

**Commission of the European Communities**

**Green Paper**

**Migration and Mobility: Challenges and Opportunities**

**for EU Education Systems**

**Response from**

**Department of Education and Science**

**Ireland**

**December 2008**

**Introduction**

The Department of Education and Science (Department) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Green Paper on *Migration and Mobility: Challenges and Opportunities for EU Education Systems*. The response is in 3 parts:

- Part 1: Background to response
- Part 2: Views of the Department on the content of the Green Paper
- Part 3: Responses from the Department to the questions posed by the Commission.

The publication of the Green Paper was very timely for Ireland as it coincides with the development of a national Intercultural Education Strategy. Consultation on the Green Paper was twinned with consultation on the Intercultural Education Strategy and with the Thematic Review on Migrant Education which is currently being carried out by the OECD. These exercises are complementary.

## **Part 1. Background to Response**

The Integration Unit of the Department has been tasked by both the Minister for Education and Science and the Minister of State for Integration with the preparation of an Intercultural Education Strategy for their consideration. The development of the Intercultural Education Strategy was one of the recommendations for the education sector in the National Action Plan Against Racism 2005-2008 (NPAR) (2005).

The context and content of the strategy were discussed by Senior Management in the Department in the summer of 2008. To further the process, and, in particular, to involve external education stakeholders, the Department, in collaboration with the Office of the Minister for Integration (OMI), the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI), and with funding from NPAR, hosted a conference on an intercultural education strategy on October 1<sup>st</sup> 2008. The presentations from that conference are available on the Department's website: [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie).

Stakeholders from across the education spectrum in Ireland were invited to attend the conference. A presentation on the EU Green Paper was given by Georgi Dimitrov, Policy Officer, from the Commission.

Following on the conference, the Integration Unit of the Department held a series of consultative meetings in November / December 2008 with representatives from different sectors within education, mainly on a sector by sector basis. The stakeholders who were invited to the conference on 1<sup>st</sup> October were invited, in addition to other representatives and organisations, to these consultative meetings.

The aim was to consult as widely as possible. In total, seven consultative meetings were held to cover the following perspectives:

1. pre-school
2. primary
3. post- primary
4. higher education
5. further education

6. youth sector
7. NGO/community groups/other government departments

There was an average of 25 attendees per meeting. The consultations covered three main areas:

**1. Intercultural Education Strategy-** The delegates were asked if the proposed principles and actions were appropriate. If not, they were asked for suggestions on how they should be adapted or on others that should be included.

The proposed principles are:

- Mainstreaming of all learners
- Knowledge of English (or Irish)
- Rights and responsibilities
- High expectations and high aspirations
- Partnership and engagement

The proposed actions are:

- Leadership
- Research
- Awareness raising
  - Training
  - Information in appropriate media

**2. EU Green Paper: “Migration and mobility: challenges and opportunities for EU education systems”-** Stakeholders were asked for their views in relation to the four key questions posed by the Commission. They were also asked to consider the future of Directive 77/486/ EEC, and asked for their views on whether the Directive should be maintained, adapted or repealed.

A separate report summarising the views of the stakeholders has been prepared.

**3. OECD Thematic Review of Migrant Education-** Stakeholders were asked “What policies would promote successful education outcomes for first and second generation migrants?” (Ireland is involved in this review together with Norway, Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands and Austria).

In addition to these consultative meetings, all stakeholders were invited to make written submissions to the Department on the above subjects.

## **Part 2. Views of the Department of Education and Science on the content of the Green Paper**

The mission of the Department is to provide for **high-quality education** which will

- Enable individuals to develop their full potential and to participate fully as members of society, and
- Contribute to Ireland’s social, cultural and economic development.

The Department caters for migrant students in the context of its mission and sees them as providing opportunities, as well as challenges. There is a welcome for the inclusion of both migrants from the EU and from third countries in paragraph 2 of the Green Paper.

The tone and the language used in the Green Paper tend to convey a negative view and present migrant students as a challenge without sufficiently acknowledging the opportunities they also offer to host communities.

Ireland has experienced a significant increase in migrant numbers in the last 8 years (paragraph 3). This is best exemplified by the increase in the number of English language support teachers from 2001/2002 to 2008/09:

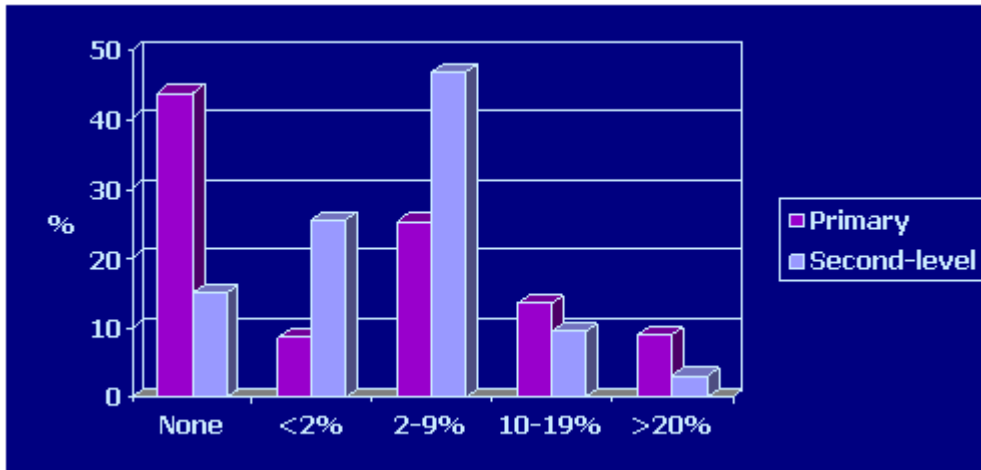
<b>School Year</b>	<b>Primary</b>	<b>Post- Primary</b>	<b>Totals</b>
2001/02	147	113	<b>260</b>
2002/03	239	158	<b>397</b>
2003/04	309	179	<b>488</b>
2004/05	405	206	<b>611</b>
2005/06	563	263	<b>826</b>
2006/07	1068	388	<b>1456</b>
2007/08	1522	479	<b>2001</b>
2008/09 (current)	1619	534	<b>2153</b>

In 2007/2008, students whose nationality is other than Irish made up approximately 10% of the primary school population and over 7% of the post-primary population.

It is important to avoid stereotyping migrants. For example, in Ireland, whilst the majority of migrants live in cities and towns, overall, they are spread quite evenly throughout the country, and are found also in small and medium sized towns. (CSO, 2008)

The Department commissioned the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) to review “The integration of newcomer students in primary and second level schools”. Their research found that migrant students are present in nearly all post- primary schools and in 60 % of primary schools. In fact, data from the ESRI (see Figure 1) show that only a minority of primary and post- primary schools have an enrolment of over 20% migrant students. There is somewhat more clustering at primary than at post-primary level.

Figure 1. Percentage of schools with different proportions of newcomer students (ESRI, Oct. 2008)



Ireland would agree with the view expressed in the Green Paper that “migration can be positive both for migrants and for the host country” and that “schools must play a leading role in creating an inclusive society” (paragraph 4).

Ireland acknowledges that the Green Paper (paragraph 5) focuses on the combination of linguistic and cultural difference with socio-economic disadvantage but notes that, like all populations, migrants are heterogeneous and have requirements that reflect the full spectrum of education need.

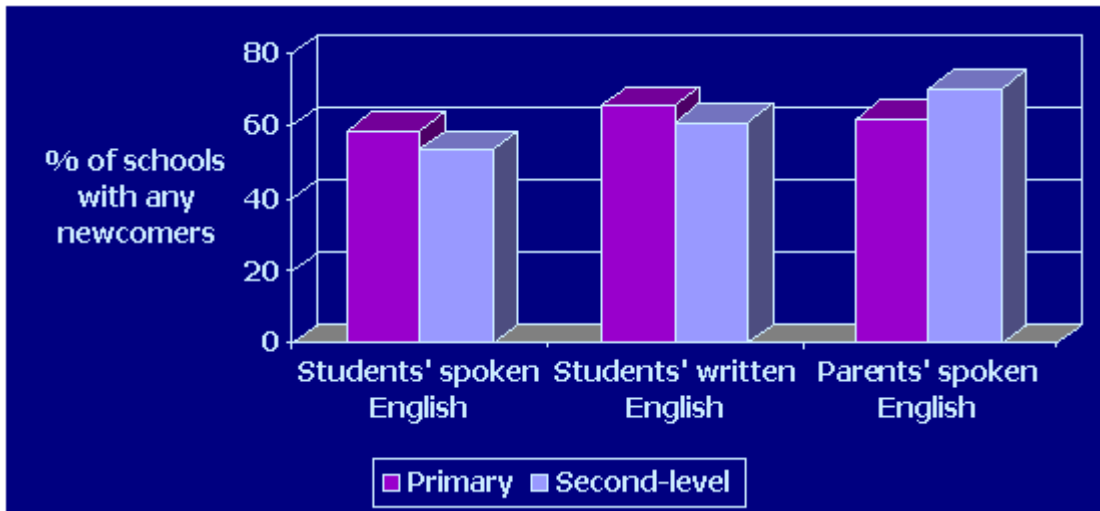
We welcome any opportunity for mutual learning from other countries (paragraph 6). It is for this very reason that Ireland is currently involved in the OECD Thematic Review of Migrant Education.

The discussion on Directive 77/486/CEE (paragraph 7) is very timely. The original directive has become outdated and needs to be amended to reflect the reality of migrant education today. Ireland is currently prioritising proficiency in the host language. There are over 160 nationalities represented in our second level schools. To provide opportunities to promote teaching of mother tongue for all would be very resource intensive. Instead, students are able to take the following subjects in the terminal school examination (Leaving Certificate): English, Irish, Ancient Greek, French, German, Spanish, Italian, Russian, Japanese and Arabic. To cater for the particular needs of EU migrants they can also present for a non-curricular examination in any of the other EU languages. These non-curricular languages do

not appear as part of the normal school curriculum but students may opt to be examined in them if they are from a member state of the EU, speak the language as a mother tongue, are presenting for the Leaving Certificate examination and for Leaving Certificate English. This non-curricular language initiative contributes to encouraging students to maintain proficiency in their heritage language.

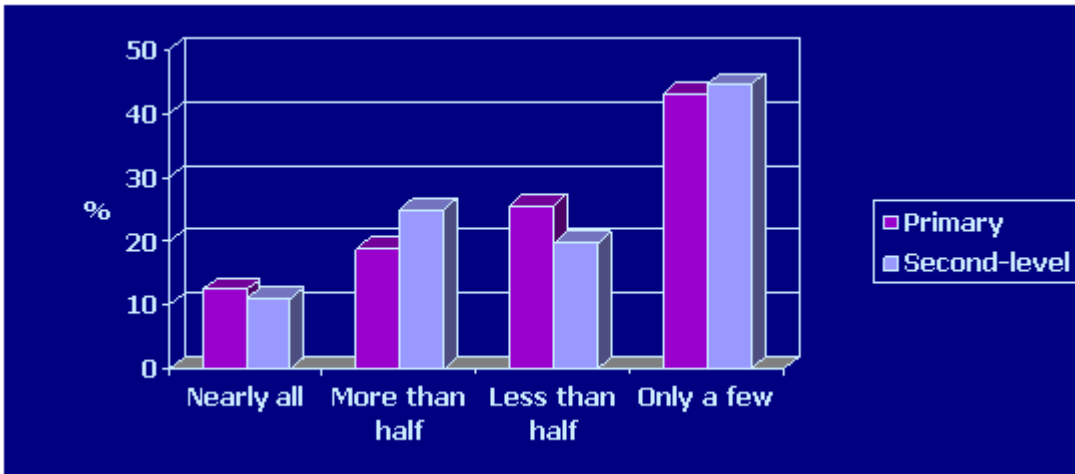
The Department would, with regard to the context in section 2.1, suggest that, for Ireland, it is not appropriate to generalise. Migrant students who do not speak English when they come here have some difficulties with language. This was found to be the case in the ESRI research and is summarised in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Percentage of schools reporting language difficulties among > half of newcomers (ESRI, Oct. 2008)



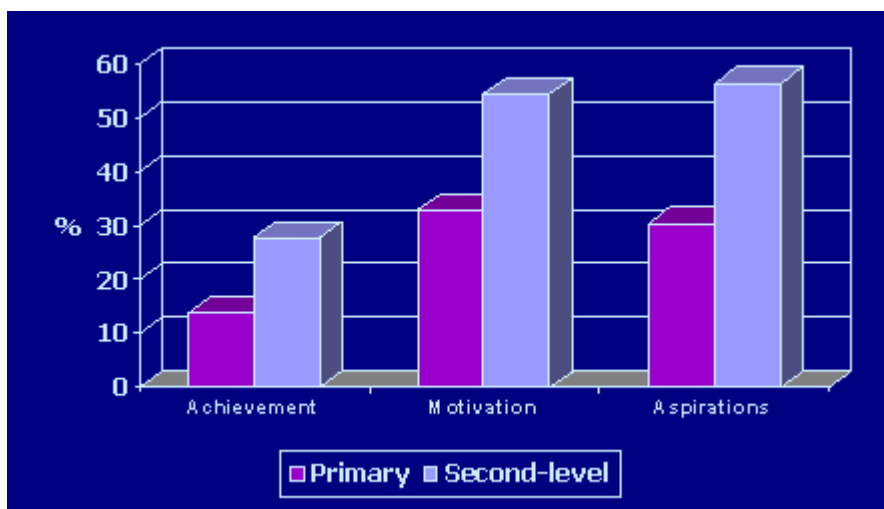
However it is important to note that the ESRI research found that only approximately 10% of migrant students had sustained academic difficulties.

Figure 3. Sustained academic difficulties among newcomers (ESRI, Oct. 2008)



Unlike the experience of migrants portrayed in paragraph 14, the Irish experience from the ESRI study is of a cohort of high achievers who are characterised by high levels of motivation and high aspirations. This is diagrammatically represented below.

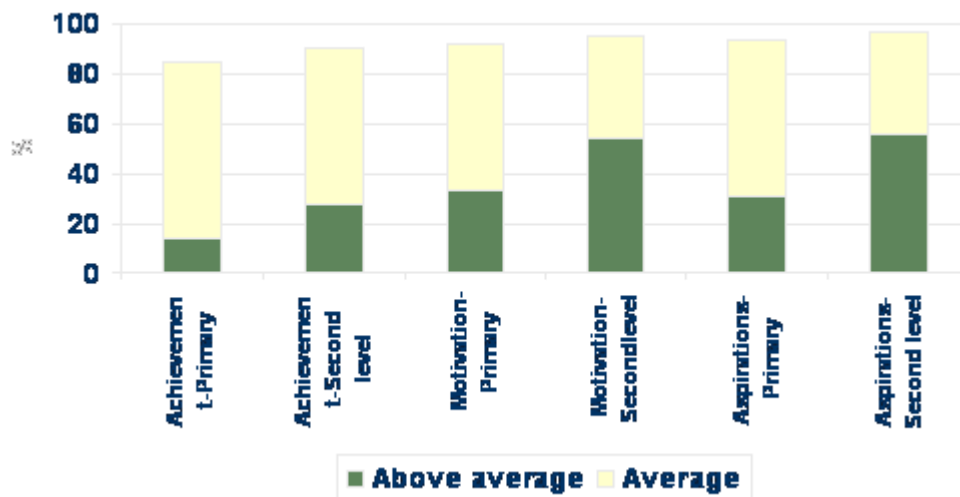
Figure 4. Rating of newcomers as “above average” (schools with newcomers) (ESRI, Oct. 2008)



Post-primary education in Ireland is not segregated into vocational versus academic, as is the case in some other EU countries. Students follow standardised Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate programmes from approximately 12 – 18 years of age.

A number of Irish schools have been designated “DEIS” schools (DEIS - Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools - is an action plan for educational inclusion). Additional resources are provided to ensure educational inclusion in schools serving socially disadvantaged communities. Migrants are often found living in the catchment areas of these schools, because of the availability of affordable accommodation.

Figure 5 shows that, in all schools with migrant children, the overwhelming majority are rated by principals as average or above average. (ESRI, Oct. 2008).





Ireland welcomes the warning about early school leaving amongst immigrants (paragraph 14). It is not a trend that has been experienced yet amongst the migrant community in Ireland but we acknowledge that there is no room for complacency. The work of the Home School Community Co-ordinators, the School Completion Programme and the National Educational Welfare Board, plus the provision of additional resources to DEIS schools aim to ensure that students remain in school until they complete second level education, at approximately 18 years of age.

With regard to paragraph 16, it is important to note that adapting to the presence of high numbers of migrant pupils poses not only a range of challenges but also opportunities, as discovered during the ESRI study, and as also noted by stakeholders during the consultation meetings and in their written submissions.

The importance of building bridges (paragraph 17) with migrant families and communities and the education sector is noted. In Ireland, the Home School Community Liaison Co-ordinators have a specific remit in this area and are working with migrant parents to inform them about the education system. They are also encouraging migrant parents to become educational home visitors and to work with other migrant parents to motivate them to realise the importance of education for their children.

In addition, access offices in third level colleges are working with second level schools to also build bridges. In fact, the National Office for Equity of Access to Higher Education in its National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2008 – 2013 (2008) has highlighted that special regard should be given to the needs of recent immigrants.

Paragraph 18 refers to socially advantaged students leaving schools with high numbers of migrant pupils. In Ireland, it is not clear that this is the case, except in some local areas, as noted in a report of the Dublin 15 area. The ESRI data presented in Figure 1 above shows that migrants are distributed throughout the education system with, however, more clustering at primary than at post primary level.

School enrolment policies can operate to exclude migrant students by setting out criteria which they are less likely to meet than indigenous students (e.g. presence of an older sibling in the school). At a general level, the Department, in an enrolment audit carried out in 2007, has found no evidence of any system-wide enrolment practices that give rise to concern. In fact, in order to cater for the diverse profile of the Irish population, the Department is piloting a new model of patronage in the primary sector with County Dublin Vocational Education Committee. Two new multi-denominational community primary schools opened in September 2008. This new provision will allow for greater parental choice in school selection.

As previously noted on page 3, high aspirations and high expectations are included in the proposed principles of our intercultural education strategy to address both the equity and efficiency objectives of Irish education (paragraph 19).

In the context of equity, the emphasis in Ireland is on respect and not on tolerance. The former term might be seen as more positive than the latter.

The reasons for educational disadvantage, as outlined in section 3 of the Paper, are noted and will be taken on board in the development of the Intercultural Education Strategy. The acknowledgement that policies and educational approaches do matter (paragraph 24) is welcomed as is the statement that “migrant pupils tend to perform better when they are taught together with class mates skilled in the host language and who have high educational aspirations”.

The positive policy responses, as outlined in section 3.3, are very informative and have been noted. In particular, the emphasis on quality standards is a key concern in Ireland. The Inspectorate of the Department continually evaluates the quality of teaching and learning in primary and post-primary schools, particularly through their whole school evaluations. Currently, the Inspectorate is carrying out a thematic evaluation of the effectiveness of the quality of teaching and learning for students studying English as an additional language and also the extent to which whole school planning reflects the principles of inclusion and respect for cultural diversity. The report of the Inspectorate is due in autumn 2009.

The Department welcomes the EU programme for lifelong learning, (encompassing Comenius, Leonardo, Grundtvig, Erasmus etc.) but has concerns about the level of bureaucracy encountered by education providers who choose to become involved.

## **Part 3. Responses from the Department of Education and Science to the questions posed by the Commission**

### **3.1 The Policy Challenges**

The key policy challenges for the Department in relation to the education of migrants are to ensure that

- The education system sees integration as a dynamic, two way process of mutual accommodation by all migrants and residents here in Ireland.
- All children, irrespective of their background, have access to a high quality education system that is inclusive and “respects the diversity of values, beliefs, languages and traditions in Irish society and is conducted in a spirit of partnership between schools, patrons, students, parents, teachers and other school staff and the community served by the school” (Education Act, 1998).
- Children who do not speak the host language (English or Irish) are enabled to gain proficiency as quickly as possible so that they can participate on a par with their host peers in the primary and post-primary curricula. Such proficiency is assessed to inform teaching and learning targets.
- Adult migrants who do not speak English are enabled to gain proficiency and participate fully in Irish society and the economy.

- Training is available to key personnel to provide them with the knowledge, skills, attitude and confidence to work in inclusive, diverse educational settings that are fully reflective of contemporary Irish society.
- All children, including migrants, reach their full potential through the education system which has high expectations and high aspirations for them.
- Children and their parents are aware of their rights and their responsibilities.
- Through collaboration with the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform on its Immigration, Residence and Protection Bill, 2008 that there will be clarity about access to educational services for all categories of non- EU nationals.
- The education partners, and in particular parents, including those from the migrant communities, are fully engaged in the education process.
- Leaders in the education sector are positive towards the provision of an inclusive, integrated education that is mindful of equality and diversity policy.
- Migrants as well as the host community can aspire to progress through the life long learning spectrum.
- Research is carried out to highlight where there might be difficulties and where there are opportunities so that students can have a positive high quality educational experience during their time in education.
- All migrants, both students and their parents, have the information they need to participate fully in the education system and to make informed decisions.

### **3.2 The Policy Responses**

The Department, in catering for the needs of migrant students, has prioritised

- Proficiency in English language for students in primary and post primary schools through the provision of some 2,000 English Language support teachers in 2008/2009 at a cost of approx. €120m. This will be reduced in 2009/2010 for budgetary reasons.
- Evaluating the findings of the *Language Education Policy Profile* ( joint report of the Council of Europe and Department of Education and Science) and of the Commission's own report *Multilingualism – an asset for Europe and a shared commitment*.
- An option for EU migrant students so that they can take their mother tongue as a subject in the Leaving Certificate examination. This encourages young EU migrant students residing in Ireland to retain proficiency in their mother tongue.
- Non-formal and informal learning through the youth and community sectors as an additional means of engaging migrants.

- Proficiency in English for adult migrants. Provision is made for the teaching of English as a second language to adult migrants by the Department. In 2007 there were 13,000 ESOL places made available in English language classes at a cost of some €10m. In addition, English language and socialisation programmes are provided for adult refugees through the national network of Vocational Education Committees at an annual cost of some €3m.
- Provision of further education for adult migrants. Over 3,500 adult migrants participate in courses funded by the Department.
- The development of guidelines and training on interculturalism for the adult and further education sectors.
- Provision of training to teachers both in pre-service and in continuing professional development
- Provision of resource materials to schools
- Evaluation of policies that could affect access to education including enrolment, diversity of education providers etc.
- Research into how migrants are integrating into primary and post-primary schools. This involves current research by the ESRI on the integration of migrant students in primary and post-primary schools (due for completion early in 2009), the thematic evaluation by the Department's Inspectorate of the provision of English as an additional language in primary and post-primary schools (completion date autumn 2009), participation in the OECD Thematic Review of Migrant Education (completion date autumn 2009) and the carrying out of a value for money review of provision of English as an additional language in primary and post-primary schools (completion date autumn 2009).
- The development of an Intercultural Education Strategy that will encompass all sectors of the education system and all students (from both majority and minority backgrounds) from pre-school through primary and second level education, and on to further and higher education. This will also include the non-formal and informal sectors that are youth and community education. Interaction with other sectors is also vital so that a national integration strategy is developed which is coherent across all sectors.
- Access to further and higher education through the work of the National Office for Equity of Access to Higher Education.

The Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs will be evaluating provision for migrant children attending pre-schools, particularly with regard to the acquisition of English (or Irish).

### **3.3 The Role of the European Union**

The opportunity to share experiences and to learn from each other's successes and challenges is key to the successful provision of a high quality education for all students, including migrant students. It is not possible to transfer directly what happens in one country to that of another but lessons can be learnt, trends can be examined and exemplars of good practice can be shared. The EU acts as a good facilitator in this regard.

Despite considerable efforts to reduce red tape, the bureaucracy that surrounds EU programmes remains a deterrent to many potential participants. There is a need to continue to examine how best to function more simply but also more effectively, so that more providers/participants will become involved in EU programmes.

### **3.4 The future of Directive 77/486/EEC**

The Directive is outdated but its focus on host and heritage language is of as much, if not more, relevance today than it was in 1977. The Directive needs to be re-drafted and it should take account not only of the needs of EU migrants but also of third country nationals.

### **Conclusion**

The Department welcomes the opportunity to respond and looks forward to the publication of the White Paper.