

3rd Baltic inter-ministerial round table on migrant education policy partnership

Educational counselling: Policy and Practice

27-28 January, 2015

This document summarises the discussions at the 3rd Baltic Inter-Ministerial Round Table that was hosted in cooperation by Praxis Center for Policy Studies and the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research, 27-28 January 2015 in Tartu, Estonia. The round-table was organised in the framework of SIRIUS, the European Policy network for education of children with minority and migrant background. The topic of the round table was *Educational counselling: Policy and Practice*.

The aim of the Tartu round table was:

- To learn and exchange knowledge on educational counselling approach in general education and services with a specific focus on supporting newly arrived immigrant pupils and families;
- To identify strengths of national measures and to assess transferability of good practice measures in the neighbouring Baltic countries;
- To elaborate concrete steps on implementation and mainstreaming of policies related to education of newly arrived immigrants in Baltic countries, while promoting partnership between ministries and other national stakeholders.

Session 1 (Jan 27, 14.00 – 15.40)

The first session aimed at introducing the system of educational guidance developed in Estonia as well as providing an overview of the Estonian educational system for the context of educational counselling. The important parts of the educational guidance system in Estonia include regional guidance centers and the Rajaleidja brand.

The sessions were opened by Eve Mägi, education analyst from Praxis Center for Policy Studies, who welcomed the participants, introduced the topic and the agenda for the coming days.

Kersti Kivirüüt, chief expert, General Education Department, the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research - 'Basic education system, the national curriculum and educational policy a context for educational counselling system'

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Kersti Kivirüüt talked about the priorities of the Estonian educational system. Educational policy in Estonia is based on Lifelong Learning Strategy 2014-2020 (LLS 2020). The general goal is to provide all people with learning opportunities that are tailored to their needs and capabilities throughout their whole life, in order for them to maximize opportunities for dignified self-actualization within society.

There are five strategic goals:

- A change in the approach to learning so that both individual and social development of individual learners is supported;
- Competent and motivated teachers and school leadership. The assessments of teachers and headmasters including their salaries are consistent with the qualification requirements for the job and the work-related performance;
- Concordance of lifelong learning opportunities with the needs of the labour market;
- A digital focus in lifelong learning which consists of better access to digital resources and effective use of technology;
- Equal opportunities and increased participation in lifelong learning. One of the most prevalent tasks is the inclusion of the Russian speaking minority.

General education is regulated by the Basic and Upper Secondary School Act and the Estonian National Curriculum. The Basic and Upper Secondary School Act prioritizes inclusion, equal access for compulsory education in all schools in Estonia as well as preventing school drop-out. Inclusion of newly arrived migrant students and minorities is still a challenge for schools, but the goal is to enable schools view the challenge as an opportunity for diversity and innovation.

The Estonian National Curriculum is competence-based which means that competences are linked to the key competences of the life-long learning strategy. The emphasis is on the outcomes of education rather than the methods of teaching. Instead of classes, the national curriculum features four school stages, which enables flexibility in the learning process and evaluation process. Furthermore, the focus is on subject fields rather than subjects, which also leaves schools with more flexibility and independence in developing school curricula. Schools with a larger number of newly arrived immigrants tend to design teaching process around subject fields which appears to be appropriate for teaching newly arrived immigrant and minority students.

'Policy directions and strategies: newly arrived immigrants and minorities'

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After a brief discussion, Kersti Kivirüüt presented a new project that focuses on newly arrived immigrant students and students of Roma origin in Estonian schools. The project was based on the need for high quality educational counselling at the regional level. The state provides schools with newly arrived immigrant and minority student body with additional support for language learning and capitation fees. A challenge is that the level of counselling needs to be improved to meet the needs of the constantly growing target group. A further problem is that Roma students are often marginalized, because there is little communication between the state and the Roma communities.

The project is carried out by the ministry of education and science in cooperation with NPO ProDia, Foundation Innove, SA Omanäolise Kooli Arenduskeskus and the Integration and Migration Foundation from 2014 to 2016 and features three main activities:

- gathering the existing expertise and sharing good practices as well as developing the webpage teretere.eu;
- designing training modules for advisors and inviting regional counselling centers and school advisors to participate in training.

A challenge of the project is that if the school doesn't have newly arrived immigrants or Roma students, they do not acknowledge the opportunity. Thus there is a need for raising the awareness of teachers and school leaders.

Margit Rammo, manager of international projects, Agency for Lifelong Guidance, the Foundation Innove - 'The Estonian system of educational guidance: Regional guidance centers and the Rajaleidja brand'

Next, Margit Rammo introduced the reorganisation of lifelong guidance in Estonia - Pathfinder. Pathfinder is established by the Agency for Lifelong Guidance in Foundation Innove, which supports the development of learners' life skills by creating and stimulating the learning environment.

Rammo gave a brief overview of the background and history of guidance in Estonia. The 21st century has seen initiatives focusing on the development of guidance systems where educational and career guidance are integrated, which have been supported by the European Social Fund. As the third phase of these developments, lifelong guidance is being reorganized through the establishment of Pathfinder. Pathfinder is a network of 16 regional guidance centers which offer differentiated lifelong guidance services, such as career information and career counselling, targeting children and youth in co-operation

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with school staff, parents, practitioners from the private education sector.

Pathfinder guidance centers offer career guidance and counselling for students with special needs. It is important to note that education strategies in Estonia and Lithuania similarly identify a different mother tongue from Estonian or Lithuanian as an educational special need. Career guidance provides career information and career counselling for young people. Career education is provided in cooperation with schools. The three career guidance services provide young people with career planning skills and information about education and labour market and support them in making and implementing informed career decisions. Counselling for students with special needs supports schools by offering special education counselling, speech therapy, psychological counselling and socio-pedagogical counselling for school staff and parents. The available services are integrated in order to meet the needs of children and youth.

Pathfinder supports the main goals of LLS 2020, which include access to guidance for all, raising the quality of service provision and training professional practitioners. Restructuring of lifelong guidance aims at an integrated approach which reduces fragmentation of the system, improves services and access to services, and raises public awareness of the possibilities for assistance. The high quality and widespread availability of guidance services enables newly arrived immigrant students to conveniently receive assistance.

During the discussion, Margit Rammo found that the competence for counselling foreign language students does not meet the need that the schools have and this issue needs to be taken into the agenda of policy makers. Kersti Kivirüüt pointed out that one of the goals of the project for newly arrived immigrants and minorities is to raise this kind of competence in the regional centers through training activities. A further problem is providing specific services for students with special needs and different mother tongue, for example speech therapy, in a foreign language.

There was also a question of the amount of cooperation between schools and the Pathfinder centers. The initial request for counselling has to come from the school. For example, when an individual curriculum is needed for a student with a diverse background, the school professionals and the center experts must cooperate. All newly arrived immigrants have an individual curriculum designed particularly base on their needs.

Session 2 (Jan 27, 16.00 – 17.40)

The second session focused on the question how youth work does and can support

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newly arrived immigrants.

Anne Kivimäe, head, Higher Education Department, the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research - 'Supporting newly arrived immigrants through youth work'

Anne Kivimäe introduced the youth policy in Estonia and talked about the possibilities of how youth work can support newly arrived immigrants. Youth work creates development opportunities for young people outside formal education. The Youth Field Development Plan 2014-2020, which guides the youth work field, has four basic goals:

- young people have more choices to open their creative and development potential;
- youth has lower risk to be marginalised;
- youth participation of young people in decision-making processes is more supported;
- youth affairs function more efficiently.

Youth work is beneficial for the development of attributes that increase social inclusion: different social competences, employability and the ability to cope in formal education. Social inclusion of young people can be increased by reducing the impact of unequal socio-economic conditions on the development opportunities of young people and preventing their exclusion. Some of the main reasons for exclusion involve poverty, cultural differences, inadequate language skills and disabilities.

There is a new programme targeting areas where these problems are widespread. Youth work services are made more accessible and suitable for youth groups at risk of exclusion. Support measures for NEET's are also being launched. Children at risk are also provided with development opportunities through a community-based programme for leisure activities. One of the examples of this approach is the programme „Children and Youth at Risk”, which offers new inclusive youth work opportunities, inclusive formal education initiatives and community-based cooperation activities to prevent exclusion.

In the following discussion, several problems and possible solutions in organising youth work were discussed.

Session 3 (Jan 28, 9.00 – 11.00)

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The third session included presentations about the adaption programme for newly arrived immigrants in Estonia and the webpage teretere.eu. Next, representatives from Estonian schools with a large population of new arrivals shared their experiences.

Liana Roosmaa, the Estonian Ministry of Internal Affairs, 'Adaption programme for newly arrived immigrants'

Liana Roosmaa presented the welcoming programme for newly arrived immigrants, which stems from the Estonian economic, education and talent policy. The programme is going to be enacted since August 2015.

The aim of migration policy is a balanced outcome. The goal is a comprehensive, flexible and appropriate system of support services for newly arrived immigrants who provide added value to society, while preventing the misuse of residency permits, strengthening safety, public order and state security. The target group are legally immigrated foreign nationals who have lived in Estonia less than five years.

The adaption programme will:

- build a gateway webpage that gathers information relevant for newly arrived immigrants, such as information on societal, legal and public services, the Estonian society, culture and state as well as adaption programme materials;
- offer modules: a basic module on Estonian society, culture and state and the EU, thematic modules on a variety of topics as well as Estonian language courses;
- develop and sustain support networks of social partners, which consists in developing services aimed at newly arrived immigrants and facilitating local level-cooperation to make information and services more accessible for newly arrived immigrants.

A key point is the location of the courses. They are preferably held in public buildings so that new immigrants are not isolated. For example, it would be attractive for parents, if the courses were held in their childrens' schoolhouse.

Kersti Kivirüüt, chief expert, General Education Department, the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research - 'Teretere.eu portal as a supportive measure: current development and future directions'

Kersti Kivirüüt gave insight into the development of webpage teretere.eu which is to act

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as a support measure for the foreign-language population, newly arrived immigrants, returnees as well as teachers. The aim of the website development is to renew and organize the information related to on the webpage, so that it becomes convenient to use for diverse target groups. Information related to the Estonian educational system, culture and history, government, adaptation, etc., will become available on the webpage and the Foundation Innove Language Immersion Center will be responsible for updating the content.

Anu Luure, Tallinn Lilleküla Gymnasium - 'School as a competence center: opportunities and challenges'

On the basis of the slideshow prepared by Anu Luure, Kersti Kivirüüt talked about how Tallinn Lilleküla Gymnasium successfully manages the large population of newly arrived immigrants in the school. It is a municipal school which has developed towards being a competence center in educating newly arrived immigrant students.

The school approaches students with diverse backgrounds case by case. The first step is communication with parents, introducing them to the educational system and clarifying the family's previous educational experience, expectations and plans in Estonia. Based on a common understanding between parents and the school, an individual curriculum, including various support measures, etc., is designed. During the first school year students receive no assessment except for formative assessment with the goal of supporting the development of each individual student.

Main challenges and directions:

- lack of a good measure of language level of students;
- need for teacher assistants and additional training of teachers and parents;
- simplified curriculum has some discriminatory aspects, for example lessened career opportunities;
- not enough possibilities for mother tongue lessons and cultural studies.

Kristi Aria, Tartu International School - 'Developing educational counselling system: the school perspective'

Kristi Aria shared the experiences of Tartu International School, a private school, which offers basic-school education with English as the language of instruction. The school has

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competence in educating children with diverse backgrounds. The school is founded by parents, which also provides daycare and conducts courses for adults.

For the transition and adjustment of new students, open communication is important. New students have meetings with the school and the school practices appointing contact persons to families and bringing together old and new families. There are also orientation days and different rituals to make new students feel welcome. The school acts as a community center, involving parents, providing supportive extracurricular activities, etc.

A supportive curriculum is flexible and allows for individual learning programmes, taking into consideration cultural aspects while making the learning outcomes clear. Although the language of instruction is English, various languages are used for communication. Future directions include raising the quality of information exchange, curriculum development, starting a parents academy and raising the teaching capacity. Private schools are a mean of increasing the diversity of education.

Triinu Pihus, PYP Coordinator, Tartu Miina Härma Gymnasium

Next, Triinu Pihus from Miina Härma Gymnasium talked about how the school supports newly arrived immigrants. Miina Härma Gymnasium is a state school that follows the International Baccalaureate (IB) programme, which enables students to comfortably transition to and from other educational institutions around the world. The Estonian National Curriculum is compatible with the IB programme. International students study the main subjects in English and music lessons, PE, etc., together with Estonian students.

Discussion 'Educational counselling system as a support mechanism for newly arrived immigrants'

One of the main challenges is increasing multicultural competence and sharing the experiences that schools have gained in the area with other schools and professionals. The round table was wrapped up by sharing ideas about which steps could be taken to make exchanging experiences with multicultural education possible between different schools in the Baltic states.

The next possible steps include raising multicultural competence of teachers and other professionals by :

- mapping the present situation of multicultural education;
- creating the opportunity to visit multicultural schools;

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- including multicultural teaching styles in in-service training;
- offering teaching internships in multicultural schools;
- building an interactive network, that continuously helps teachers and other professionals to deal with their relevant problems;
- creating written materials, which provide information about educating students with diverse backgrounds.

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