



InClusion of Refugee ChiLdren in Education (CIRCLE)

National Report

PORTUGAL

Work package 1. - Development of diagnostic tools for the assessment of prior learning

Activity A1.1.2 - Research and evaluation

0.1.2_National Report - Portugal



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1. Introduction

The CIRCLE project (InClusion of Refugee ChiLdren in Education) is a two-year Key Action 3 project co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programmed of the European Union. This project is implemented by four European member states and eight organisations: Amadora Inovation E.M. Unipessoal Lda. (PT), Câmara Municipal da Amadora (PT), Asociación Mar Violeta (ES), Provincia di Livorno Sviluppo Srl (IT), the Regional Directorate of Primary and Secondary Education of Central Macedonia (GR), the Provincia di Livorno (IT), the Family and Childcare Centre KMOP (GR) and EUROTraining (GR).

The CIRCLE project aims to identify models, practices and tools for the evaluation of previous learning, as well as validation mechanisms in the education systems of the countries that integrate it: Greece, Italy, Spain and Portugal, through:

- Research to identify and evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of prior learning assessment practices;
- Development of diagnostic tools and mechanisms specifically designed to assess the prior learning of newcomers: migrant / refugee children/youngsters of primary and secondary school age;
- Development and promotion of policy recommendations involving policy makers in the field of education;
- Involvement of "stakeholders" by providing training to leaders and educators on the use of tools and mechanisms for integration.

2. Key findings from the desk review

a) The national context: migrant/refugee children in the educational system

In 2017, the Portuguese population was 10,265,832 citizens, 434,092 of whom were foreign residents. In January 2017, among the European Union countries (EU28), Portugal ranked 21st in terms of relative importance of foreigners in the total number of residents, with only 4.2% of foreigners, according to data from the Serviço de Estrangeiros e Fronteiras (SEF). In 2017, statistics indicate that 36,639 immigrants entered Portugal, 6,714 more than in 2016, according to data from





the Instituto Nacional de Estatísticas (INE). In 2018 (with a growth of 14% over the previous year), the country reached the unprecedented value of more than 480 thousand resident foreigners, a stock never before achieved in Portugal.

In Portugal, in the academic year of 2016/2017, there were 1,624,713 students (preliminary data for the academic year 2017/2018 point to a total of 1,627,751 - *Direção-Geral de Estatísticas da Educação e Ciência* (DGEEC)), 1,183,376 of which relate to primary and secondary education. Of these students, 38,712 are students of foreign nationality, representing 3% of the general student population, with an increase of around 2,094 students (+5.7%) compared to the previous school year (when foreign students were 36,618 individuals and with a decrease of 21,519 students (-37%) compared to the beginning of this decade - reference year 2010/2011). In the case of primary and secondary education, the data report the students enrolled in the public education system, not including in this universe the students attending artistic education in courses of initiation or in articulated or supplementary regimes.

Since the beginning of the decade (reference to the 2010/2011 school year), the Portuguese primary and secondary system has lost 33% of students of foreign nationality (-19,425 students), with a trend reversal in the academic year 2016/2017.

In the 2016/2017 academic year, the highest level of education was in the 3rd cycle of basic education (11,253 students), followed by the first cycle of basic education (with 10,647 students).

In the 2016/2017 school year, public primary and secondary schools brought together students from 182 different nationalities and, as a whole, foreign students accounted for 3.7% of the total number of students in the Portuguese school system (3.5% in the academic year 2015/2016). As in previous years, in the academic year 2016/2017, about one-third of foreign students were African nationals, with a special focus on PALOP (Group of countries with portuguese as their national language) students (31.3% of all foreign students enrolled in basic and secondary education). This group was followed by students from South America and from the European Union, representing 30.5% and





16.4%, respectively.

With regard to immigrant students, Portugal was the OECD country where the distance between the results of immigrants and the remaining students (PISA, 2016) was further reduced. Portugal has emerged as the OECD country that has most improved the performance of immigrant students in this last decade. In evolutionary terms, it is important to highlight an important point: when compared with the previous school years, there is an improvement in the levels of school success of students of foreign nationality compared to the values presented at the beginning of this decade, rising 3 percentage points in the transition/completion rate when compared to the academic year 2011/2012 and 4 percentage points when compared to the academic year 2012/2013. This tendency is transversal to the group of students in basic and secondary education, and there is an improvement in school performance among students of portuguese nationality (which increased the transition rate by 0.3 percentage points from 2011/2012 to 2016/2017 and 5 percentage points from 2012/2013 to 2016/2017).

b) Overview of national laws concerning the assessment of migrant/refugee students prior learning

According to the existing legislation to access education, two situations are foreseen for the foreign child at enrollment: the first time the child attends school or the child may have already attended school in the country of origin. If the child presents itself in the second situation, he or she must request equivalence or recognition of qualifications.

The system of granting equivalence of qualifications of foreign educational systems to qualifications of the Portuguese educational system of primary and secondary education is defined and clarified by the *Law Decree no. 227/2005*, and amended by the *Decree No. 9/2006*.

When the child/youngster does not have proof of previous qualifications and intends to enter the basic or secondary education of the Portuguese educational system is previously submitted to tests carried out at the educational institution level, considering the age and the corresponding year of





schooling, with a view to proper integration in the education system.

According to *Order no. 10041-A / 2015, of September 3*, once enrolled, the child is included in the first-year class if it is the first time he attends school, or the class corresponding to the year that was granted to him. By integrating the respective groups, the student works together with the large group and the reception process is considered as central to the success of the inclusion of these children/youngsters, insofar as they are students in extreme vulnerability. Thus, it is also essential that the first measure to be taken by the school environment should be to gather information about the student in question, also making a diagnosis of the child's/youngster school profile, depending on the assessments made by the teachers of each discipline, at the beginning of the academic year, mainly in terms of their linguistic, curricular and integration needs. For this purpose, data of a sociolinguistic nature may be collected by completing an individual form, with the collaboration of their parents or their legal guardians. If necessary, the school may request the collaboration of teachers, students or other actors who, because they have mastered a language of mediation, can facilitate the completion of this document.

The collected sociolinguistic information will allow a deeper knowledge of the specific situation of each student and will allow a better adaptation of the educational measures to implement.

In face of the new students who are part of the class, it is up to the teacher to carry out a diagnostic evaluation. In article 23 of *Law-Decree 139/2012*, the evaluation is defined as "a regulatory process of teaching, guiding the school course and certifying the acquired knowledge and abilities developed by the student". According to the same decree, the diagnostic evaluation is carried out at the beginning of each year of schooling or whenever it is considered opportune, and must base strategies of pedagogical differentiation, of overcoming any difficulties of the students, of facilitating their school integration and of supporting the school and vocational guidance.

The second step is the creation of a multidisciplinary and multilingual team consisting of the head





teacher/classroom leader and other language teachers and other teachers, appropriate to the size of the school and the number of pupils whose mother tongue is not the Portuguese. It is the responsibility of the incumbent teacher to dynamize the team, organizing the processes and encourage the most appropriate strategies to solve the problems that may be encountered. This team also has the functions of informing the students and their respective parents about the education system and all that it presupposes, defining a curricular integration plan adjusted to each student, promoting activities that give visibility to the languages of origin of the students and doing the liaison between students, caregivers and the classroom teacher, facilitating the integration of the child in school.

It is still in the reception phase that the teacher will carry out an initial diagnostic evaluation, considering that the student (s) will not have any capacity to communicate in Portuguese. To do this, two moments of evaluation are suggested: in the first, it is intended that there will be an informal observation of the student's behavior in the school and of the possible knowledge of foreign languages of communication in the activity room/classroom, playground, in the cafeteria, and a small informal conversation between the teacher and the student, which should focus on basic questions of socialization and not last more than five to ten minutes. This interview can be performed using linguistic mediation and the use of non-verbal language, such as images, and may include information about the student's personal data, the data of the people with whom he lives, languages that dominates and personal interests.

The third measure refers to the accomplishment of a test of diagnosis of Portuguese language carried out by the student. Regardless of their language, culture, social status, origin and age, the provision of the Portuguese Non-Mother Language course is foreseen in the basic education curriculum, according to articles 10 and 18 of *Law-Decree no. 139/2012, of July 5*, in its current version. According to the principles of curricular reorganization and management, stipulated in article 8 of *Law-Decree no. 6/2001, of January 18*, "schools must provide specific curricular activities for the learning of Portuguese as a second language to students whose mother tongue is not Portuguese. "





According to the specifics presented by these children, we can also use the one presented in article nº20 of *Normative Dispatch nº24-A/2012* that defines that it is up to each school to implement measures that aim at the school success of its students. To this end, whenever necessary, pedagogical accompaniment devices should be set up, with accompaniment plans at the class level or at the learner level, including appropriate measures, in order to assist overcome their difficulties at any time during their school career and in any disciplinary area. The order further states that the plan must be implemented through a set of measures aimed at supporting the study and thus meet specific needs. In addition, schools may also temporarily form "groups of homogeneity relative to school performance in structuring disciplines" or otherwise allow "classroom coadjuvant, valuing the experiences and collaborative practices that lead to improvement of education". Also points to Accompanied Study in the 1st cycle (primary) to "support students in the creation of study and work methods and aiming primarily at reinforcing support in the Portuguese and Mathematics disciplines, namely solving homework." This measure through Article 13 of *Law-Decree no. 91/2013 of July 10*, is rectified replacing the Study Accompanied by Study Support, maintaining the same objective but making it mandatory frequency. *Order No. 1438/2005*, in point 2, determines educational support, through strategies and activities carried out within the scope and through the curriculum enrichment, allowing all students to acquire and develop skills to achieve school success. In point 4, point (d) mentions that this support can be made using different modalities, such as "specific programs of the Portuguese language for students from foreign countries".

In relation to immigrant students, concrete measures and actions are identified that relate to learning the Portuguese language (extracurricular activities), the provision of specific supports in certain areas of knowledge and their insertion in the classes according to the level of knowledge of the language, or because they are frequented by colleagues of the same origin (for newcomers).

There should be a rapid integration into the entire curriculum of the respective year of schooling, and the management of the Schools Groups/Schools, under proposal of the pedagogical council,





implement all the measures previously mentioned for a maximum period of one academic year.

For an adequate integration of newly arrived migrant/refugee children into school, *Law-Decree No. 115-A/98, of May 4*, establishes that schools must develop an educational project in accordance with the demands and needs of the context in which they are inserted, in order to create conditions and use resources that allow the integration of all students, as well as access to the curriculum.

The monitoring and integration of this pupils concerns the whole educational community, that is, the action of students, parents and staff are essential for the "construction of a school culture open to diversity, whose educational and curriculum projects must contain objectives and strategies of reception and inclusion "(Ministry of Education, 2005). In addition, the school may, within its autonomy, make available other projects, activities or courses that aim at the development of the Portuguese language and culture and which also promote the recognition and appreciation of diversity as an opportunity and as a source of learning for all, in the multiculturalism of the school community.

In fact, this intention may be embodied in the development of strategies to facilitate the inclusion of students, such as tutoring and/or mentoring. It can also be used in the production of documents, aimed at students and their families, facilitators of the knowledge of the organizational structure of the school, of its physical spaces, along with the services it offers and its schedules and modes of operation. The information to be contained in these documents should be presented using schemes and images and can be translated into other languages. As far as possible, the families of the students should be involved in the reception process and/or the representative of the host institution. Therefore, in order to meet this objective, schools have the autonomy and power to decide how refugee children are part of the curriculum of their class, and may even have to analyze each situation and determine which subjects to attend.

Despite the existence of clear legislation, policies and strategies related to the integration of



migrant/refugee children into the Portuguese education system, there were no specific measures regarding the evaluation of previous learning of newly arrived migrant/refugee children. In some cases, what is happening is the use of legislation/general measures regarding the various aspects of the educational process of students in Portugal, in order to resolve specifics regarding the integration of newly arrived migrant/refugee children into Portuguese schools. For example, there are no specific measures to promote the educational success of these children, but there are programs/projects for all children experiencing school failure.

c) Overview and evaluation of creation and implementation of national policies and strategies related to the integration in the school system of migrant/refugee students and, in particular, to the assessment of their prior learning

Regarding the institutional framework of this area, it is pointed out that since the 1980s the Portuguese educational system has been confronted with an increasing need to welcome and integrate cultural and linguistic diversity within it, following and responding to its own growth and diversification of migratory flows to Portugal. The first initiative in Portugal that defined new responses from the Ministry of Education to these needs was in 1990, with the Project "The School in the Intercultural Dimension". Since then, various measures/policies have been created and implemented to integrate migrant/refugee students into the education system.

The latest step is the creation of the European Agenda for Migration, presented by the European Commission on May 13, 2015, which defined concrete measures to address the current challenges to the European Union on migration. To this end, a Working Group for the European Agency for Migration, under the terms of *Order no. 10041-A/2015, of 3 September*, was established to "prepare a plan of action, resettlement and integration of immigrants, and report on the activities carried out, their conclusions, proposals and recommendations. "

Within the scope of this agenda, and in view of the integration and reception in the Portuguese educational system of migrant children and young people, extraordinary educational measures were created in terms of granting equivalence of foreign educational qualifications, progressive integration



into the Portuguese curriculum and reinforcement of the learning of the Portuguese language, as well as the school social action.

d) Overview and evaluation of implementation of EU directives and other international legislation, related to the integration in the school system of migrant/refugee students and to the assessment of prior learning

What is happening through international law and European regulations is that great efforts are being made to streamline mechanisms related to the educational support of newly arrived migrant/refugee children.

The European Union, together with its Member States, has been active on this front for many years. The existing EU policies and legislation provide a solid framework for the protection of the rights of the child in migration covering all aspects including reception conditions, the treatment of their applications and integration. As a result, there is a wealth of knowledge and good practice in the Member States on the protection of children in migration.

In education, Member States are encouraged, inter alia, to provide language learning and prevent educational segregation, ensure that teachers have the skills to manage diversity, to promote the recruitment of teachers with a migrant background, to promote the participation of migrants' children in early childhood education and care, to enable access to vocational training, and to assess, validate and recognize skills and qualifications of third country nationals (European Commission, 2016).

e) Evaluation of how the aforementioned policies and directives are actually implemented at the local level in both primary and secondary schools

Currently, even though most European countries recognize the importance of newly arrived migrant children/youngsters integration into education system at the policy level, there are certain discrepancies in implementation of national priorities at the regional and local levels. Targeted policy response to newly arrived migrant children/youngsters needs will only work effectively in an inclusive and comprehensive education system that is already favorable for the integration of newly arrived migrant children/youngsters. Therefore, policy makers should pay more attention to the overall





structure of the education system and its effects on arrived migrant children/youngsters inclusion rather than the individual support measures targeted at children/youngsters. This integrated approach should provide equal opportunities for arrived migrant children/youngsters to develop, as much as possible, within the mainstream education system and guarantee additional or remedial support, when necessary, in all areas, not only host language teaching. It is important to tailor educational support to individual needs and continue it throughout the general education in all key areas including linguistic and academic support, parental and community involvement and intercultural education.

The education of newly arrived migrant children/youngsters from other countries who speak another mother tongue is not a recent phenomenon in Portugal. This question has become a frequent reality in Portuguese classrooms, arousing interest and becoming the target of numerous investigations. Both the school and teachers are confronted with the responsibility to embrace this diversity and before it the duty to prepare citizens without the right to cultural and linguistic identity being devalued. International publications carried out by the European Commission and the United Nations analyze and propose measures that have influenced the country's governmental system to improve its policies regarding the education of these children/youngsters. As it was possible to verify in the various documents consulted, Portugal presents a good and solid theoretical foundation at the legislative level that aims to support the integration of foreign children/youngsters into the Portuguese education system, providing a set of reception and schooling measures that schools must ensure.

In fact, at the legislative level there is a great effort to build a theoretical foundation that supports the integration of foreign children/youngsters into Portuguese education. Without belittling the importance of this theoretical basis, it must be emphasized and recognized that there is a fatal distance between what is proposed and what is in fact feasible. That is, not always what happens on the ground, especially in schools, corresponds to what is defined in laws and theories, thus showing and promoting a gap between what characterizes theory and what happens in practice. That is to say,



if, on the one hand, schools are given the freedom to organize their work in relation to the integration of foreign children/youngsters, on the other hand, there is no real possibility of operationalizing what is required by law on the ground. The lack of knowledge of the causes of school failure and drop-out among some sectors of the population, including the economically and socially disadvantaged population of foreign origin with low socio-economic status, the lack of experienced teachers in this area (training), resistance of families, lack of hours for support as well as lack of production of adequate materials/resources are some of the factors, among others, responsible that hinder the articulation between what is intended and what is accomplished.

f) Evaluation of good practices carried out by primary and secondary schools (national level)

At the governmental level, the Direção Geral de Educação recognizes the need to promote intercultural education in response to the growing diversity of students of foreign origin. Intercultural education aims to promote the recognition and appreciation of diversity as an opportunity and as a source of learning for all, respecting the multiculturalism of today's society, as well as developing the capacity to communicate and encourage social interaction, creating identities and meaning of belonging to humanity. This theme is well reflected in our country through initiatives and awareness campaigns such as:

- *Selo Escola Intercultural (Intercultural School Stamp)* - was promoted jointly with the Directorate General of Education and aims to distinguish the country's schools that stand out in the promotion, recognition and appreciation of diversity as an opportunity and source of learning for all;
- *Programa REEI - Rede de Escolas para a Educação Intercultural (School Network for Intercultural Education)* - The purpose of the network is to promote the reception, integration and educational success of all children/youngsters and young people in pre-school education and secondary education, as well as to develop a respect for differences and establish positive relations of interaction and rapprochement between students and other members of the educational community of different cultures;

- *Programa TEIP - Territórios Educativos de Intervenção Prioritária (Educational Territories for Priority Intervention)* - It is a government initiative, currently implemented in 137 clusters schools/non-clustered schools that are located in economically and socially disadvantaged territories, marked by poverty and social exclusion, where violence, indiscipline, abandonment and school failure are most evident. The main objectives of the program are the prevention and reduction of early school leaving and absenteeism, the reduction of indiscipline and the promotion of educational success for all students;
- Program for the integration of students who do not have Portuguese as their mother tongue - Currently, foreign students can benefit from pedagogical support appropriate to their situation and framed in the educational project of the educational establishment. This support should focus on overcoming the difficulties experienced by the student, particularly in the Portuguese Language field. The support in learning the Portuguese language is the only situation in which specific groups are suggested and the immigrant students may arise isolated from the rest of the classmates;
- *“E se fosse eu? Fazer a mochila e partir” (“What if it was me? Make the backpack and leave”)* - The objective of this activity was to raise children/youngsters awareness of the reality of refugees, thus promoting the commitment to welcome those seeking humanitarian protection and embodying the principles of a democratic and inclusive society;
- *“Não são apenas números” (“It's not just numbers”)* - is a set of tools on migration and asylum in the European Union, designed to help teachers and educators to engage young people in informed discussion on this subject, and aimed at teaching young people between 12 and 18 years of age - 3rd Cycle and Secondary Education.

Portuguese legislation refers to the need to promote, recognize and respect the individual needs of all pupils, and in particular the specific needs of pupils newly arrived in the national education system and the challenges posed to schools in the face of the need to mobilize the richness of linguistic diversity and socio-cultural heterogeneity as factors of cohesion and integration. There have been a number of ongoing programs and projects in schools that are essentially intended to address

concerns about the integration of the children/youngsters of immigrants into the host society. In this sense, the more specific programs and projects, promoted by political power, have aimed at consolidating ways of curricular dealing with the diversity of students. Examples of this are:

- Curriculum Flexibility Projects - aims at promoting better learning that promotes the development of higher level skills, taking the centrality of schools, their students and teachers, and allowing the management of the curriculum in a flexible and contextualized way, recognizing that the effective exercise of autonomy in education only is fully guaranteed if the object of this autonomy is the curriculum;
- Alternative curricula - its a measure of promotion of educational success in basic education. It is a specific offer of a complementary nature to other existing ones with a view to social inclusion and compliance with compulsory schooling;
- Inclusive education - the creation of inclusive schools implies considering the three dimensions that it incorporates: the ethical dimension, referring to the principles and values that are in its genesis; the dimension related to the implementation of educational policy measures that promote and frame the action of schools and their educational communities and the dimension regarding educational practices, and none of them can be neglected;
- Education for citizenship - education for citizenship aims to contribute to the formation of responsible, autonomous, solidarity persons who know and exercise their rights and duties in dialogue and in respect for others, in a democratic, pluralistic, critical and creative spirit, with reference to the values of human rights.

g) Overview of research and reports (national and international) regarding the tools and practices used to evaluate migrant/refugee students' prior learning, the challenges they have to face and their actual needs

From the research and reports analyzed, in relation to the practices/tools used to evaluate the prior knowledge of migrant/refugee students, three types of challenges can be distinguished:

- Relative to the migration process itself (e.g. leaving the home country, learning a new language, adapting to the new rules and routines at school, etc., and the impact of these factors that disrupt the process of acculturation in well-being of migrant students);
- Concerning the general socio-economic and political context (e.g. policies concerning the provision of resources to education systems and schools to promote integration, or policies that promote inclusion and equality in general);
- Concerning students' participation in education, including the restrictive character of the initial assessment, which does not always include academic and non-academic aspects (e.g., social, emotional and health aspects); inadequate placement in the level of schooling; language offer not adapted to the needs of students with a different mother tongue; insufficient learning support and lack of psychosocial support; untrained and/or unsupported teachers to deal with diversity in the classroom; insufficient home-school cooperation; and absence or inflexibility in the use of financing to organize an adequate supply/support.

h) Overview of reports of international organisations and EU institutions

Concerning the reports of international organizations and European institutions, the following points are highlighted:

- In most European education systems, children and young people from migrant backgrounds of compulsory school age have the same rights and obligations to participate in education as those born in the host country;
- Functioning procedures and structures of assessing refugees' prior education and connecting their education with their prior knowledge and educational attainments (e.g. through individualized learning plans) are not in place in a comprehensive way in many countries;
- In most countries, teachers lack the training, competences and experience with general issues of migration and diversity, to work with refugee students and their particular needs, to teach the national language as a second language, to provide psychosocial guidance, and to enable connections with the prior education of students;
- Coherent cooperation between multiple stakeholders involved in the education of refugees on different levels (schools, municipalities, communities, NGOs, labor market, social actors etc.) is

lacking in most countries; this is a barrier to the effective support and integration of newcomers;

- Teacher competences must be developed to implement an appropriate curriculum for these learners, together with educational support devices in order to provide adequate language and academic support based on the learners needs;
- Seeing the complexity of assessing the educational experience of newly arrived migrant learners, their learning pace and proficiency of the language(s) spoken at home, these assessments should be administered and conducted by highly specialized centers with educational experts;
- Limited resources and competence within schools or local authorities sometimes may result in the use of inappropriate criteria to determine the level at which to enroll a child, such as knowledge of the host country language, the age of the child or other narrow tests;
- An initial assessment of newly arrived migrant students is not widely carried out and is rarely comprehensive in Europe Top-level education; authorities advocate taking into account newly arrived migrant students' skills in the language of instruction and/or the results of the assessment of their prior learning;
- Newly arrived migrant learners should be given support based on their individual skills and needs when they arrive, as part of a more inclusive general education system;
- Newly arrived migrant learners prior learning and knowledge should be assessed by educators with knowledge of the relevant home country education system and experienced in individual student assessment to determine the appropriate language and academic support for them to catch up to the grade level of their peers in their new country of schooling;
- In Portugal intercultural education is promoted throughout the country through individual initiatives and projects. However, from 2018/19, intercultural education will be integrated into the curriculum of "Citizenship and Development";
- In Portugal, the assessment of prior learning is not used for determining school grade but it is in deciding what learning support is needed;

- In Portugal, competences in the host country language do not play a role in determining school grade, but top-level assessment criteria are available for determining language support needs;
- Portugal consider academic as well as non-academic issues in their top-level regulations/recommendations on the initial assessment of newly arrived migrant students;
- In Portugal there are no strict procedures for the initial assessment of newly arrived migrant students, however, official documents require that nonacademic issues are considered to some extent. For example, when students from migrant backgrounds enter the Portuguese education system, an initial interview should be conducted to evaluate verbal and non-verbal aspects (e.g. facial expressions or body language). This initial assessment should also be based on informal observations of student behavior in school (in the classroom, the playground and cafeteria) in interaction with the teachers and peers. Additionally, a sociolinguistic assessment should be carried out based on parents' or guardians' responses to a form they need to fill out. It gathers a range of information including students' previous learning trajectories, learning difficulties, study habits, etc.

3. Research results of the focus groups

a) Methods of evaluation

At primary education level (primary school), the group reported the following:

- Within the school/project they are integrated, that an evaluation of previous learning is made using diagnostic tests that seek to assess the level of skills and / or knowledge of the students;
- That a joint interview with students and their parents is realized in order to assess the student's school other information namely school performance (performance, number of retention, absenteeism).

At secondary level (secondary school), the group reported the following:

- that they usually conduct an initial interview with students in order to gather information regarding their origin, spoken language, family structure, among other aspects;

- that the student's interests are also valued and considered in order to make the best possible referral;
- that the interviews are conducted by a technician and should have the technical coordinator of the course in order to extract all relevant information regarding the characteristics, skills, abilities/aptitudes and, if possible, previous experience.

The practices used, in both groups, are based on the current legislation that enforces the need for the recollection of information with the objective of establishing the school's profile of the child/youngster. This is made by the teachers of each discipline, at the beginning of the school year, mainly at the level of their linguistic, curricular and integration needs.

b) Families' involvement

In the primary education group, families are always involved in all stages of the students' educational process and, more specifically, in the collection of data and evaluation of previous learning.

The secondary school group states that families are not involved in the process of assessing prior learning, specifically at the time of the initial interview, except in cases where the student is a minor. Nevertheless, it is mentioned that they actively seek to involve families throughout the various stages of the formation process.

Portuguese law states that a collaboration of those responsible for the education of these students in the initial integration process must exist when completing an individual form for the collection of sociolinguistic data. The information collected will enable a more in-depth knowledge of the specific situation of each student and will allow a better adaptation of the educational measures to implement case by case.

c) Native language evaluation

Regarding the evaluation of the spoken language in the country of origin, the groups indicate that it is not evaluated, that is, in the integration it is not taken into account previous knowledge regarding the language of the country of origin. The Portuguese legislation also does not provide for the assessment

of the language of the country of origin of the migrant students.

d) Linguistic and cultural mediators involvement

In the case of the secondary education group, they state that there is no involvement of linguistic and cultural mediators. On the other hand, the primary education group refers to the involvement of linguistic and cultural mediators throughout the educational process.

In the specific case of the involvement of cultural and linguistic mediators, our legislation is not clear, emphasizing that, if necessary, the school may request the collaboration of teachers, students or other actors who, because they have mastered a language of mediation can facilitate the collection of information on the various linguistic, curricular and integration aspects of these students. It is also suggested the creation by schools of multidisciplinary teams, constituted according to the existing resources, whose mission is to analyse, propose and develop strategies appropriate to each case. Also, at the time of the formal interview, when assessing the language skills of these students in relation to Portuguese, the use of linguistic mediators may be requested.

e) Training for teachers and other school operators

Regarding the training of the teams in these specific contents (evaluation of previous learning, integration of migrant children/youngsters in the education system, intercultural education, among others), the two groups affirmed that they've never undergone any training of this nature. However, in Portugal and through the *Bolsa de Formadores do Alto Comissariado para a Imigração e Diálogo intercultural*, a set of information/awareness-raising actions and seminars on topics related to interculturality in a school context are made available. Those contents are addressed to both students and teaching and non-teaching staff. The modules available are as follows:

- Learning with Stories: first steps towards Interculturality;
- Intercultural Dialogue;
- Intercultural Education for Youth;
- Intercultural Education;
- Intercultural Education in School;
- Hosting and Celebrating Diversity: Support Services and Small Ideas;



- Nationality Law;
- Immigration Law;
- Myths and Facts about immigration in Portugal;
- Interreligious Dialogue;
- Health, (I) Migration and Cultural Diversity.

In order to access these training/awareness actions, the schools or school groups must meet certain conditions, such as a minimum number of participants, available space and equipment and request it by filling out a form.

f) Weakness and strengths of tools and practices currently in use

According to the opinion of both groups, the integration into classrooms of Portuguese Non-Mother Language paralleling the process of integration of these students into regular classes would be the greatest strength of the practices / tools currently used. According to their opinion, the parallel integration in the regular classes and in the classes of Portuguese Non-Mother Language would increase the effectiveness in the acquisition of Portuguese.

The process of integration of the newly arrived migrant students provides that they can attend the educational activities that the school considers appropriate to the particular case, without, however, allowing a complete untying of the group/classroom. Thus, schools will be able to decide on a case-by-case basis the subjects to be followed by these students, based on their knowledge of their specific situations, as well as the profile of their teachers, namely at the level of foreign language mastery of communication with students.

During the time period of dismissal of the disciplines foreseen in the curricular matrix of the respective year of schooling, the students:

1. They develop learning activities in Portuguese Non-Mother Language, including activities in the Portuguese language as a vehicle of knowledge for other curricular subjects;



2. They are accompanied by a teacher who holds training in Portuguese/Portuguese Non-Mother Language or, alternatively, by a teacher in the 1st cycle of primary education or by a teacher who holds qualifications in foreign languages.

However, a rapid integration into the entire curriculum of the respective year of schooling should be made, and the school board, on proposal of the pedagogical council, must implement all the measures previously mentioned for a maximum period of one academic year.

The greatest weakness found in the used practices / tools would be the lack of support classes in the remaining theoretical curricular disciplines that accompany them. Regarding this point, it is mentioned that, in relation to migrant students, concrete measures and actions are identified that are related to the learning of the Portuguese language (curricular and extracurricular activities), the provision of specific supports in certain areas of knowledge and their insertion in the classes according to the level of knowledge of the language. In addition, the school may, within its autonomy, make available other projects, activities or courses that aim at the development of the Portuguese language and culture and which also promote the recognition and appreciation of diversity as an opportunity and as a source of learning for all, in a multicultural school community.

In order to properly integrate newly arrived migrant/refugee children/youngsters into school, the *Law-Decree 115-A/98, of May 4*, establishes that schools or groups of schools must develop an educational project in accordance with the demands and needs of the context in which they are inserted, in order to create conditions use resources that allow the integration of all students. The monitoring and integration of pupils concerns the whole educational community, that is, the action of students, parents and staff its essential for the "construction of a school culture open to diversity, whose educational and curriculum projects must contain objectives and strategies of reception and inclusion "(Ministry of Education, 2005).

g) Main challenges/difficulties of migrant/refugee children/youngsters in the educational system

For both groups the main challenges/difficulties that these children/youngsters can find when they are integrated into the Portuguese education system will be the acquisition of the host country's language, peer communication and educational team, and, in a more comprehensive way, with regard to their social and cultural integration.

Regarding the above mentioned, the main challenges/difficulties that newly arrived migrant/refugee children/youngsters face as soon as they become migrants are:

- Regarding the migration process in itself (e.g. leaving the home country, learning a new language, adapting to the new rules and routines in school, etc., and the impact of these factors that disrupt the process of acculturation in the general well-being of migrant students);
- Concerning the general socio-economic and political context (eg policies concerning the provision of resources to education systems and schools to promote integration, or policies that promote inclusion and equality in general);
- Concerning students' participation in education, including the restrictive character of the initial assessment, which does not always include academic and non-academic aspects (e.g., social, emotional and health aspects);
- inadequate placement in the level of schooling;
- language offer not adapted to the needs of students with a different mother tongue;
- insufficient learning support and lack of psychosocial support;
- untrained and/or unsupported teachers to deal with diversity in the classroom;
- insufficient home-school cooperation;
- absence or inflexibility in the use of financing to organize an adequate supply/support.

h) Main obstacles to a successful integration in the educational system

For both groups, the biggest obstacle these children/youngsters could find for successful integration into the education system would be the language barrier. However, Portugal has a very strict procedure with regard to learning Portuguese as a second language in relation to students whose



mother tongue is not Portuguese. In this specific case, Portugal makes a real diagnostic evaluation of the Portuguese domain of these children/youngsters with the aim of positioning them by determining their level of linguistic proficiency, considering their oral, reading, oral production and written production skills.

Thus, students who are placed at the levels of initiation or intermediate language proficiency follow the curriculum of Portuguese Non-Mother Language and not the curriculum of the Portuguese course of the school year in which they are.

This evaluation is done in three moments: informal observation, formal interview with linguistic mediation and a diagnostic test.

i) Actual needs of migrants/refugee children/youngsters in the educational system

For the secondary education group, the current needs of these children/youngsters would be a recognition of their knowledge previously acquired in the country of origin, with the aim of being given a fair and adequate referral when they are integrated into Portuguese education.

The primary school group states that what these young children/youngsters would need would be a tutor to assist them in a successful integration. The Portuguese legislation states that in order to facilitate the inclusion of these students, tutorials and/or mentoring can be carried out. This support can also be achieved through the production of documents, aimed at students and their families, with information regarding the organizational structure of the school, of its physical spaces, along with the services it offers and their schedules and modes of operation. The information to be contained in these documents should be presented using schemes, diagrammes and images and can be translated into other languages. As far as possible, the families of the students should be involved in the reception process and/or the representative of the host institution. Therefore, in order to meet this objective, schools have the autonomy and power to decide how refugee children/youngsters are part of the curriculum of their class, and may even have to analyse each situation and determine which subjects to attend.



j) Needs addressed/not addressed by the assessment practices

According to the groups, the practices implemented do not respond to the current needs of these children/youngsters. For the secondary group, it would be necessary to accept and change, in the first place, any type of institutional paradigm with the purpose of improving the integration process of these children/youngsters.

4. Conclusions

The education of newly arrived migrant children/youngsters from other countries who speak another mother tongue is not a recent phenomenon in Portugal. This question has become a frequent reality in Portuguese classrooms, arousing interest and becoming the target of numerous investigations. Both the school and teachers are confronted with the responsibility to embrace this diversity and before it the duty to prepare citizens without the right to cultural and linguistic identity being devalued. International publications carried out by the European Commission and the United Nations analyze and propose measures that have influenced the country's governmental system to improve its policies regarding the education of these children/youngsters. As it was possible to verify in the various documents consulted, Portugal presents a good and solid theoretical foundation at the legislative level that aims to support the integration of foreign children/youngsters into the Portuguese education system, providing a set of reception and schooling measures that schools must ensure.

According to what has been presented previously, Portugal has adequate legislation regarding the integration of new migrant/refugee children/youngsters to our country, following many of the guidelines and regulations coming from the European Union and other international institutions. As in many countries of the European Union, Portugal does not have any legislative basis when assessing the previous knowledge/learning of these children/youngsters. As far as we can see, the assessment of prior knowledge of migrant/ refugee children/youngsters is not used to determine their position at school level, but is used to decide what kind of learning support these children/youngsters need.



Although in practice it's not always implemented, Portugal presents precise measures regarding the positioning of migrant children/youngsters with regard to their knowledge of the language of the host country. There is a whole process inherent to this measure, and the final objective will be the availability of the Non-Mother Language Portuguese course in the curriculum of these children/youngsters with the objective of facilitating their integration in all the disciplines duly followed by the group/class.

In fact, at the legislative level there is a great effort to build a theoretical foundation that supports the integration of foreign children/youngsters into Portuguese education. Without belittling the importance of this theoretical basis, it must be emphasized and recognized that there is a fatal distance between what is proposed and what is in fact feasible. That is to say, if, on the one hand, schools are given the freedom to organize their work in relation to the integration of foreign children/youngsters, on the other hand, there is no real possibility of operationalizing what is required by law on the ground. The lack of knowledge of the causes of school failure and drop-out among some sectors of the population, including the economically and socially disadvantaged population and foreign origin with low socio-economic status, the lack of experienced teachers in this area (training), resistance of families, lack of hours for support as well as lack of production of adequate materials/resources are some of the factors, among others, responsible that hinder the articulation between what is intended and what is accomplished.

