils is quite recent, teachers seem not to have appropriate tools to identify the ethnic aspect of conflict at school as well as those with which to face and manage ethnic conflicts.

From the teachers' viewpoint, school is a 'protected context' and elements of conflict are treated accordingly. Due to the school's structural and relational characteristics, conflicts, and particular ethnic conflicts are not addressed and managed within the school context. Teachers and students recognise that unsolved conflicts lead to violence and particularly verbal violence out of the school context. Therefore, it seems that students themselves do not have adequate tools to face and manage such kind of conflicts out of the school context.

## LATVIA

Comprehensive education in Latvia is provided by schools with Latvian as the language of instruction. Next to these are schools implementing different models of bilingual minority education programmes.

Until 1995 there were two systems of schools: educational institutions with Latvian as the language of instruction, and educational institutions where Russian was the language of instruction. From 1990 to 1992 the first other-ethnic minority schools were established. Between 1999 and 2004 a bilingual educational reform was implemented in Latvia: it established models, tools and approaches for the use of the official language

This research project focused on schools in Riga, as it is the largest and ethnically the most diverse administrative territory in Latvia.

Schools with Russian as the language of instruction show a higher ethnic diversity. According to the statistical data of Latvia Ministry of Education, in the 2004/2005 academic year in Riga, 89% of students in schools with Latvian as the language of instruction were of Latvian origin. In minority education schools with Russian as the main language of instruction 72 % of students were Russian by origin. 11 % of students in schools with Latvian as the language of instruction and 28 % of students in schools with Russian as the language of instruction were respectively of another ethnic background (The Russian ethnic group being the second largest in schools with Latvian instruction language (4 %), and Latvians (12 %), Byelorussians (4 %), Poles (3 %) and Ukrainians (3 %) being the largest ethnic groups in minority education schools with Russian as the main language of instruction).

Schools which participated in integration and civic issues oriented projects were chosen for participation in the project. Schools with Latvian as the language of instruction and the largest minority schools with Russian as instruction language were asked to participate. Different suburbs of Riga were also

and of the minority languages both in curricula and in the teaching process.

Today government-financed bilingual education in Latvia is offered in eight minority languages – Russian, Polish, Hebrew, Ukrainian, Estonian, Lithuanian, Roma and Belarusian. In 2004/2005, there were 724 schools in Latvia in which classes were taught in Latvian, 155 schools where classes were taught in Russian (offering a bilingual education programme), and 108 schools where classes were taught in Latvian and in Russian (dual flow schools where education programmes in both Latvian and minority languages are implemented).

Over the last 10 years, there has been an increase in demand for education in Latvian, and there has been a correspondingly lower level of demand for an education in Russian. The formation of minority schools other than Russian certainly also contributed. In 2003/2004, 74.4 % of preschool children began their studies in Latvian, and in the 2004/2005 school year that percentage was up to 75.2 %. This is mostly because non-Latvian parents increasingly want their children to have an education which will later offer them greater opportunities to study at university level and to become more competitive in the labour market. To some extent this can be seen as creating some extra burden for the teachers in schools with Latvian as the language of instruction.

represented, and the size of the school was also taken into the consideration.

The study implemented in the *YiES* project shows that participation in events (like participation in projects, essay competitions, student exchange with neighbouring schools etc.) oriented towards ethnic and civic integration is considered important for the schools.

The conflicts in schools are described mostly as short term and non-violent, though the opposite also occurs. There seem to be no explicit conflicts involving ethnic background within the schools. Children of different ethnic, linguistic and cultural origin are involved in conflicts and arguments virtually as much as children of the same ethnic and cultural background. However, ethnic conflicts might possibly be 'brought outside' the school to the street.

Except for some specific cases, most conflicts were characterized as being caused by leadership problems widely agreed as typical for the age group of 14-16 year olds. Conflicts in schools are more described as based on a variety of reasons, mostly not connected with, or only vaguely referring to the cultural differences or ethnicity, and occur mostly in the form of an argument without violent behaviour.

The ethnic background dimension is not explicit except for some cases, and in general it rather remains latent and underlying,

intertwined with other social and personal aspects of the partied involved. This fact and the lack of apparent and significant cultural differences between the major ethnic groups in Latvia certainly characterizes and affects the application of conflict solving and prevention methods and approaches, and activities promoting multiculturalism in Latvia.

## SPAIN

In recent years, Spain has rapidly changed from a country of emigration to a country of immigration. The first wave of immigrants of extra-Community origin arrived in the late eighties. In the nineties, new waves of migrants arrived and families reunited in Spain. This had a direct impact on schools. This had an direct impact on schools and the General Education Act (LOGSE), which was passed in 1990, was out of date.

In the academic year 1993/1994, there were 50,076 foreign pupils enrolled in Spanish schools ('foreign' designating those not being Spanish nationals), whilst in 2001/02 there were 207,252. It is worth pointing out that this number had almost doubled by the year 2003/04, when it stood at 398,187.

In Catalonia, "although the overall figures are low compared to other European countries, if migratory flows continue to increase at the current pace, foreign pupils may be around 10 % of the total number at all levels by 2005-2006".

Despite there now being more foreign pupils in private education, the vast majority (84.6 %) are still to be found in state schools.

Moreover, the figures vary significantly from region to region: in some regions they are less than 5 % whilst in others they are over 10 %.

The amount of pupils arriving from each region has varied greatly in recent years: some ethnic communities have only grown a little while the number of pupils from non- European Community countries has increased seven-fold. By 2001-2002, there were more pupils from South and Central America than from the Maghreb, previously the country with more students, and this trend has continued."[8]

This influx of immigrant pupils outdated the law or made it inapplicable if schools were to abide to the principles it promoted. For example, managing diversity and its consequences took on such an unforeseen force and scale that it exceeded all allocated resources.

However, the problem is not only one of resources. Difficulties already experienced in managing diversity in the classroom burgeoned when pupils from abroad joined the classes. Most teachers had not been adequately trained for this.

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[8] Departament d'Educació de la Generalitat de Catalunya, *Pla per la Llengua i la Cohesió Social*, pp. 7-10, Barcelona.

Finally, another type of problem has appeared recently in the classrooms: violent and inappropriate behaviour increases in some schools, in part due to the low motivation of some students that are forced to stay in class.

Compulsory secondary education[9]

Compulsory secondary education is aimed at pupils between ages 12 and 16 and is divided into two stages, each made up of two academic years.

At the end of compulsory secondary education, pupils receive a school attendance certificate, and, if they have achieved the required marks, a Secondary School Graduate certificate.

If a student passes the course and wishes to continue studying, s/he can either go into the second level of vocational training or do "Batxillerat" (integrated upper secondary). Students may also leave school and join the labour market since they have reached the minimum age required to work.

Administrative measures

The Generalitat of Catalonia has developed a whole system of measures to tackle conflict in the classrooms and to alleviate discrimination in the education system (particularly with regards to the entry of foreign pupils in schools). In 2003 the Department of Education drew up a document which goes

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[9] This description is from www.gencat.net/educacio

under the name of '*Coexistence in high schools. Programme and proposals*' which promotes mediation and mediator training.

In 2004, the Department of Education of the Generalitat of Catalonia drafted the '*Language and Social Cohesion Plan*', in an effort to address the problems arising after a considerable number of foreign pupils were admitted to Catalan schools. The most relevant measures are: local education plans, strategies to improve diversity (creation of a "Diversity Committee" which includes representatives of the parents, of the teachers and of the students; in schools, open classrooms and shared school units) and strategies to support new pupils.

<u>Some issues on conflicts</u>

The emergence of migrant people in Spain throws light on some social issues concerning the social structure and affecting vulnerable social groups. On the one hand, these groups fear loosing economic subsides, because they understand that migrant people will be the new beneficiaries. On the other hand, the low economic status of most migrant people means they will live in neighbourhoods where housing is cheap; many community services (health, education and social services as a whole) are frequently used by them. Finally, although migrants usually take on jobs that the Spanish do not want to do, they are seen as people that "steal our jobs".

However, in other social groups the perspective on migration is unclear. Some nationalist people think that immigrant people break up Spanish or Catalan identity. Others believe that integration is very difficult and migration a source of conflicts etc.

All these considerations could become conflicts and are reflected by pupils in schools. The prejudices of pupils on migration are usually prejudices similar to those of their parents. They generally develop three types of attitudes: a) a friendly attitude (cultural differences are not important enough to deny relationship), b) a reserved and cautious attitude (due their low knowledge of migrants, they question their previous attitudes, etc.) and c) a rejecting attitude (racist and xenophobe).

# GOOD PRACTICES

Good practices on strategies, working methods and tools for preventing and managing inter–ethnic conflicts at school are presented here in two macro categories, conflict solving and conflict prevention.

Conflict solving activities work on actual behaviour in existing conflicts in order to help students facing those situations where parties have equal rights and are enabled to express and negotiate their interests. In this sense, "Mediation training" and "School social pedagogues" give students tools to solve arguments in a constructive way, methods of mediation are used to prevent the escalation of disparities.

Conflict prevention strategies and tools work on perceptions, values and finally attitudes rather than actual behaviour. In this sense, intercultural activities as well as the "Empowerment approach" and "Strategies to create belonging" aim at preventing causes of ethnic conflicts such as stereotypes and prejudices.

We believe that a comprehensive prevention strategy should work at the same time on both actual behaviours and attitudes.

# CONFLICT SOLVING

## Mediation training

<u>Description</u>

Mediation is a common method through which to facilitate conflict solution processes. In school, it is employed to sensitise pupils towards finding constructive ways of solving arguments, to make pupils familiar with methods of mediation and to introduce a low-hierarchical, pupil-to-pupil approach to prevent the escalation of disparities.

Mediation is a method that has to be learned through special training. In this mediator training, participants acquire skills in moderating discussions among pupils or between pupils and teachers in conflict; in other words, participants learn how to support a process where all parties have equal rights and are enabled to express and negotiate their interests. Therefore it is important that mediators learn how to create a relaxed atmosphere, how to facilitate communication, how to support conflicting parties in finding a solution, etc. The mediators will only be accepted if they are sensitised to taking into consideration the different social, cultural and gender background of the disagreeing parties.

We may distinguish between different phases of mediator training:

a) At the age of 13 to 14, all pupils are introduced to the method of mediation in school. This can be done either by older pupils trained to be mediators in previuos years or by teachers, schools social workers or external educators. Pupils can volunteer to become mediators and are selected or invited to take part in mediator training.

b) Following that, there is an intensive (one week seminar) or semi-intensive (after school hours) training using different tools.

c) After the training, the new mediators are presented to the other pupils in school. During the presentation, they share their experiences and talk about the benefits that the mediation method entails. Furthermore, a list of school mediators is made public (e.g. posted in the school hall), so that the new mediators can be easily identified by pupils seeking help.

In some schools, there is a "mediation room", where pupil-to-pupil mediation takes place. The mediators also meet among themselves on a regular basis to discuss current issues. During school breaks, "open office hours" are held, i.e. mediators inform other pupils about the methods of mediation, counsel in minor conflicts or plan a mediation process. This way, all pupils in school know where and when to get help.

In order for mediation to be good practice, the participants –
both teachers and pupils – have to agree to the rules of
mediation. Teachers and other adults should not get involved in
the mediation process unless they are part of the conflict
themselves. Mediation can work only if teachers accept that they
have the same rights and duties in the mediation process.. In
some cases it might be therefore helpful if pupil mediators are
supported by (but not replaced with) adult mediators.

Target

The main target group are 13-14 year old pupils who participate
in the mediator training. In some schools, these pupils are
volunteers or they are invited to participate in training; in other
schools, teachers are involved in training too.

Tools

With interactive learning, role games, debates, use of different
media (video analysis etc.) and other methods the participants
train for their tasks as mediators

Results

Participants of the mediator training learn productive ways to
solve conflicts and are sensitised to issues of cultural difference;
this knowledge is passed on to other pupils. Also, the training
strengthens the personal relationship between the participants,
because there is an active exchange of views on different issues.
A change of the general behaviour of the "new" mediators can

be observed, specifically a change of attitudes about intercultural differences, which leads to an improved atmosphere in class.

## School social pedagogues, social workers, school psychologist

<u>Description</u>
During the last ten years, social workers, social pedagogues or school psychologists regularly working in schools have become widespread practice.

Many schools employ a school social worker at least on half-time basis, sometimes schools in the same district share a school social worker. It is also a very common practice that a social pedagogue and a school psychologist work in close co-operation; in some cases they join forces with a speech therapist and a special pedagogue, these being regarded as the support personnel to the teaching staff.

Social workers or social pedagogues are especially trained to work in school settings and deal with conflicts and social problems connected with the school environment. The purpose of having a social pedagogue or social worker at school is to establish a more positive atmosphere in school by helping pupils and teachers solve different school-related problems not necessarily directly connected with the studies. Amongst the

tasks of the social worker or social pedagogue are support to the teachers in communication and interaction problems, dealing with social situations of the students at home leading to absence from lessons, conflicts, conflict prevention, conflict solving and other. In some cases, social pedagogues and school psychologists might take up also some teaching tasks or engage in different out-of-school activities and projects.

An important role of social workers in schools is to keep in contact with the neighbourhood and to support parents. Many migrant families need help in dealing with the local administration due to language barriers,  to their social and economic situation or due to their insecure residence status.

School social workers help them fill out papers, organise contacts with other counsellors (lawyers, social workers etc.) and explain the pupils' and parents' social rights. Often work is done with the parents in order to ensure that the pupil receives the support needed at home. Special attention is paid to involvement of parents of minority ethnic origin in the events and activities at school.

The school social workers or social pedagogues usually have an office in school where they can be met for consultation during open hours e.g. during school breaks, but they also offer a number of other services. At the beginning of the school year, the social workers go from class to class to introduce themselves

and to explain to the pupils what they can do for them and their parents. Also, the parents are usually informed about the services of the school social worker with a handout, sometimes written in various languages. The social pedagogue can be accessed freely for counselling or in case of a problem.

Should any problems arise, the pupils directly involved, their parents or a teacher are the first to inform the social worker or social pedagogue. The social pedagogue mostly is the first person to turn to in case of an emerging conflict, and usually the social worker is the central person in conflict solving. The problems are solved first by counselling teachers and pupils; in some cases also parents are involved, if necessary.

School psychologists deal more specifically with psychological problems, while the social pedagogue addresses a broader spectrum of issues. The work of the support network in school is based on establishing mutual trust with pupils, as well as cooperation with the school principal, other teachers and, to a very high extent, with parents.

Target

Social pedagogues or social workers usually work with the pupils, their parents and the school teachers, though other interested parties might be involved. They usually work with individuals, though sometimes also interaction in larger groups is an issue.

Tools

The activities of a social pedagogue or a social worker mostly involve counselling and mediating conflicts. Counselling and mediation are provided both individually as well as in a group with the conflicting parties. Cooperation with other institutions and the coordination of the problem solving are also among the tasks of social pedagogues or social workers at school. Activities such as social training for individual pupils, administrative help for pupils and parents, organisation of school activities such as parties or parent-teacher-days etc. are in within the scope of activity of social workers.

School social workers are trained to take into account intercultural differences and to know how to deal with conflicts where such differences play a role. Some have additional qualifications in the field such as "intercultural mediator" or a good command of a language that many migrants in school speak.

Mediation can be done successfully only if both parties agree to it voluntarily. If a pupil repeatedly shows socially unacceptable behaviour, e.g. disrespects and harasses other pupils, but is not willing to take part in a mediation process, school social workers can offer a "social training". For a certain period of time that pupil will have to take part in regular activities which will improve his or her social skills.

Mediation can have an intercultural dimension too if pupils claim that a conflict is based on different cultural values. The school social workers try to find out what is at the core of the conflict and use methods of mediation in order to settle the conflict. A typical conflict is that one pupil blames the other for not acting in an "honourable way", e.g. frequently changing boy- or girlfriends, while the other blames her or him for being "prude". The task of the social worker here is to communicate and facilitate understanding and respect for each others' values and to stress that such issues are individual life choices.

The counselling for pupils is more often employed by females rather than by males. Girls appreciate talking to an adult about personal things like friendship, love or conflicts with other pupils, but also seek advice on how to cope with conflicts with parents or teachers. Typical conflicts with parents often have an intercultural character. Parents do not allow girls to dress in the way they want (or in the way their peer group in school expects them to dress), or due to religious beliefs they are not allowed to take part in certain school activities (swimming lessons, school trips). In that case, school social workers contact the parents and try to mediate a compromise.

Results
The need to employ social workers at school had been disputed for some time in the schools where their help was used, but

today headmasters, teachers, pupils, parents and civil servants all agree that it has positive effects.

The activities of social pedagogues are in general considered as having positive results in reducing the number of violent and long term conflicts and establishing a more positive and open school atmosphere.

# CONFLICT PREVENTION

## Class Contracts

<u>Description</u>

Contracts on good conduct and against unacceptable behaviour in school are a common approach in order to avoid intercultural conflicts and racism. From our point of view, these contracts can be especially good practice if they are drafted by the pupils themselves in class.

At the beginning of each school year, pupils discuss, moderated by a teacher, how they want to be treated in class and what type of behaviour they think is unacceptable among pupils. The pupils have to agree on a set of rules which are laid out in the contract. These rules can derive from the concrete experience of a pupil or a group of pupils, but they should apply to all pupils equally.

Typical experiences pupils bring up in such discussions are those of exclusion and violence, including racism and intercultural conflicts. Based on these experiences pupils themselves try to find rules to avoid these accidents and to improve the class atmosphere.

In addition to the rules, the pupils talk about possible sanctions if the rules are not followed. Common forms of sanctions are the

confrontation of offenders with her or his behaviour in a class discussion, information of parents, work for the benefit of all pupils, talks with the headmaster or a social training done under the school social worker's guidance.

To draft the rules, it is necessary that the pupils be sensitised for different forms of discrimination and that they are enabled to express their ideas freely. Of course it is also necessary that teachers and pupils are able to establish a co-operative atmosphere where everybody's opinion is respected.

Target

The target groups are all the pupils in the class. The teacher has the role of a moderator and ought to make sure that all pupils participate in the drafting of the rules at the same level. Teachers can make suggestions on rules they think are useful. However, the final decision for or against a certain rule is left to the pupils.

Tools

Class contracts are a bottom-up approach. In contrast to many common "school contracts" or "school constitutions" the pupils themselves talk about good conduct in school and are able to decide what is acceptable and what is not. In the discussion process, pupils can talk about their own experiences with violence and exclusion and think of rules to avoid such experience. This is done in a (more or less) abstract manner, i.e. pupils are not currently engaged in a conflict and therefore can

judge it with more distance. If a pupil does not want to agree to the rules, she or he has to argue why and convince the pupils of a better rule that touches upon everybody's interests. The class contract is signed by all pupils, i.e. all pupils have to consent to it. If a certain rule is seen as unjust or not feasible, pupils can bring up the issue during the school year and the contract is negotiated. But as long as the contract is in force and unchanged, the rules are binding for all pupils.

Results

Interviews with pupils show that they feel very much bound to the rules of the class contracts. If a conflict arises or a pupil shows misconduct, other pupils refer to the contract and insist on following the rules, because everybody agreed upon them. Even if an offender tries to ignore the rules, pupils know that they count on the solidarity of other pupils and that the offender's behaviour will be sanctioned. In the observation of both teachers and pupils, violent conflicts in class diminished because there are rules which were drafted with the participation of all pupils and which everybody agreed to.


## Clear, known and participative rules

Description

Rules have a key role in defining what and how is acceptable in school. Indeed, schools develop internal regulations to apply

when rules are broken. Violence in general and interethnic violence in particular are main issues of these regulations.

The most important aspect of this practice is the process through which regulations are defined. Obviously, a regulation is a basic tool with which to keep a good atmosphere in school. It is required by the Education Administration: however, not all the schools develop this participative process. Indeed, there are some important aspects such as definitions of what behaviour is allowed and which is not, sanctions, etc. These regulations do not change every year, but when the process to re-define them is open some schools are interested in knowing what the students think about some topics, and take into consideration their opinion and suggest their participation in the process. It is also necessary to add that some schools incorporate this method to redefine part of their regulations.

<u>Target</u>
Students are the target of this activity. However, there are various levels of involvement: some are students' representative, some are not. .

<u>Tools</u>
Students' participation begins in the "tutorial class" (a non-teaching hour where it is possible to discuss various types of issues, some of them suggested by the students); in this class the students' representative explains to the others that the process is

open, how it is possible to participate and that their opinion will be considered in further discussions. Obviously, the students' representative makes a note of the other students' considerations. Afterwards, the Director and the other teachers summon the students' representative to another meeting where "negotiations" take place in order to arrive to an agreement. Finally the School Council (the main school body, where teachers, school-caretakers, parents and students are represented) passes the regulation.

<u>Results</u>

The result is a well known, at least to some students, regulation; they can inform the rest of pupils. Indeed, participation of students has three added values: on the one hand, especially the students' representatives are committed to the regulation; on the other hand, the regulation engenders a direct, personal process in which to participate; finally, it means writing out the rules in an understandable language: words, syntax, internal logics. This last aspect helps rules obtain a further role in school

## Empowerment strategy

<u>Description</u>

This approach is based on "empowerment" as a process as well as a result. On the one hand it aims at considering students on the basis of a comprehensive approach: the student is seen as a

person in order to strengthen self-esteem and to increase the value of their abilities.

The empowerment approach aims at widening opportunities and choices in order to make changes possible. It also aims at improving the context in order to structure a welcoming environment.

The strategy is based on the one hand on the definition of individual teaching paths based on the students' language abilities, on the other hand it is based on the improvement of socialisation activities that have been shown to be key tools in strengthening the personality of students'.

To this purpose, school teaching and socialisation goals are continuously adapted to students' needs. Assumptions of this strategy are quite different from those most commonly accepted thought: the latter indeed are focused on achieving predefined teaching goals to the prejudice of socialisation and integration. This strategy instead aims at defining a positive and stimulating context in order to affect students' results and their relational abilities. Building up an empowering context positively affects the school results of foreign students and their emotional as well as social capacities. A positive, challenging atmosphere, based on the acceptance of diversity gives to social context and to migrant communities a positive image of this academic environment.

This strategy requires a change in the overall school approach. Continuity and sustainability is assured as teachers share the empowerment approach and the idea of a school based on a multicultural identity.

Target

The target of the empowerment approach are all the actors of school activities. Teachers are the main target as they should share and promote a new way of approaching diversity in teaching and socialisation activities. Students are target too and they are involved both as individuals and as group. Indeed this approach aims at improving the school climate to create an empowering context.

Tools

The empowerment approach is based on two different categories of tools. On the one hand tools related to teaching: in order to adapt teaching goals to students' abilities and needs appropriate school books are defined. On the other hand tools to improve communication and mutual exchange among students and between students and teachers such as empathetic and active listening are employed

Results

In order to implement the empowerment strategy, teachers are required to show a continuous and shared reliance on students' potentials. The authentic and unconditioned acceptance of

diversities improves students' self esteem leading to success in learning as well as in integration.

The impact on students is high, particularly in primary and lower secondary school. Many students confirm their reliance in this strategy by applying for the secondary school courses in the same school. Moreover, foreign students in upper secondary schools show they are able to adapt to new teaching as well as social contexts even where there are high levels of awareness of cultural differences.

## Strategies to create belonging

<u>Description</u>

This overall and general strategy aims at working on students' feeling of belonging from two different perspectives:

* individual dimension: exploitation of the individual histories of all the students, consciousness of different identity, origin and cultural background to give value to each individual/member of the group. It works on the actual belonging to the group and in this sense affects relationship and the exchange with other groups.

* social dimension: it works on transferring the focus from ethnic belonging to other forms of belonging (i.e. working group, class, etc.), from ethnic diversity to shared and common goals.

People live different and numerous forms of belonging defining his/her own individual and social identity (religious, national, cultural, political, gender belonging).

This strategy is based on extra curricular activities aiming to promote and improve sense of belonging to the class group and to the school. Examples of extra-curricular activities are: writing and debating specific topics and issues, watching films and discussing the topics they deal with, playing activities, schools' journals, inter-schools meetings. Continuity and sustainability of the project is based on goals and aims being shared by teachers.

Target
Both foreign and students which may be defined as culturally belonging to the nation being discussed are the target group of this activity. They are mainly involved as a group in order to transfer the focus from ethnic belonging to other forms of belonging (i.e. working group, class, etc.).

Tools
Working groups and co-operative learning are the main tools.

Results
This strategy aims at improving the identification of students with the peer group on the basis of shared and common interests. Schools become an example of welcoming context open to differences. Positive results are registered in socialisation as well as in school failure.

# Gender Training

For gender training, male and female pupils meet on a regular basis in school in order to talk about individual and social issues. Popular topics in gender training are prevention of violence, addictive behaviour and drugs, conflict solving strategies, but also individual life and job perspectives, friendship, love and sexuality. In all these issues, gendered patterns can be observed; separate cultural norms exist for each gender group.

Pupils in these groups are encouraged to define their own identities and learn that there is a great variety of choices an identity can be build on. Therefore, the aim of gender training is not to develop a static "male" or "female" identity, but to reflect common gender roles and expectations.

The issues of gender and intercultural differences are closely intertwined. Cultural norms determine gender roles and children have to learn how to negotiate between different expectations of how to fill the gender role, e.g. from parents, from peers, from school and from society in general.

Target
The target groups are male and female pupils in separate groups. For all pupils, regardless of their migration background, it is important to learn that there is no essential, predetermined gender role and that cultural norms can be negotiated and

changed. By learning essential social skills and reflecting gender roles it is possible to prevent violent behaviour, intolerance and discrimination.

Tools

Gender training is an approach applied from the first to the last year of secondary school. Girls and boys meet in separate groups. Meetings are held on set days, at least biweekly, for one or two school hours. Under the guidance of a teacher or educators from NGOs – groups discuss various issues of life in school and individual perspectives.

In gender training boys learn that they are accepted even if – to give a few stereotypical examples – they are not always strong and dominant and that there are different concepts of honour, e.g. that is it not honourable to judge others for their individual life choices. Girls learn that becoming a victim of violence is not a fate but something they can defend themselves from; they also learn that they can make individual choices by negotiating the expectations from different groups with personal interests.

In separate groups, boys tend to be more open to talk about themselves, about their problems and their feelings. This is especially true if one of the more popular pupils shows the others that it is o.k. to talk about personal issues. Such openness is very hard to achieve in mixed groups, since boys are usually taught not to show weaknesses or feelings (except for

aggressiveness or triumph). Also, girls feel intimidated in showing doubts or weaknesses when boys are around. Girls too prefer separate groups, because it is easier to share experiences of victimization and consider ways to prevent violence in single sex groups.

Results

In our research, both teachers and pupils pointed out how much they like these boys and girls group meetings and how much these meetings have changed the atmosphere in class. Gender patterns were not cemented – after all, the groups meet only once or twice every fortnight, and most social activities take place in mixed groups. Rather gender roles are broken up in the course of the years while pupils learned to respect each others' individual choices. Both boys and girls used their social competences by transferring it to other contexts; most importantly, more open discussions became possible in class. Pupils said that they felt more accepted both in the way they think or the way they dress. In conflicts, including those with an intercultural background, both girls and boys show various strategies to negotiate interest, rather than displaying violent behaviour.

# Multicultural education

Various issues concerning multiculturalism are taught in class and are in fact integrated into the comprehensive primary education curriculum. Issues related to ethnicity, diversity of cultures and identities are part of the everyday learning process in school.

In general creating awareness of multicultural issues refers to the comprehensive education course programme in history, but some issues related to ethnicity, identity and multiculturalism are also addressed in the second language classes as well as in the native language classes.

Socio-cultural skills amongst other things should include understanding and awareness of cultural issues and inter-cultural dialogue together with the ability to perceive, understand and tolerate cultural diversity. Usually multicultural education modules are provided in the national or second language depending on the language of instruction in school. In extra-curricular activities multicultural elements are also important. Besides class activities directly connected to the study programme, pupils participate in different non-strictly academic activities, for example, in essay competitions, events and projects related to the diversity of cultures (projects involving performing

arts; school scientific projects related to the ethnic cultures and identities).

Target

Usually multicultural education in forms of lectures and discussions is provided for the whole class. The research shows that there is an interest in different cultures, traditions, and awareness of multicultural education activities in class among the pupils. In activities different from formal class work for example, in projects, usually individuals or groups of individuals participate.

Tools

Information for the teachers is available as well as manuals and teaching aids as part of the general teacher training. Working methods include those usually used in the class: lectures, discussions, together with work in groups on multicultural issues.

Results

It is recognised by school personnel that pupils express interest in multicultural education activities, when in class; though it is presumed pupils do not reflect on ethnicity much outside the class. The commonly agreed opinion is that this kind of education module provides information for cultural understanding, thus promoting ethnic and cultural integration of the pupils. The impact of the multicultural education in schools as well as extra-curricular activities were mostly spoken of as having positive impact on the integration process, on learning

the language, and achieving good results in competitions. Naturally, curricular and extracurricular activities on multicultural and ethnic issues do not directly prevent possible conflicts but they surely promote multicultural and social skills of the pupils.


## Abstract Intercultural Learning

Description

Research has shown that talking about cultural differences between pupils in class can intensify rather than diminish conflicts. Pupils come to believe that their conflicts are based on cultural values –conflicts cannot be solved because these cultural differences are persistent. Also, if cultural difference is addressed in a concrete conflict, the involved parties have differing roles in and perceptions of the conflict (offenders, victims, bystanders etc.). The parties cannot be addressed in the same way and will, due to their interest, not develop the same attitudes toward certain cultural values, but rather use cultural differences to argue in favour of their cause.

It can therefore be more helpful to address the issue of cultural differences and tolerance in a context detached from existing interests, roles and norms, in class, for instance, through abstract intercultural learning. It is more likely that pupils develop empathy for the situation of others when they are not personally involved in a conflict. Also, cultural skills will mature more easily.

A major advantage when dealing with issues of cultural difference in an abstract context is that all pupils are addressed in the same way and requested to reflect on problem from the same perspective, i.e. as observers or bystanders. Their own cultural background does not come too much into play when judging a situation and while developing strategies to solve a conflict. Abstract intercultural learning is part of the everyday learning process in school, but it can become good practice if the pupils are actively involved and when it is developed as an extra-curricular activity.

<u>Target</u>

Abstract intercultural learning is - by its nature - a preventive measure. Accordingly, the target group are all pupils in class. Our research has shown, though, that a prerequisite for abstract intercultural learning to be good practices is the active involvement of pupils. It has an especially deep impact if it is, for example, combined with a field trip or with the involvement of experts and if such excursions or visits from experts are well prepared in class by the pupils themselves. Activities that leave an observable impact on the pupils are visits to memorials of concentration camps or visits by refugees who tell about their personal history. A popular example for abstract intercultural learning is the seminar "Steps against Kicks".

<u>Tools</u>

Issues of cultural difference, exclusion and racism can be talked about in a large number of subjects. Common issues are Holocaust education, slavery in (former) European colonies in the 19th Century or the apartheid regime in South Africa. Apart from historical issues, current questions can be addressed as well, such as refugees and asylum in the European Union. These can span the subjects of history, geography, political science and languages, but also art and music.

Of course, the topics of abstract intercultural learning should be part of general education in school, but the impact of learning about violence and intercultural differences is more intense if the issues are not address during normal class hours, but with methods that differ from the daily routine of instruction and combine various subjects.

"Steps against kicks", for example, is a two-day seminar for pupils in secondary schools, usually in grade 7 or 8. Its aim is to prevent exclusion and violent behaviour in school. Even though the prevention of violence is in its focus, issues of intercultural conflicts and racism play an important role.

The seminar is lead by pedagogues and other external educators, among them police officers from the youth departments and social workers from the field of drug addiction prevention and rehabilitation. All of them were intensively trained in the

methods of the seminar. Among the methods used are role games, interactive games, discussions of video clips, reports from experts etc. One of the methods that pupils refer to the most is the so-called "video replay": One pupil thinks about a situation where she or he was a victim of violence or felt excluded. The pupil slips into the role of a film director and chooses other pupils to act out the scene where she or he felt mistreated. After the situation had been reconstructed (or "replayed") with the pupil actors, all pupils talk about this situation. They try to answer the question how they would have felt in different roles and how the violent situation could have been prevented.

When the seminar "Steps against Kicks" had been conceived, most seminar activities dealt with the apartheid regime in South Africa. Today, activities focus more on the topic of refugees: Their life in their country of descent (war, persecution, economic deprivation, discrimination because of their sex or their sexual orientation etc.), but also their experiences during their passage to Europe and their arrival (asylum procedure, detention in refugee camps etc.). Frequently, young refugees (often older or former pupils) are invited as experts to talk about their experiences and pupils can ask questions.

Results
The seminar "Steps against Kicks" has a high emotional impact for pupils. The participants refer to it in detail even years after

they took part. Since the seminar is held every year for all classes in grade 7 or 8, every pupil in school takes part in it. The method allows for a high level of personal involvement and connects individual experiences with phenomena such as apartheid or persecution of refugees which are morally discredited by most pupils. Pupils realize how it feels to be a victim of violence, but also learn how to react in such situations or how to avoid them in the first place.


## Intercultural School Networks

<u>Description</u>
This strategy is based on the networking approach that tries to improve sharing methodological and operative instruments. A 12-schools network shares funds, skills and expertise to implement activities aiming to improve cultural integration and prevention of inter-ethnic conflicts at school.

The network implements training activities for teachers (primary and secondary schools) on intercultural approach, conflict management and mediation; summer state language courses for foreign students to prepare them to be included in the class; information activities for parents on school organisation and functioning; workshops with cultural mediators for children to improve their integration by developing a positive atmosphere in class and preparing students to welcome non-native students

avoiding "refusals"; last but not least, socialisation activities (exhibitions, entertainments, etc.).

The network has been formalised through a protocol and has its own funds (from schools, Municipality and other source of funding related to intercultural activities). The networking approach represents a change in working procedures as well as in the professional identity in order to implement this strategy it is necessary to develop the necessary skills. In this sense training for teachers is a starting point.

Target

At the structural level schools in a comprehensive perspective are the main target group. Indeed the strategy aims at improving their general approach to cultural diversity in schools. At the operative level teachers and intercultural focal points within schools are the target. Moreover, parents and students are the beneficiaries and they are mainly involved as a group.

Tools

Tools are defined at two different levels: at the network level schools implement exchange of information, seminars and training activities for teachers. At the school level they implement summer state language courses for foreign students, informative activities for parents on school organisation and functioning, workshops with cultural mediators, socialisation activities (exhibitions, entertainments, etc.).

Results

Results are at two different levels. At the systemic level the results is the adoption of a common approach to prevent ethnic conflict. Improvement in language skills, socialisation abilities, conflict mediation are the main results at the operative level.

The content of this booklet does not necessarily correspond to the opinion of the European Commission

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