

## **Republic of Poland - Ministry of National Education and Sport**

### **Measures by the Ministry of National Education and Sport for the integration of migrants**

The minister of social policy bears primary responsibility within the government administration for the integration of migrants in Poland. The structure of the Ministry of Social Policy includes an Inter-Ministry Team for the Social Integration of Migrants, established on the basis of regulation No. 26 of the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of 9<sup>th</sup> March 2005. The Team is a subsidiary organ of the Prime Minister.

The relevant activity of the Ministry of National Education and Sport is of a supplementary character, conducted in support of other ministries engaged in various projects and initiatives designed to enhance the social integration of migrants.

The Ministry primarily focuses on ensuring that migrants residing in Poland have the possibility of education at all levels: in schools, other educational establishments and colleges.

Polish regulations envisage that children who do not hold Polish nationality but are covered by the schooling obligation have the right to free education in public primary and grammar schools – on the same conditions as Polish children.

If such persons do not know the Polish language, they are entitled to one year of additional, free learning of the Polish language. These additional Polish-language lessons are designed to facilitate the integration of the children of migrants with the school community, establishment of contacts with their classmates and problem-free education. The Ministry of National Education and Sport conducts qualification-enhancement courses for teachers involved in the tuition-free Polish-language classes for migrants.

Certain groups of migrants, including those granted permanent residence permits, persons granted refugee status in the Republic of Poland, migrants granted temporary protection, migrant workers from European Union and EFTA states (Iceland, Lichtenstein and Norway) and members of their families are entitled to:

- education in schools above the grammar-school level, teacher-training schools and other educational establishments,
- study and participate in scientific research in higher schools on the same terms as Polish nationals.

The latter means that they are also entitled to apply for financial assistance in the form of various scholarships, grants, subsidies and credits.

### **Polish education policy toward national and ethnic minorities**

Polish public schools of all levels hold classes in minority languages, as well as the history and culture of the native country, for pupils belonging to the Belarus, Lithuanian, Slovak and Ukrainian minorities.

Under regulations introduced in 1992, schools have also been established with classes in the Lemka language, and the Kashube language (which has the status of a regional language).

The systemic transformations - which led to changes in educational regulations, as well as bilateral agreements with neighbouring countries, resulted in the Nineties in a substantial growth of the number of educational establishments for national minorities and a rise in the number of their students.

The schools for national and ethnic minorities are treated as an integral part of the national system of education. However, the particular educational needs of those communities have necessitated the introduction of special regulations to ensure optimum fulfilment of the minority educational rights. These solutions address such issues as:

- definition of the types of schools with minority-language classes,
- principles of developing the school network,
- inclusion of minority-language classes in school curricula,
- inclusion in teaching schedules of classes in minority languages, and history and geography of the native country,
- principles of preparing and approving for school use of programs and textbooks, for teaching minority languages, as well as the history and geography of the native country,
- secondary school-leaving exams in minority languages, tests after primary school and exams after grammar school,
- principles of financing minority schools.

Units of territorial self-government which are responsible for public schools - upon the expressed wish of parents or older pupils - ensure the implementation of the educational rights of national and ethnic minorities in:

- kindergartens and schools with instruction in the minority language,
- bilingual kindergartens and schools,
- schools with additional classes in minority languages,
- interschool teaching groups.

Postulates of minority communities addressed to the organs responsible for schooling determine the form of teaching the minority language and the type of educational establishment that will be set up for the purpose.

The programmes and textbooks for the teaching of minority languages, as well as the history and geography of the native language, are written by persons representing the respective minorities (mainly school and academic teachers). The Ministry of Education determines the authors of the programmes and textbooks in collaboration with the minority organizations. Also, for the past several years, the Ministry has been buying up the full press runs of the textbooks for teaching minority languages, as well as the history and geography of the native country (also – textbooks for teaching other subjects in schools with instruction in minority languages and auxiliary books in minority languages) – and transfers them without charge to the schools.

The educational rights of Roma pupils are implemented differently. The Roma community in Poland has not yet indicated a need for Roma language classes in public schools. However, there is a need for enhancement of the educational chances of Roma pupils (some have poor knowledge of the Polish language) and their integration in the school community. That was the reason for launching in 2001 the *Pilot Government Programme for the Roma Community in Małopolskie Voivodship for the years 2001-2003*. Educational tasks constituted its basic component and their realization was seen as being crucial for attaining the primary goal of the programme – improvement of the social situation of the Roma. The Ministry of Education, involved in the programme, provided funds for Roma assistants, pre-school classes, skill-improvement classes in general subjects, ethnic identity-enhancement instruction and the purchase of textbooks and teaching aids for Roma pupils. The experience gained through the pilot programme served as the basis for elaborating a long-term *Government Programme for the Roma Community in Poland*, launched in January 2004. On 1<sup>st</sup> January 2003 increased subsidies (by 20 per cent or 100 per cent) were introduced for schools which organized additional classes designed to improve the educational chances of Roma pupils and to enhance their ethnic identity.

Cultural diversity is the foundation of the richness of the Polish culture, which in turn is an important component of the European cultural heritage. The Ministry of Education, seeking to preserve that heritage and stimulate the development of culture, provides subsidies to minority organizations devoted to protecting and disseminating minority traditions and culture. For many years now, funds have been made available for culture festivals and artistic events with the participation of children and youth, school competitions and presentations, methodological workshops for teachers and youth exchanges.

The support of the Ministry is also an expression of approval for the initiatives of minority communities, in which the school remains a culture-stimulating institution, integrating the locals around values that also enrich the cultural heritage of all mankind.