

Session 4. Providing equal opportunities: What works in the integration of youth with a migration background?

OECD Headquarter Paris (Chateau, Room D)

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Distinguished guests,

Due to increased migration trends, accelerated ageing of population and requirements of higher overall employment rate in the Slovene economy, successful long-term migration policies are of utmost importance to achieve economic growth and obtain competitiveness and productivity. Additionally, we shall not forget that any lack of inclusion cause much larger societal and economic costs than integration itself by use of clear integration policies. On the other side, an inclusive migration policy requires a clear vision on industrial development, elaborated industrial policy and priority sectors to invest into.

Slovenia adopted the “Strategy on economic migrations” in 2010. One of the important recommendations of the strategy is the fact that carefully reconsidered migration schemes, migration’s management and efforts to mobilize domestic labor reserves are not contradictory policy, as it is often a political debate.

The strategy focuses primarily on third-country nationals, coming to Slovenia due to a temporary or more permanent work, for employment or self-employment reasons (economic migrant workers). For the purposes of attracting potential highly skilled workforce strategy Slovenia pays close attention to the foreigners who come to Slovenia for study, training and research. Public employment service is very active in promotion of work integration through the “info point”, offering information, free consultations as well as languages courses for migrant workers, including family members.

Slovenia is aware that to reach successful integration policies, it is very important to put additional emphasize to successful integration of youth in the school system. According to our educational legislation, migrant children in Slovenia have equal rights to primary*/secondary schooling as Slovene citizens. The successful school integration is namely the best guarantee for smooth transition in the labour market. In such a way the additional adequate skilled young persons might contribute to higher employment rate, decreasing skills mismatches and unfilled vacancies in certain sector.

In 2012 “Guidelines for inclusion of children with migrant background into kindergarten and schools” was adopted. The Guidelines define concrete recommendations adaptation for work

and cooperation with parents for faster inclusion into Slovene system of education and into the community.

Since 2013 programme “Successful inclusion of children with migrant background” is incorporated into the educational system. The mentioned programme includes training of teachers within 65 primary and secondary schools in Slovenia. Changes in existing legislation as regards the children with migrant background require organizing of Slovene language courses and culture by entering the primary school in duration of two years. With other words, all children without Slovene language as a mother tongue have a right to attend additional language courses.

There are many innovative programmes on local level developing, tackling with the challenges of migrant integration into the local environment.

I would like to conclude my intervention by example of successful community action; the primary school in Slovenia, supported by devoted teachers produced the film with the purpose of the Student Short Film Competition 2013.

The film was produced with the aim of making the voice of the children whose parents moved to Slovenia from different countries around the world heard. The children shared their experiences with a hope that their initial difficulties would be alleviated by a greater degree of positive acceptance of their difference. The thoughts expressed, though, show that it is not easy to integrate into a new environment. The students wanted to encourage the general public to help immigrants and their children in all countries around the world. With this film, the young filmmakers are giving away the message that it is the multiculturalism that enriches the world and contributes to a greater quality of life.

Last, but not the least, the mentioned film was awarded at the competition in 2013 under the auspices of the United Nations Information Service in Vienna and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Austria with the support of the Austrian Federal Ministry for Art, Culture and Education. This is one of small steps for hopefully bigger changes in understanding world and its diversity.

Thank you.