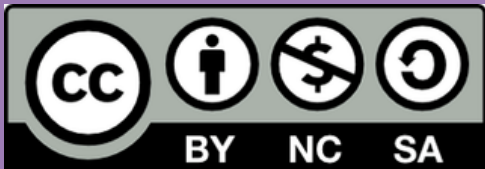


## **MODEL OF WORKING WITH A PUPIL RETURNING FROM ABROAD TO THE NATIVE EDUCATION SYSTEM**

*School Adaptability*

as a key to develop a child's potential



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# *School Adaptability*

as a key to develop a child's potential

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# Introduction

The Model of Working with a Pupil Returning from Abroad to the Native Education System is an inclusive educational model to facilitate the challenging experience of migration - adaptation process of children (6-14 years old), support inclusive school communities for all students and create an effective teaching and learning environment.

It contains a description of working steps that will help a pupil who returns to the home education system or comes there for the first time after having attended school in another country. It covers all the stages from making the decision of moving abroad to the first few months of transitioning to a new school. The addressees of the model are principles, school personnel, teachers, tutors, psychologists.

The Model of Working with a Pupil Returning from Abroad to the Native Education System will be replicable to ensure future usability in different school systems, communities and countries struggling with diversity in their student population.

The Model is the original work of the authors and is largely based on hands-on experience, best practises applied in education, as well as theoretical background presented in the first chapter. The Model presents all the stages, which should ideally be looked at in the adaptation process of a new pupil. Nonetheless, if some of the stages cannot be implemented in the suggested sequences, or some of the roles and activities cannot be executed, it should be individually customised and adapted to each school reality.

# Chapter 1

## CHARACTERISTICS OF A PUPIL RETURNING FROM ABROAD TO THE NATIVE EDUCATION SYSTEM

This Chapter focuses on the characteristics of a pupil returning from abroad to the home education system. Specialists and professionals in the field of education are responsible for supporting school-aged children in adapting to the native education system; taking into account their psychological, sociological, pedagogical conditioning, as well as any problems they may experience on their return from abroad. More specifically, the below paragraphs focus the attention on the successful structural educational integration and arrangements of those children, while highlighting social and cultural dimensions, educational experiences and performance.





Some professionals (Luca, Foca, Gulei and Brebuleț, 2012, cited in Ciomaga, 2019) who run focus groups in Romania with specialists in the field of education, such as school counsellors and teachers, concluded that the reintegration process of their returned migrant children was based on individual interventions and expertise of teachers, rather than an inclusive institutional strategy, educational knowledge or resources provided for the children's smooth and effective readaptation. This is to understand that, to be reintegrated into the home country and the native education system, many factors must be taken into account.

To be more specific: the reintegration context of the home country and the differences and similarities between the destination and the home countries (concerning education, economy, the leaving standard, social interactions and relationships, etc.); the duration of which children were abroad and the experiences gained, as well as their personal expectations and goals (Dustmann, 2003, cited in Catalano, 2016). In other words, education specialists can go through this introductory Chapter to explore and understand how the migration process can affect remigrant children in psychological, sociological and pedagogical levels, and be able to identify children's conditioning when it comes to interpersonal difficulties, depression, anxiety, etc (Catalano, 2016).



# 1.1

## PUPILS RETURNING FROM ABROAD TO THE NATIVE EDUCATION SYSTEM - THE SIZE OF THE PHENOMENON

Pupils returning from abroad to the native education system tend to become familiar with the lifestyle and learning systems of the host country and with this in mind, their return to their home country appears to be challenging. As investigated by Ciomaga (2019) who focused attention on the profile and characteristics of returning children, explained that children tend to have low levels of self-confidence, medium to high levels of anxiety and fear, lack of trust in their social relationships and interactions with adults, lack of interest in building in their peer relationships, low educational expectations, etc. Focusing more on the long-term effects, teachers and school specialists should pay more attention to children's personalities when returning from abroad to restart their education in the native education system. For instance, they need to define those factors that may affect their readaptation, identify any mental and/or physical disorders and learning difficulties, get to understand their feelings and emotions, define their strengths and weaknesses and adjust their curriculum accordingly (Catalano, 2016).

A more recent study, that took place in the Vrancea County School Inspectorate in Romania, indicated that in 2016, 1210 children between the age of 6-7 years old coming from abroad re-enrolled in the country's education system: representing 2.52% of the total school population of the country (Ciomaga, 2019). Another researcher, Brebulet, studied international statistics in 2018 to estimate that Romanian pupils who left the hosting country to come back to Romania, reached a total of 150,000 to 180,000 pupils between 2008 and 2015 (Ciomaga, 2019). As stated by the author Banton (2001), the educational experience is the key to structural integration (Vathi, Duci and Dhembo, 2016), especially when ensuring the cultural and social integration of returning children and as supported by the International Organisation for Migration (2020), the reintegration process can be considered successful and sustainable when we can observe high levels of psychological and social well-being of returnees.





The authors elaborate on this by stating that the educational arrangements for the smooth transition of returning migrant children to the homeland, and especially to the educational system differ across Europe. Such factors rely on the face-to-face relationships and contact children have with their teachers, the school duration, as well as the support they receive outside and inside the school. Crul and Schneider (2010) focused their observations on the comparative integration context theory, which explains that various differences regarding institutional arrangements within national contexts can affect the effective integration of children (Vathi, Duci and Dhembo, 2016). Speaking of European integration, it is important to understand that the European Union experienced major crises over the years, especially around 1990, affecting the integration projects around European countries, creating conflicts among the member state governments (Schimmelfennig, 2018).

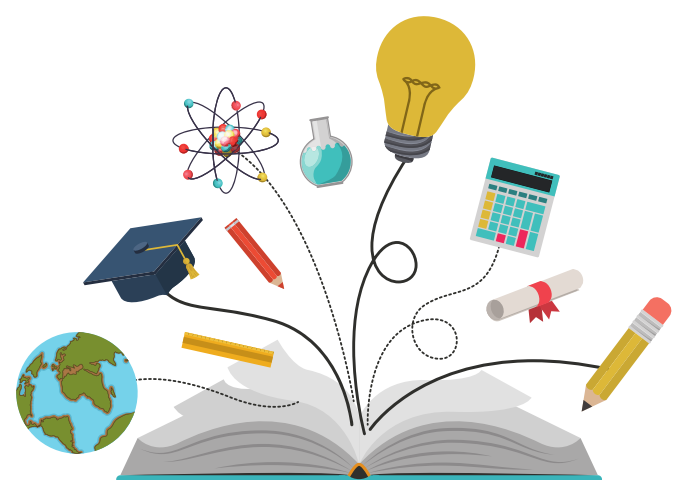
With regards to national contexts, the European Commission (2018) reported on the education and training conditioning in Cyprus. It was reported that there was a need for a more inclusive education with regards to students with migrant backgrounds and, therefore, the focus was on reforming special needs education. With this in mind, five priorities were defined for the successful integration of the students starting and continuing their education in Cyprus, such as to learn the Greek language. These priorities were focused also on school personnel needs, and more specifically, on teachers' continuing personal and academic development which would better prepare them in welcoming new students in their classrooms. Being able to understand and analyse students' needs and develop an appropriate and relevant curriculum for a more intercultural approach were also identified by the European Commission. As per the Statistical Service of the Republic of Cyprus in March 2021, 12154 boys and girls from various EU countries have entered the public and private schools in Cyprus, while 6131 students were identified as having arrived from third countries. Further to that, a report on the education of migrant children, that was developed in 2015 by RAND Europe, estimated that 10% of the EU population, of which 5% are children under 15 years old, were residing in a different country from where they were born. According to Tromans et al. (2009), the migrant status of a child is determined by country of citizenship or country of birth.



Since migrant families and their children can move freely within EU Member States, the migrant population in Cyprus, for example, is 61%, 83% in Slovakia, etc. Based on Eurostat (2021), the statistical analysis of emigrants under the age of 15 in their country of next usual residence in 2019 indicated 17300 emigrants in Spain, 16888 in Italy, 17694 in Poland, while there is no data available for Cyprus. As per the total population reported also in 2019, 155673 of emigrants were found in Spain, 114812 in Italy, 8709 in Cyprus, and 138405 in Poland. An emigrant, according to Eurostat definition (p.1) is “a person undertaking an emigration”, and emigration is “the action by which a person, having previously been usually resident in the territory of a Member State, ceases to have his or her usual residence in that Member State for a period that is, or is expected to be, of at least 12 months”. Concerning the immigration data by EU countries of previous residency, it is indicated that 18927 immigrants of less than 15 years old were found in Spain, 10145 in Italy, 672 in Cyprus and 48006 in Poland.

Additional data from the Statistical Service (2021) also refer to the children who came from schools abroad to enrol in the native education system for the first time. To be more specific, 242 children, of 5-14 years of age, enrolled in private schools, while 497 of them of ages 6-14 enrolled in public schools. The type of public schools and teaching languages the pupils are attending are Greek and Armenia, based on the last update on March 2021. As per the private sector, the schools and teaching languages are English, Greek, Russian and French. Moreover, the additional languages children are taught except the teaching language of private and public schools are Greek, English, French, Armenian, Russian, German, Spanish, Italian and Turkish. In addition to these, the authors Vathi, Duci and Dhembo (2016) elaborated on Durkheim, a sociologist who supported that language is firstly a social thing and therefore, it can be a great barrier when it comes to educational performance and knowledge development.

A recent research project (2019) focusing on the challenges returning migrant children experience in the school environment in Poland, introduces the importance of return migration with regards to the developmental transition. At this point, it is significant to understand that children, and especially those who return to their homeland, are very sensitive to changes, as they need to become familiar with new experiences and environments. According to the authors Szydłowska, Durlik and Grzymala-Moszczyńska (2019), the problem in the Polish educational system is the lack of data concerning the number of children returning from abroad to Poland, but it is though certain that the phenomenon is growing. They focused their analysis on the (Un)easy return home project which was aiming to identify concrete educational needs of those children in Polish schools and develop strategies for teachers in order to be able to support their students in their readaptation.



With this in mind, the authors implemented qualitative research for better understanding the challenges and experiences of returnees on their integration into the schooling environment.

To have a more comprehensive picture of this, they interviewed 34 children attending primary and secondary education (between 6/7 to 12/13 years old, including teenagers), 25 teachers and 27 parents. Children stayed in the receiving countries UK, Italy, Belgium, Germany, Switzerland, USA, the Netherlands, Spain, Hungary, Ireland and Norway for approximately 6.5 years and returned to Poland 2 years before the conduction of the research. The main conclusions of this research indicated that children lacked language skills and had limited knowledge about the cultural context and norms of the country and the educational system. Some of the children mentioned experiencing anger or sadness, due to the negative assessment/critics of their teachers (i.e., low marks). They also showed low self-esteem levels, low competence and passive attitudes. On the contrary, those children who received quality support from their teachers and peers and felt welcomed in their schooling environment appeared to adapt better and faster within the educational system.



Some key factors that played an important role in their smooth reintegration according to the authors are the proactiveness of the teachers and their positive and supportive attitude, their professionalism and sensitivity, and up-to-date knowledge. With this intention, the authors provided some practical recommendations for remigrant children's adaptation into the schooling system, such as the share of knowledge among existing and migrant children regarding school rules, the diagnosis of children's reading skills, strengths, talents and interests, constant communication with parents, exchange of personal experiences in the receiving countries, etc.

This is to understand that the adaptation of those children becomes a teacher's responsibility, rather than their parents only, as they tend to have a leading role in the formation of children's school life and well-being (Langa and Dumitru, 2016).



## 1.2

# PSYCHOLOGICAL CONDITIONING OF PUPILS RETURNING FROM ABROAD TO THE NATIVE EDUCATION SYSTEM

To elaborate on the above, the psychological conditioning of the children returning from abroad to the native education system depends on a great level on the educational life and challenges they were experiencing in the receiving country and their homeland upon their return, as well as any socio-cultural and emotional challenges they may face during their transition (Szydłowska, Durlik & Grzymala-Moszczyńska, 2019). Teachers welcoming and integrating children into the native educational system need to take into account some key factors that might have affected or may affect children's psychology and well-being during their transition. For example, their psychological needs such as self-esteem and anxiety, knowledge of cultural context and lifestyle of the return country, engagement, etc. (Szydłowska, Durlik & Grzymala-Moszczyńska, 2019).

According to the authors Lu and Zhang (2016), “the healthy migrant effect generally refers to better health of “migrants” (Stawarz et al., p.207). The IOM UN Migration (2016) supports that returning home can be harder than leaving, explaining that children who spent long periods abroad tend to experience difficulties in readapting into the home country, due to the fact that they have to reshape their social and educational lives, rebuild their sense of belonging and overcome discriminatory behaviours. Ciomaga's (2019) quantitative research under the Romanian framework focused the scope on the effects return migration causes in educational behaviour, based on children's and teachers' perceptions. The research indicated that children were skipping their classes and some of them even left school, some others had low academic performance and involvement in activities outside the school, and they developed fewer competencies and skills than expected by their teachers. Based on these, the authors Szydłowska, Durlik and Grzymala-Moszczyńska (2019) elaborated their research at a Polish school by collecting experiences and statements of interviewed children in order to find out how effective their induction was.



Briefly analysed, the children that took part in the research mentioned that they were experiencing emotions of fear during their first days at the Polish school, stating that most of the teachers were not aware of their return, having both, the teacher and the students lost concerning their reintegration. To highlight some examples, a 15 years old boy returning from Germany mentioned (Szydłowska, Durlik and Grzymala-Moszczyńska, 2019, p. 179):

*“I mean, there was loads of stress, it was just as I had expected before; the stress was even greater because I had to go to the opening day alone and the first few weeks, the first month I had to cope on my own”.*

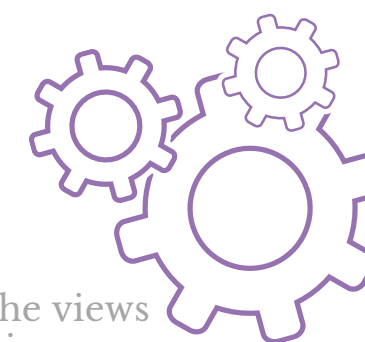
The above is to explain that such barriers can become a great challenge for returnees in evolving their learning capabilities and developing new relationships with peers.

For example, they were not able to understand Polish poetry, speak the language or read handbooks and this can be linked with a lack of support from their teachers which as stated by a mother of her 11 years old boy coming from the UK in regards to his teachers, “...they did not consider that he was not able to copy something quickly” (Szydłowska, Durlik and Grzymala-Moszczyńska, 2019, p.181). Also, the differences in school programs and content created a lot of stress and difficulties, especially when they were about to take their final exams. In addition to this, Delina, a 12 years old girl from Albania who returned from Greece and had to describe her life in one of her assignments mentioned (Vathi, Duci and Dhembo, 2016, p. 11):

*“I had a fight with my teacher because one of the assignments was a small story on our life, experiences and impressions...[...] and I described Greece and wrote that Greece is more beautiful than Albania... And she told me ‘no, you will not write about this. You will write about Albania”.*

For Curtis, Thompson and Fairbrother (2018), migration in Europe has been defined as “global migration magnet”, a phenomenon that continues growing. Therefore, Ciomaga (2019) concluded the research results perceived by the children and the teachers and suggested school activities which teachers can implement to improve the mental health and well-being of the returned children, as well as their educational integration and development. She suggested the development of a linguistic system and accessional classes on school subjects and activities (i.e., cultural, extracurricular, etc.) and life-based learning experiences and group activities between the returned children and their peers. She also emphasized the integration of psychotherapy and counselling sessions for students and their parents, which as practices promoted within the school, can reduce children’s anxiety and improve their self-esteem. She proceeded with additional suggestions on the activities which can improve institutional development and the reintegration of return children such as the reform of the curriculum, the integration of effective evaluation tools and methods, as well as the provision of training for teachers and the schooling staff on how to successfully reintegrate the students who return to their native education system.

As for the tools and practices teachers and the schooling staff can develop to support their smooth reintegration, the author suggested two separated school Handbooks, one for the teachers and one for the return children, the promotion of optional courses and counselling worksheets, as well as informative documents and intellectual materials for children and teachers on the educational and social effects of return migration. To conclude on the psychological conditioning affecting the children returning from abroad to the native education system, it is crucial to understand that not only teachers but also return children themselves need to be informed about the psychological difficulties and consequences they may face upon their arrival to their home country, starting from a comprehensive knowledge on such matters and concise and inclusive procedures in relation with children’s reintegration. For instance, such psychological challenges rely on limited involvement and lack of interest in extracurricular activities, limited engagement and low motivation, communication difficulties, anxiety, etc.



# 1.3

## SOCIOLOGICAL CONDITIONING OF PUPILS RETURNING FROM ABROAD TO THE NATIVE EDUCATION SYSTEM

The International Organisation of Migration (2011, p. 13) defines reintegration “as the re-inclusion or re-incorporation of a person into a group or process, ... of a migrant into the society of his or her country of origin or habitual residence ... enables the returnee to participate again in the social, cultural, economic and political life of his or her country of origin”. To ensure the effective social reintegration of return children in their homeland and native education system, the schooling staff need to focus on inclusive strategies (i.e., group reintegration projects) in order to “enrich” the social relations of those children who lack social networking upon their arrival in their country of origin. Through such strategies, return children can share experiences with their peers and feel more socially included in the schooling environment (International Organisation of Migration, 2011).

With this intention, teachers must consider returnees’ well-being at macro and micro levels, focusing the attention on the development of an inclusive educational framework, and on family and personal factors that can positively or negatively affect the sociological conditioning of the children (Gulei, 2015). According to this, it has been stated that those returning children reintegrating into a new social environment go through a stressful period as they need to cope with new relationships and positive interactions (Measure & Savidan, 2006, cited in Gulei, 2015, p. 145). In such a case, the socio-economic condition of returning children and their families play a significant role in their smooth reintegration into the native education system. This phenomenon indicates differences in socio-cultural frameworks among the receiving and the returning country such as returning children's attitudes, lifestyle, educational level and grading systems, living standards, family relationships, student-teacher relationships, as well as student-student relationships, etc.

As stated (Catalano, 2014, cited 2018):

*"The remigration term supposes the migrant's returning to his/her home country after a temporary migration. The consequences of this phenomenon are visible in multiple fields: education, psychology of development, family psycho-sociology, social work and protection etc."*

Therefore, children return to their homeland and reintegrate into the education system due to parenting remigration. In such a case, parents are experiencing social, cultural and/or financial challenges and for these reasons, it is very likely that they and their children may face discriminatory behaviours upon their return. Among other factors, the lack of acceptance by their peers and social participation in school groups, the learning difficulties, the changes in the curriculum can lead to various socio-emotional problems (Catalano, 2018). Vygotsky (1958, cited in Gulei, 2015) mentioned that social interactions play a major role in the cognitive and cultural development of a child, at social and individual levels.

The quality of social interactions and relations among the return children and their peers can negatively or positively affect their social identity and resilience. The lack of attention and social support from peers and teachers challenges the return children in developing their personalities and social image, as they lack knowledge of the norms and rules of the school and the society in general, especially when they lived abroad for a long period of time. This is why teachers welcoming the return children in the school need to be sensitive towards such aspects and keep regular communication with the school management and children's parents.





The results of the study that took place in a Polish school, as indicated above (Szydłowska et al, 2019), concluded that those children who had support from their peers and teachers could easily be part of a group, felt self-worth and managed to overcome challenges efficiently. However, other return children mentioned that they experienced at a great level the criticism of their teachers who were unaware of the difficulties and challenges they were going through, having the children experiencing low self-esteem and struggling to meet satisfied competence levels. They mentioned that they took some time to make friends and they felt lonely and abandoned due to the fact that they were not familiar with the cultural characteristics of the country and the spoken language. Jurek (2019) supported that, children with language imperfections feeling unable to cope with the writing and reading in the classroom, they were feeling ashamed in the presence of their peers.

In addition to the above paragraph, the authors (Jurek, 2019) recommended a list of practices suggested for the successful adaptation of the return children within new environments. To be more specific, they supported that, teachers must ensure that the return students meet with the rest of the classroom students on their first day at school and introduce themselves to their peers during the reintegration process. Moreover, school students can warmly welcome the return children by preparing a school map to show them around and make them feel more comfortable in their new environment. The authors also suggest teachers be proactive in regards to new children's needs and prepare interactive workshops in order to increase intercultural awareness and sensitivity among the new children and their peers, and develop the feeling of empathy. This is proven to decrease discriminatory behaviours towards the children who return to their home education system and create better and stronger relationships with their peers. During the implementation of such practices, the return children can gain information about the school rules (i.e., dress code, behaviour and communication with their classmates and teachers, etc.) and share experiences they lived abroad (i.e., spoken language, culture, food, etc.).



Regardless of the above, teachers must also make sure that they assess their new students' needs, strengths and weaknesses by keeping regular communication with their parents prior and during their participation in schools, as well as keep observing their behaviours and relationships with their peers on a daily basis in order to control any unexpected reactions that may arise at individual and group levels. This method will help teachers identifying their return students' talents and passions and their positive or negative responsiveness in various classes and tasks. According to this, teachers must provide clear instructions and directly ask the children in person if they understood their lesson and tasks properly or there is a need to be readjusted for matching their skills and needs, without making them feel ashamed or uncomfortable in front of their peers. A proper statement by a teacher on the difficulties he/she observed concerning the integration of a boy coming from Spain is (Jurek, 2019, p.181):

*“Of course, it is all because of the educational, program differences. I mostly teach history and I can see that the boy needed to catch up a lot. And I can see that his situation is difficult because the program differences are not only here, not only in history”.*



# 1.4

## PEDAGOGICAL CONDITIONING OF PUPILS RETURNING FROM ABROAD TO THE NATIVE EDUCATION SYSTEM

In addition to the psychological and sociological state of a pupil that returns from abroad to the native education system, it is of vital importance to take into consideration the pedagogical conditioning of that pupil in order to understand the state of those students and help them in their adaptation process. For reference, the term pedagogy refers to the methods, styles and practices of teaching, as well as teaching theories. The pedagogical approaches and practices that a teacher may choose, are and should be influenced by the individual needs of the students. The conditions that could be examined might include differences in the school curriculum, the way the new education system is functioning, the students' educational needs and the overall adaptation to a different educational approach. The above mentioned pedagogical conditions will be examined below.

To begin with, education systems vary across Europe. Education in European countries is categorised into three main models: single structure, common core curriculum and differentiated lower secondary education (Eurydice, 2018). Single structure education refers to the compulsory schooling system which is provided from beginning to end without any transition as is the case in Finland, Sweden and Poland. Common core curriculum provision refers to the progression to lower secondary level education once primary education is completed like the current system in Spain, Italy and Cyprus. In regard to the differentiated lower secondary system, students can follow different pathways in secondary education and respectively gain different certifications as is the case in Germany. Since there are variations in the education systems across the world, there are inevitably differences in the curriculum and syllabus in each country and it is therefore vital to clarify the demands and differences of the new education system to new students joining the school as this will help them adapt smoothly to different academic approaches. Although the pupils we are focusing on are repatriated, they still need to deal with and learn a new set of norms since it is like they are foreigners in their own country and home (Gambhir & Rhein, 2021).

For example, asking questions to the teacher might seem like the pupil is incompetent in one educational setting, whereas it might seem as the student is engaged to the lesson in another setting. Completing exercises in a book might seem unacceptable in one country but a usual classroom routine in another. During this transition, pupils abandon their familiar educational experiences, and have to familiarise themselves with new settings and a new educational context.

Furthermore, students need to feel they belong in the new school environment, and that they are part of the processes and culture of the school in order to adapt faster. The teacher's role is considered an integral part for the successful adaptation of students offering emotional and instructional support and classroom organisation (Luckner & Pianta, 2011). Teachers play an important part of the student's overall school experience, even influencing their behaviour with the way they support them and set their expectations. Teachers also focus on teaching values and beliefs as well as assessing the students' prior competencies and learning challenges.

Their pedagogical teaching practices, shape the way these pupils will integrate into the school culture and research shows that interpersonal relationships between teachers and students, based on mutual trust and support prevent student alienation and is a fundamental part of the adaptation process (Mahmoudi et al., 2018). Teachers firstly believe that a student-centred approach and activities based on cooperative learning can help integration and the learning process for the whole class and secondly, employ an inclusive approach for meeting each student's educational needs. It is very important to understand that integration is an active process that involves not only the pupil that is coming back to the native education system but also their classmates and the teacher. According to Biasutti (2020), teachers have to promote inclusive attitudes in the class and students have to learn to accept and negotiate cultural differences in a climate of mutual respect. Educators should also consider the students' cognitive, emotional, and linguistic skills, to promote children's well-being. They are interrelated because critical thinking is necessary for developing emotional awareness, and personal emotional states may be expressed and shared through verbal and non-verbal communication.

Since European countries have had a shift in population in the last decades, the number of migrants and repatriated families has increased in most European states. As a result, educational systems have been exploring ways of making education more inclusive, meeting the individual needs of each student and facing challenges that arise along the way. There is a need for constant in-depth communication between the school administration, personnel, students and parents to help in the adaptation process of the students to help them deal with the changes and demands of the new school culture whilst respecting the needs of the student (Gresu et al, 2019). Teachers believe that learning is most successful when they adopt learning-by-doing methods and practical activities linked to children's daily experiences, using inclusive class activities and resources (Hedegaard 2006). Therefore, in-classroom differentiation should be applied to meet all the needs of the students and help to fill any educational gaps arising from the change of schools and curriculum. It is crucial that all students must be involved and not only the pupils that have returned home in order to enable the whole class to engage fully with processes of educational inclusion (Biasutti, 2020).

Overall, although there is little current research addressing the adaptation of pupils returning from abroad to their native education system, it is nevertheless a critical area worth exploring since it can only prove beneficial for the pupils as well as the educators. Pupils need to adjust socially, psychologically as well as pedagogically to the new school environment, dealing with new rules and regulations, new classmates, new academic subjects (Fisher et al, 1984). The literature emphasises that schools are the primary environment in which all children can develop critical thinking and teachers should promote the emotional skills of the whole classroom 'for developing empathy and a sense of solidarity' among children.



## 1.5

# PROBLEMS OF PUPILS RETURNING FROM ABROAD TO THE NATIVE EDUCATION SYSTEM

The experience of adaptation represents a significant psychological and emotional event with strong impacts both on children and their parents. Upon the return back home, pupils not only bring with them the marks of their immigration journey (which can be an appalling experience),

), but they have also to learn about, and adapt to a new education system, social and cultural environment resulting in a number of problems and difficulties arising.



Several stressors that affect the daily lives of students return at home from a different country, are social and judicial pressure and prejudices and discrimination among children in school. Another stressful aspect is the disappointment that may arise for migrant people when they are comparing their previous expectations of their new lives (often unrealistically high) with reality in the country of arrival (Rogers-Sirin, Ryce, and Sirin, 2014). Although the pupils return to their native educational system, they still need to adjust and conform to a new lifestyle, make new acquaintances, learn new rules and regulations and begin new academic subjects, which are factors that could cause pressure to the pupil (Fisher et al, 1984). When repatriated, they still have to adopt the new norms that they have not learnt yet, as well as new demands regarding behaviour expectations, orientations and competences (Gambhir & Rhein, 2021).



Another problem that students might face is school alienation which can cause serious educational problems with negative consequences to the students' progress, like school failure and limited class participation (Frey, Ruchkin, Martin, & Schwab-Stone, 2009; Hascher & Hadjar, 2018), as students might not feel the need for education nor understand the purpose of learning (Newmann, Wehlage, & Lamborn, 1992). In such a case, pupils might show oppositional behaviour at school endangering their educational success (Grecu et al, 2019).

From the field work undertaken by all partners, it has been shown that pupils who have returned from abroad to their home education system can still have issues with language. The most visible difficulty faced by these students is their lack of proficiency in the native language. That is because the students might have left the country very young with minimal opportunities to use the language and even if they spoke the language at home, their written work might suffer and they might not be at the same level as other pupils of their age.

Pupils might not be able to understand colloquial language used in everyday life and other specific regional terms. Language issues can also affect their social interactions and cultural integration as it limits both their learning capabilities and the process of building relationships with peers (Szydłowska et al, 2019). Some pupils faced discrimination because of their insufficient language fluency. Ni Laoire's (2011) research, shows that even the pronunciation of some children and other behavioural aspects were reasons to be mocked by their schoolmates.

Another area of concern which arose from the field work is academic and refers to the curriculum which differentiates from country to country. As a result, pupils might have missed subjects when they change countries and might not feel competent enough in certain subjects as there might be a gap in the syllabus. This is especially evident in history and religious education classes.

Pupils also face identity issues, since they have to reintegrate to the society which they left, and because of their young age in most occasions it is like they are foreigners and they experience a cultural shock depending on whether the parents had maintained close contacts with their country of origin or not. In regards to culture, daily habits need to be relearnt and altered to meet the context of the native country, as eating habits, greeting ways, functioning in a group, certain hobbies and activities, dress code, standards of work, amount of homework, ways of studying, grading system, student-teacher relations etc. are done in different ways in each country and therefore the demands are different. Pupils might feel homesick and even angry to change countries as they will need time to understand why they have left and feel the sense of belonging. It has been noted that pupils were excluded from their peers because they were not familiar with local customs (Szydłowska et al, 2019).

Additionally, there are other problems that need to be addressed and taken into consideration when dealing with pupils who have returned to their native country.

For example, the financial situation of the parents, since the child can benefit from extra classes to catch up only if the parents can afford it. Also, entering school when the teacher has not been informed that a new student would join the class could cause issues and the feeling of being lost (Szydłowska et al, 2019). What is more, the behaviour of other pupils towards students who have returned back can influence the adaptation if they are not friendly enough.

In conclusion, there are many variables that need to be taken into consideration when dealing with students returning back to their native country and education system. Students, educators and parents need to be aware of the problems that might arise and possible solutions to better deal with these students and aid in the adaptation process in order for it to be smooth and rapid. Limited relationships with peers, educational objectives that are not student-centred and do not meet the pupils' needs and an absence of adult guidance and communication can lead to the failure of adaptation.

## Chapter 2

### DESCRIPTION OF THE MODEL OF WORKING WITH A PUPIL RETURNING FROM ABROAD TO THE NATIVE EDUCATION SYSTEM

This chapter includes a detailed description of the Model of Working with a Pupil Returning from Abroad to the Native Education System. The proposed Model comprehensively covers the activities from the moment parents decide to return to the home country, until the full adaptation of the pupil in the new school. The aim of this Model is to guide the child and his parents effectively and satisfactorily through the process of changing the place of residence and the educational institution, taking into account the psychological, pedagogical, sociological and cultural context. It should be highlighted that parents play a crucial role in the process of adaptation of the child, and, as much as possible, they should be supported in this task (through psychoeducation, meetings, extra trainings, psychological support, etc.).



## 2.1

# STAGES OF THE MODEL OF WORKING WITH A PUPIL RETURNING FROM ABROAD TO THE NATIVE EDUCATION SYSTEM

The model consists of two main parts divided into several stages:

(1) the actions of the parents before returning to their home country;

and

(2) a series of actions of the school and the parents from the first contact with the school after returning to home country, until the full adaptation of the pupil to the new school environment.

The diagram below shows the individual stages of the Model:



## STEP 1

### Preparing the child for the awaiting change.

The tasks of parents:

- talking to their child about returning to the home country
- informing the child's current school about the decision to return to the home country
- choosing a new school for the child in the home country
- contacting the selected school and collecting information from its management regarding the formalities related to the change of school
- completing the formalities in the child's current school
- enabling the child to say goodbye to the classmates and teachers from the foreign school

### Who is involved in the implementation of this step?

- parents
- head teachers at schools that parents consider for their child
- head teacher at the selected school in the home country
- the head teacher and teaching staff of the child's current school



## STEP 2

**Familiarizing parents with the specificity of the school and to completing the necessary formalities related to enrolling a child in a given school.**

The tasks of the school head teacher:

- getting to know the family and their needs and expectations
- familiarising the parents with the school operation principles and internal documents regulating the activities of the institution
  - providing the parents with a welcome package
  - establishing the rules of contact with the school
- Discussion of the next steps of introducing the child to school
- involving the parents in the completion of the Questionnaire of a Pupil Returning from Abroad to the Native Education System part I
  - informing parents about the possibilities of obtaining optional support from other institutions
- making the decision to admit the pupil to a particular class and informing the parents about the head teacher's decision
  - appointing a remigrant family assistant as a coordinator of the Model implementation

**Who is involved in the implementation of this step?**

- parents
- head teacher at the selected school in the home country

## STEP 3

**A meeting between parents and the school pedagogist / psychologist and the remigrant family assistant.**

Informing the parents:

- (1) how to support the child,
- (2) what to talk to the child about before going to school and after returning from school, especially on the first day of school
- (3) how to react to difficulties that may occur.

**Who is involved in the implementation of this step?**

- parents
- school psychologist / pedagogist
- reemigrant family assistant

## STEP 4

Preparing the class for the admission of a new pupil and appointing a classmate-guardian.

**Who is involved in the implementation of this step?**

- the class teacher of the class the new pupil is joining
- school
- psychologist/pedagogist
- migrant family assistant
- classmate-guardian

## STEP 5

**Developing part I of the Individual Plan of the Adaptation of a Pupil (IPAP)**

The plan should contain:

- specific proposals of activities along with an indication of the people responsible for their implementation

**Who is involved in the implementation of this step?**

- parents
- school head teacher
- class teacher of the class the new pupil is joining
- school psychologist/ pedagogist
- remigrant family assistant

## STEP 6

### Visiting the school by the pupil and his/her parents.

The aim of this step:

- building a sense of security and familiarity with the topography of the new school building
- meeting the class teacher, school head teacher and the classmate-guardian by the pupil

### Who is involved in the implementation of this step?

- parents
- class teacher of the class the new pupil is joining
- classmate-guardian



## STEP 7

### Preparing teachers for the admission of a new pupil.

The following actions should be taken:

- teacher training on the process of pupil adaptation
- familiarising teachers with the Individual Plan of the Adaptation of a Pupil
- discussing the principles of evaluating the child's scientific achievements
  - analysis of the pupil's learning outcomes to date at a foreign school
- familiarizing teachers with the educational system of the country the pupil arrived from

### Who is involved in the implementation of this step?

- school head teacher
- the class teacher of the class the new pupil is joining
  - subject teachers of the class hosting the pupil
  - school psychologist/pedagogue
  - remigrant family assistant.

## STEP 8

### The first day of the pupil in the new class.

### Who is involved in the implementation of this step?

- parents
- the class teacher of the class hosting the pupil
- subject teachers of the class hosting the pupil

## STEP 9

**Supporting the child in the process of their adaptation in the new school in the social and emotional aspects.**

The following actions should be taken:

- carrying out form periods
- implementation of the project method and group work in individual lessons
- providing individual support to the pupil during their stay at school by school specialists, the class teacher, subject teachers and remigrant family assistant
- supporting the child and cooperating with the school by parents
- regular meetings between parents, remigrant family assistant, class teacher and subject teachers

**Who is involved in the implementation of this step?**

- the class teacher of the class hosting the pupil
- subject teachers of the class hosting the pupil
  - school psychologist/pedagogue
  - remigrant family assistant
  - parents.

## STEP 10

**Supporting the pupil's cognitive functioning and assisting them in fulfilling their academic duties.**

The following actions should be taken:

- observation of the pupil's work during lessons and evaluating their school achievements
- this evaluation should serve as the basis for the development of part II of the Individual Plan of the Adaptation of a Pupil (IPAP)
- presenting the IPAP to the pupil's parents and thoroughly discussing it with them

**Who is involved in the implementation of this step?**

- the class teacher of the class hosting the pupil
- subject teachers of the class hosting the pupil
  - remigrant family assistant
  - school head teacher
  - parents.

## STEP 11

**Evaluation of the actions taken to support the pupil in his/her adaptation process after returning to his or her home country.**



## PARENTS' ACTIONS BEFORE RETURNING TO THEIR HOME COUNTRY

### STEP 1

In the first stage of the process of adapting a pupil in a new school, appropriate actions are taken by parents, while the child is still attending a school abroad or when the parents have made a decision after their return and the child is going to start education at a school in the home country. The main goal is to properly prepare the child for the awaiting change (school, place of residence).

At this stage, the parents' task is to:

- Talk to their child about returning to the home country - parents should be honest with the child, tell them what is going to happen and what awaits the child in the near future. The conversation should be calm, giving the child a sense of security. You should also answer to all questions and address all anxieties your child may have. At this stage, parents may benefit from the support of a psychologist, pedagogist or teachers at the child's current school.

The parent should be aware that, e.g. sadness and anger are natural emotions for a child. It is important to accept them, talk about them and give the child time to experience them (these emotions should not be ignored or denied and parents should not convince the child that it is different than he/she feels).



- Informing the child's current school about the decision to return to the home country - the school the child attends can be a great support for the family at this initial stage of the adaptation process. Teachers should know about the decision to return in order to be able to support the child and respond to his/her needs and concerns that they may express.
- Tell the child that he/she will be able to keep in touch with his/her friends through the network.
- Choosing a new school for the child in the home country - parents should, if such an option is available, carefully analyse schools in the vicinity of their future place of residence and choose the one that best suits their child's expectations and needs. To this end, they should analyse the schools' offer (website, opinions about the school, etc.) and contact the school management.
- They should contact the selected school and collect information from its management regarding the formalities related to the change of school or enrolment of the child in the selected school - parents should be ready to meet the formal and legal requirements related to the change of school. They should take care of the relevant documents from the previous school abroad, which will be requested by the head teacher at the selected school in the home country.

- Completing the formalities in the child's current school - parents should receive relevant documents on the course of their child's education so far and complete all formalities related to the completion of education at a foreign school.
- The child should have a chance to say goodbye to classmates and teachers from the foreign school - proper closure of the previous stage of education is important in the process of adaptation to a new school. The child should say goodbye to their friends and teachers - draw the line to be able to enter into new relations with a sense of peace and conviction that something ends and something begins.

**At this stage of the Model implementation, the following parties are involved:**

- Parents
- Head teachers at schools that parents consider for their child
- Head teacher at the selected school in the home country
- The head teacher and teaching staff of the child's current school.

## 2.3

# ACTIONS UNDERTAKEN BY PARENTS AND SCHOOL AFTER RETURNING TO THE HOME COUNTRY

## STEP 2

The first step after returning to the home country should be a meeting between the parents and the head teacher at the school that their child is going to attend. The main goal is to familiarize parents with the specificity of the school and to complete the necessary formalities related to enrolling a child in a given school.

### The tasks of the school head teacher:

- Getting to know the family and their needs and expectations.
- Familiarising the parents with the school operation principles and internal documents regulating the activities of the institution (statute, organization of schoolwork, educational and pedagogical programme, etc.).
- Providing the parents with a welcome package including school regulations, school map, contact details of the head teacher/class teacher/psychologist/pedagogue/remigrant family assistant, etc.
- Establishing the rules of contact with the school.
- Discussion of the next steps of introducing the child to school - explaining the Model and discussing the next steps that will be taken for the effective adaptation of the child at school.
- Involving the parents in the completion of the Questionnaire of a Pupil Returning from Abroad to the Native Education System part I (Annex 1), containing personal data, previous education in a foreign school, scientific achievements, etc.

- Informing parents about the possibilities of obtaining optional support from other institutions (according to the needs of the family), e.g. psychological and pedagogical counselling centre, social welfare centres, free legal aid offices, local government units, organizations operating in the local community (libraries, cultural centres, non-governmental organizations, parishes, etc.).
- Making the decision to admit the pupil to a particular class and informing the parents about the head teacher's decision. If there are several classes at a given level of education, the head teacher should choose the class that will offer the pupil returning from abroad the best conditions for adaptation.
- Appointing a remigrant family assistant as a coordinator of the Model implementation (a liaison between the school and parents) and introducing him/her to the pupil's parents. The position of the assistant may be assigned to the class teacher of the class the remigrant pupil is going to join.

### The implementation of this step of the Model involves:

- Parents
- Head teacher at the selected school in the home country.



## STEP 3

The next step in implementing the Model is a meeting between parents and the school pedagogist/psychologist and the remigrant family assistant. The purpose of this meeting is to prepare and instruct parents on how to effectively support their child in the process of adaptation in the new school. School specialists should present the specifics of the process of the child's adaptation and possible difficulties, but above all, inform the parents (1) how to support the child, (2) what to talk to the child about before going to school and after returning from school, especially on the first day of school (3) how to react to difficulties that may occur. The meeting should provide an opportunity for specialists to talk to parents as partners and to answer any questions and address parents' doubts.

During this meeting, the parents should be involved in the completion of the Questionnaire of a Pupil Returning from Abroad to the Native Education System part II (Appendix 1), containing information on the psychosocial and emotional functioning of the child and description of the parents' needs and expectations towards the school as well as the process of their child's adaptation in the new school.

**The implementation of this step of the Model involves:**

- Parents
- School psychologist/pedagogist
- Remigrant family assistant



## STEP 4

The purpose of the next step in implementing the Model is to properly prepare the class for the admission of a new pupil and to appoint and prepare a classmate-guardian. The role of the classmate-guardian is to support the new student - to help him or her navigate the school, facilitate adaptation to the student environment, and possibly assist in meeting educational requirements (e.g. help with homework). The classmate-guardian is to act as a mentor and "good spirit" for the new student.

The class teacher or school psychologist/pedagogue should meet the class hosting the new pupil, inform them that a new classmate is joining their class and that he/she previously attended a foreign school. At the same time, a form period should be held with the following topic: We are getting ready for your arrival in accordance with the attached scenario (Appendix 3).

The class teacher, in cooperation with the remigrant family assistant and school specialists (school pedagogist/psychologist) should select one pupil from the class who could act as a classmate-guardian for the remigrant pupil. After obtaining the consent of the selected pupil to perform this role, the pupil should be prepared for this task (instructed on his/her role and how to carry it out).

The classmate-guardian should take particular care of the new pupil, help him/her find their way in the new school, familiarize them with the specificity of the school as well as the rules and regulations, introduce them to the classmates, accompany and support them in difficult and problematic situations.

### The implementation of this step of the Model involves:

- The class teacher of the class the new pupil is joining
- School psychologist/pedagogue
- Migrant family assistant
- Classmate-guardian

## STEP 5

The purpose of this step is to develop part I of the Individual Plan of the Adaptation of a Pupil (IPAP) (Appendix 2). This objective should be achieved by holding a meeting of the head teacher, class teacher, remigrant family assistant, pedagogist/psychologist and the pupil's parents to develop the plan. Based on the previously prepared assessment based on the Questionnaire of a Pupil Returning to the Native Education System, the parents should be offered a plan of work with the pupil, aimed at their effective adaptation at school in the social, cultural and emotional aspects. The plan should contain specific proposals of activities along with an indication of the people responsible for their implementation, e.g. additional lessons in the native language, additional lessons in subjects with the greatest curricular differences between the foreign school and the school in the home country, psychological support, etc. The implementation of these lessons depends on the organisational issues of the respective school - they can be individual additional lessons that take place before or after the whole class or extracurricular group activities. If necessary, it is possible to introduce a support teacher for a migrant pupil who will work individually with this pupil in parallel during class time. The proposed activities should be accepted or rejected by the parents, and the parents should also be able to propose actions and solutions that they would like to provide for their child.

### The implementation of this step of the Model involves:

- Parents
- School head teacher
- Class teacher of the class the new pupil is joining
- School psychologist/pedagogist
- Remigrant family assistant

## STEP 6

In this step, the pupil with his/her parents visits the school - gets to know the architectural layout, key rooms in the school - cloakroom, canteen, classroom, school library, etc. The time of the first school visit should be carefully considered - some children may feel more comfortable if they see the school in the afternoon when there are no other pupils in it. The purpose of this step is to build a sense of security and familiarity with the topography of the new school building. It is also time for the new pupil to meet the class teacher. It is also important for the child to meet the school head teacher.

An essential element of this step is introducing the new pupil to the classmate-guardian and giving them the opportunity to talk freely and get acquainted.

The persons showing the new pupil around the school should be the class teacher and classmate-guardian. It is also important for the child to meet the school head teacher.

**The implementation of this step of the Model involves:**

- Parents
- Class teacher of the class the new pupil is joining
- Classmate-guardian

## STEP 7

The purpose of this step is to prepare teachers for the admission of a new pupil. The school head teacher should convene a meeting of all teachers of the class hosting the new pupil. The school specialists and the remigrant family assistant should also attend.

The meeting should be used to undertake the following actions:

- Teacher training on the process of pupil adaptation conducted by the school psychologist/pedagogue or an external trainer. This training should take place before the admission of the first pupil returning from abroad.
- Familiarising teachers with the Individual Plan of the Adaptation of a Pupil - discussion of the role of particular subject teachers in the adaptation process.

- Discussing the principles of evaluating the child's scientific achievements during the first weeks of the pupil's stay at school. The evaluation should be based on the observation of the pupil's work during lessons, adhering to school duties (the pupil should not be required to take any tests or examinations).
- Analysis of the pupil's learning outcomes to date at a foreign school.
- Familiarising teachers with the educational system of the country the pupil arrived from and the scope of the curriculum content in individual subjects the pupil has already covered.

**The implementation of this step of the Model involves:**

- School head teacher
- The class teacher of the class the new pupil is joining
- Subject teachers of the class hosting the pupil
- School psychologist/pedagogue
- Remigrant family assistant.



## STEP 8

After completion of the previous seven steps, it is time for the child to enter the new school - this is the step where the child spends their first day in the new class. Parents play a key role here, as they should prepare the child for this day, in accordance with the guidelines provided by the school psychologist/pedagogue (Step 3). It is very important that the child's first lesson is a lesson with the class teacher with the following topic: Get to know me - Get to know us, according to the proposed scenario (Appendix 4). In subsequent lessons, according to the timetable, teachers should introduce themselves to the pupil and ask him/her to introduce themselves, and ensure their sense of security, without focusing on them too much.

The implementation of this step of the Model involves:

- Parents
- The class teacher of the class hosting the pupil
- Subject teachers of the class hosting the pupil.



## STEP 9

In this step of the Model implementation, actions are taken to support the child in the process of their adaptation in the new school in the social and emotional aspects. A number of previously prepared activities are now carried out during the child's stay at school. Thus, the objective of this step is to support the child as he/she adapts to the new school environment. In this step, the following actions should be taken:

- Carrying out form periods with the following topics:
  - (1) Meet our school (customs, school holidays, winter holidays, school principles, relations with teachers, school savoir-vivre, etc.) (Appendix 5).
  - (2) Our talents - how similar are we? (Appendix 6).
- Implementation of the project method and group work in individual lessons. It is about integrating the pupil with the classmates through the execution of various scientific tasks.

- Providing individual support to the pupil during their stay at school by school specialists (pedagogue, psychologist) as well as the class teacher, subject teachers and remigrant family assistant.
- An extremely significant role of parents is to support their child and cooperate with the school, especially when some disturbing events take place.
- Regular meetings between parents, remigrant family assistant, class teacher and subject teachers to discuss the pupil adaptation process, as well as the problems and difficulties that the child experiences (along with establishing ways of solving them).

### The implementation of this step of the Model involves:

- The class teacher of the class hosting the pupil
- Subject teachers of the class hosting the pupil
- School psychologist/pedagogue
- Remigrant family assistant
- Parents.

## STEP 10

The objective of this step is to support the pupil's cognitive functioning and assist them in fulfilling their academic duties. The following actions should be taken:

- Observation of the pupil's work during lessons and evaluating their school achievements. It is important not to conduct quizzes, tests or examinations to check the pupil's level of knowledge. The evaluation should be based on the pupil's (1) activity during lessons, (2) spontaneous oral responses, (3) homework during the first month at school, (4) analysis of documentation from the previous school.
- This evaluation should serve as the basis for the development of part II of the Individual Plan of the Adaptation of a Pupil (IPAP); This part of the plan should include activities of teachers associated with the compensation of any shortcomings and gaps in the pupil's knowledge (e.g. resulting from curricular differences between the current and previous school/education system). This Plan may include additional individual lessons in the native language; support in subjects where curricular differences have been found; participation of the pupil in after-school clubs, extracurricular activities, etc.. The plan may also point out the need for pupil's support by other institutions, e.g. psychological and pedagogical counselling centres, speech therapy clinics, etc.

- The IPAP developed by teachers should be presented to the pupil's parents and thoroughly discussed with them at a meeting with the class teacher/remigrant family assistant and the head teacher. Parents should be able to propose their solutions and submit their ideas regarding the support their child needs. The final version of the Plan should be developed at this meeting - jointly agreed by the parents and school representatives (the class teacher/remigrant family assistant and the head teacher). Depending on the level of language competencies, it may be necessary for the school to organize additional classes for teaching the mother tongue or to employ a supporting teacher who knows the foreign language of the country the child comes from and will be able to help the child in his/her educational path.

**The implementation of this step of the Model involves:**

- The class teacher of the class hosting the pupil
- Subject teachers of the class hosting the pupil
- Remigrant family assistant
- School head teacher
- Parents.

## STEP 11

The purpose of the last step in implementing the Model is to evaluate the actions taken to support the pupil in his/her adaptation process after returning to his or her home country. The evaluation should be carried out continuously in the course of implementation of the individual steps of the Model and at the end of all activities planned in the Individual Plan of the Adaptation of a Pupil. The person responsible for conducting the evaluation is the school head teacher (or a teacher assigned by him) in cooperation with a remigrant family assistant, class teacher, pedagogist/psychologist.



**The Model described above assumes comprehensive support for the child and their family who migrate back to their home country. It should be modified and adapted to the needs and expectations of a particular family.**



## Chapter 3

### ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN BY TEACHERS IN INDIVIDUAL CONTACT WITH THE PUPIL AND THEIR PARENTS

This chapter describes the principles of individual work with the pupil and family coming back to their home country. The forms of work using the Questionnaire of a Pupil Returning to the Native Education System and Individual Plan of the Adaptation of a Pupil (IPAP) have been highlighted in the process of the pupil's adaptation. One-to-one contact between teachers and the pupil is one of the key elements of the adaptation process - hence it is so important that the process is carried out correctly. The aim of the activities undertaken by the teacher should be to create a safe relationship with parents based on trust – the activities below serve this purpose. Supervision or methodological support from the teacher implementing the Model may be very important in this process.





# 3.1

## FIRST TALKS WITH PARENTS AT SCHOOL

The first direct contact of parents with a school representative (head teacher, school psychologist / pedagogist) is an opportunity to start building positive relations and attitudes in an atmosphere of mutual trust. The purpose of the first meeting with the head teacher is to familiarize parents with the specificity of the school and to complete the necessary formalities related to enrolling a child in a given school (Step 2). Whereas the purpose of the first meeting with the school psychologist/pedagogist is to prepare and instruct parents on how to effectively support their child in the process of adaptation in the new school (Step 3).



It is worth taking care of the external conditions in which the meeting with the parents takes place (including without third parties), as well as limiting the atmosphere of formalities and official attitude towards the parents to absolute minimum. It is also important to reserve enough time so that the meeting is not rushed. The conversation should start with introducing the parents and the school head teacher / specialists and with casual topics, such as the reason for choosing the school, the child's favourite activities, etc. Certainly, you should not overwhelm parents with forms to fill in at the beginning. The beginning of the conversation should help build a friendly atmosphere.

It is important for parents to be able to express their perceptions and expectations, and during the discussion, as well as throughout their child's adaptation and schooling process, they should feel valued and important. The ability to listen actively, show understanding and interest in what parents say is extremely valuable here.

## 3.2

# PRINCIPLES OF COOPERATION BETWEEN TEACHERS AND PARENTS IN THE PROCESS OF PUPIL ADAPTATION

It should be kept in mind that parents should become allies of the school in the process of pupil adaptation. The success of this process depends on the complementarity of teachers and parents.

In implementing the Model, it is worth adopting the following principles of cooperation between teachers and parents:

- Partnership - assuming duties and responsibilities in the implementation of the Model. In the adaptation process, complementarity between schools and parents is crucial;
- Unity of interactions - the implementation of common and compatible goals for the benefit of the child;
- Mutual respect - acceptance of school rules and parents' values;



- Information flow - informing about the child's situation, adaptation progress and experienced difficulties;
- Systematic contact - regular meetings between parents and the class teacher/subject teachers/remigrant family assistant;
- Honesty - open communication and honesty in cooperation in the implementation of the Model and Individual Plan of the Adaptation of a Pupil.

### 3.3

## CONVERSATION TO SUPPORT THE PUPIL



A supportive conversation is communication between the teacher and the pupil, based on empathy, respect, acceptance, authenticity, curiosity and openness to the pupil's needs and expectations. The teacher should give the child a sense of security and, in an atmosphere of trust, help them to cope with difficulties resulting from starting education in a new school, described in chapter 1. It should be kept in mind that when the child talks about problems and difficulties they are experiencing, it is possible for the teacher to provide them with adequate support. However, for a child to talk about their concerns, they must feel safe in the relationship with the teacher. The teacher is responsible for creating a safe atmosphere.

It is important that the conversation between the teacher / class teacher / intercultural assistant and the pupil coming back to the home country takes place in conditions that guarantee the confidentiality of the conversation. It is not easy for a child to talk about their difficulties. Therefore, every effort should be made to build an atmosphere of trust and kindness.

## In the conversation to support the pupil:

- Focus on the child, putting off any other activities. The child must feel that they are in the focus of interest, which is achieved through eye contact, appropriate body posture (leaning towards the child, nodding, friendly gestures), articulations: "Aha, hmm".
- The language used must be understandable to the child - adequate to his/her age and their command of the native language.
- The child should be encouraged to talk and the teacher must listen attentively. The teacher should gently encourage the child to continue talking (e.g., "What you are saying, is really important") by using additional open-ended questions and avoiding "if" questions where the possible answer is yes or no (e.g., "What happened next?" ; "How did you react then?").
- The teacher should paraphrase or rephrase the child's utterances (e.g., "From what you said, I gather that...;" "If I understand correctly, you...").
- The teacher should try to reflect emotions by describing what the child feels ("I see that the situation you have told me about was very stressful;" "I can hear sorrow in your voice").
- Statements containing evaluation or disapproval should be avoided (e.g. expressing surprise, astonishment with the pupil's experiences, indicating contradictions in the utterances of the interviewed person).

A supportive conversation does not always have to end with advice from the teacher. Sometimes just talking about the problems experienced by the child brings relief. At the end of the interview, it is important to appreciate and praise the child for opening up and talking about their situation. In the case of older pupils (or shy pupils), a good solution could be to create a questionnaire in which the pupil will write about himself/herself, his/her fears, problems, achievements, dreams and goals.



## 3.4

## WELCOME PACKAGE

**The welcome package is a set of the most essential information about the school provided to parents in writing at the first meeting with the head teacher (Step 2).**

The welcome package should contain:

- School contact details (exact address with a map, telephone numbers to the head teacher's office, class teacher, remigrant family assistant, school specialists - psychologist / pedagogist / career counsellor).
- Basic information about the school (map/diagram of school buildings, history of the school, number of pupils and teachers, the most important recent achievements of pupils, institutions the school cooperates with, the school anthem etc.).
- A map showing how to get to school with the route of school buses or public transport stops near the school.
- Calendar of the school year with marked national holidays, days off from school (winter break, summer holidays), important school celebrations, etc.
- Information on the dress code applicable at school (including the requirements regarding outfit during sports activities).
- Selected, most important information from the Internal Pupil Assessment System (grading scale and its meaning, rules for assessing pupils' achievements, rules for issuing mid-year and end-year grades - school leaving certificate, etc.).
- Forms applicable at school, e.g. excusing absences, exemptions from lessons, etc.

Depending on the specificity of the school, the package may also contain information other than the above-mentioned.



## 3.5

# QUESTIONNAIRE OF A PUPIL RETURNING FROM ABROAD TO THE NATIVE EDUCATION SYSTEM

Questionnaire of a pupil returning from abroad to the native education system consists of two parts: the first part completed in Step 2 and the second part in Step 3 of the Model implementation. It is significant that the document should be completed when there is a certain relationship between the school staff and parents, and both parties are seeking trust and are convinced that they are acting for the child's benefit. The teacher should be very careful when completing the questionnaire with parents so that the parents do not feel that their privacy/intimacy has been violated. It is also worth showing how the information they are providing may be helpful for the child in the process of adaptation (what is the purpose of collecting the questionnaire?).

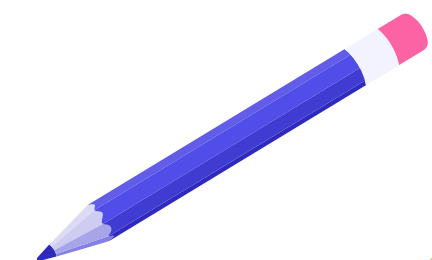
The Questionnaire includes fields to be completed by the school head teacher, remigrant family assistant, school specialists (school psychologist/pedagogue) in the course of two meetings with the pupil's parents. The purpose of this Questionnaire is to collect vital information about the pupil in a single document, which will be used in the process of this pupil's adaptation. It is important that the pupil's class teacher, remigrant family assistant, school psychologist/pedagogue and all subject teachers of the pupil have access to this Questionnaire. The idea is that individual teachers do not have to collect this information from parents, and thus parents do not have to repeat information about their child over and over again.

First, the pupil's personal details and their parents' contact details are collected (Step 2 of the Model). The introductory section of the Questionnaire includes a description of the family situation and the reason for the return to the home country. Information on whether, for example, a child is brought up in a two parent or single parent family, who has legal and physical custody of the child, who can collect the pupil from school, relations between parents, if the family is dealing with financial problems that forced them to return, etc. may be important in the process of pupil adaptation and may sensitize teachers to the way they work with the child. The head teacher's conversation with the parents about the above topics should be conducted with great tact and gentleness, accepting the parents' boundaries. In the beginning, it is worth explaining to the parents how this information can help their child at school.

Part I of the Questionnaire contains a description of the child's educational path to date at school abroad, their academic achievements, skills, talents and interests. This information may come directly from the parents and/or may be obtained from documents from the child's previous school abroad, presented by the parents. At the parents' meeting with the head teacher, the level of the child's abilities should be assessed (mathematical skills, logical-abstract thinking, spatial imagination, verbal skills (speaking and writing in native language), language skills (using and learning foreign languages), musical abilities, artistic abilities, manual skills, mobility, interpersonal skills) on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 is very low and 10 - very high level of ability. It should be clarified to the parents what each ability means and they should be provided with examples of the child's behaviour related to particular ability. Parents should assess each ability with a number between 1 and 10.

Part II of the Questionnaire describes the pupil's functioning as well as the needs and expectations of parents and should be completed in Step 3 of the Model implementation. Information about the pupil (health, strengths and weaknesses, social functioning, emotional sphere, cultural habits and practices important to understand the attitude of the child) should come from the parents on the basis of questions asked by the school pedagogist, psychologist and remigrant family assistant. Information about, for example, diabetes or epilepsy, allergy to various food products, etc. will improve pupil's safety at school, while the child's prior functioning in the peer group and their ability to manage own emotions will be the key information in the

development of the Individual Plan of the Adaptation of a Pupil. In a summary of this area, it may be useful for the intercultural assistant and the parents to make a list of the pupil's resources facilitating their adaptation at school.



The second area of this part of the Questionnaire concerns the needs of the pupil in the process of the child's adaptation at school and parents' expectations towards the school management, class teacher, remigrant family assistant, subject teachers and school specialists (school psychologist / pedagogist). Parents should be presented with the responsibilities of individual school employees, and in the event of parents having difficulties in verbalizing their expectations, examples of actions the school staff members can take to help their child can be provided. In the case of older children, the teacher can ask them what are their expectations towards the new school (so there should be a part “Pupil’s needs and expectations” added to the Questionnaire).

At the end of the Questionnaire there is a space for the head teacher, remigrant family assistant and parent/parents’ signatures.



## 3.6

# INDIVIDUAL PLAN OF THE ADAPTATION OF A PUPIL

After evaluating the child's situation by means of the Questionnaire of a Pupil Returning to the Native Education System, the Individual Plan of the Adaptation of a Pupil (IPAP) should be developed - Step 5 and Step 10 of the Model implementation. Adaptation should take place in the social, cultural, emotional and academic/school aspects. The persons responsible for the development of the Plan are: the school head teacher, class teacher, remigrant family assistant, school pedagogist/psychologist (part I - Step 5), and, additionally, in the case of part II (Step 10), also subjects teachers of the pupil's class, who should closely cooperate with the pupil's parents.

The introduction to the Plan includes the pupil's data, a brief description of the pupil's prior educational path at the foreign school, and the expected barriers, difficulties, problems, critical points related to the process of the pupil's adaptation at a new school, along with the ways to minimize and overcome them. It is necessary because the teachers need to know the prior path of education (the scope of the curriculum content in individual subjects) and must be prepared for difficulties in the process of the pupil's adaptation process.

Part I of the IPAP (to be developed and implemented in Step 5 of the Model implementation) contains fields for entering activities facilitating pupil's adaptation in the social, emotional and cultural aspects and persons responsible for their implementation. These activities should respond to the child's needs and parents' expectations, as well as to the expected difficulties in the adaptation process. These activities may include: scheduling regular meetings between the pupil and the school psychologist/pedagogist; one-to-one conversation between the class teacher and the child; observation of the child's functioning in class by the class teacher and subject teachers; the use of activating teaching methods, e.g. the project method with the teacher indicating who is to work with whom (without leaving the decision to the pupils); arranging tasks in which the pupil can succeed in the classroom; supporting the classmate-guardian, etc. You can enter activities of other institutions, which can be involved in pupil's adaptation (e.g., psychological and pedagogical counselling centre).





Part II of the Plan (to be developed and implemented in Step 10 of the Model implementation) contains fields for entering activities facilitating pupil's adaptation in the academic/school aspect. These activities should respond to possible curricular differences between the pupil's previous school abroad and the current one, or problems with meeting school requirements. These activities may include: additional tutoring in the native language; providing additional support in subjects where curriculum differences have been diagnosed; participation of the child in clubs and interest groups, extracurricular activities, etc.

At the end of the Plan there is a space for the head teacher and parent/parents' signatures. The activities included in the Plan should be monitored and evaluated by the team of teachers teaching the pupil's class and the school head teacher.



## Chapter 4

### ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN BY TEACHERS IN THE CLASS ATTENDED BY THE PUPIL RETURNING TO THE NATIVE EDUCATION SYSTEM

The chapter contains suggestions of teachers' activities in various subjects and ready-made lesson scenarios to be used when working with a class that has been joined by a pupil returning to their home country. All presented lesson plans are available in the form of appendixes. They can be used in full or provide inspiration for developing other solutions.

Good preparation of the teacher and class for the implementation of activities aimed at helping the newly admitted pupil will have a positive impact on the adaptation process. In order for the parties to feel satisfied with the performance of these tasks, they must feel safe.



## 4.1

# ACTIVITIES OF TEACHERS INCREASING THEIR COMPETENCES IN WORKING WITH A PUPIL RETURNING TO THE NATIVE EDUCATION SYSTEM

Teachers working with the class hosting a child who has returned to their home country should be properly prepared for their admission, and constantly develop their competences by:

- using the help of teachers who have already had experience working with a returning pupil;
- using materials available on websites devoted to work with pupils returning to the native education system;
- asking the head teacher to buy devices with Internet access in order to facilitate communication and understand instructions (if the pupil does not have such a device);
- establishing cooperation with the pupil's family;
- cooperating with the teaching staff, exchanging experiences;
- staying in touch with the classmate-guardian and remigrant family assistant;
- ensuring that the classmate-guardian is actively involved and willing to help;
- using, if necessary, the support of the school psychologist and pedagogist;
- paying attention to whether the pupil returning to the native education system has been welcomed by the class;
- observing the behaviour of the group to which the new pupil has been assigned during class work;
- making sure that the new pupil is involved in teamwork and not isolated;
- involving the pupil in projects that promote emotional, social and cultural adaptation;
- focus on the spoken language learning process;
- reacting (on a regular basis) in the case of noticing unfavourable behaviour of the class;
- participating in the work of the IPAP evaluation team.

The class teacher that the pupil returning to the native education system gets acquainted with at the beginning of his education in his/her new school, must be aware that the time spent abroad was associated with many educational, communication and cultural experiences. Another change consisting in starting education in his/her parent/parents' home country is a demanding situation requiring re-adaptation. Therefore, it is important that the teachers understand the new circumstances the pupil has to deal with, their fears and needs.



## 4.2

# THE ACTIVITIES OF TEACHERS PROVIDING THE PUPIL WITH A SENSE OF SECURITY

A very important aspect of the pupil's adaptation process is to provide him/her with a sense of security in the new school environment. Teachers' activities in this area should start even before admitting the pupil to his/her new class.

### Before a new pupil comes to class:

- getting to know the education system of the country from which the pupil is coming;
- ensuring kind and friendly attitude towards the new pupil;
- not perceiving the new pupil in the context of potential problems;
- getting acquainted with the Questionnaire of a pupil returning from abroad to the native education system and the Individual Plan of the Adaptation of a Pupil;
- preparing the class for a friendly reception of the pupil and arousing a positive attitude and curiosity in the class;
- preparing the classmate-guardian for the task of, first of all, providing support to the new pupil.



### After a new pupil comes to class:

- introducing oneself and asking the pupil to introduce themselves;
- determining how the pupil wants to be referred to (maybe diminutive of their name);
- informing the pupil how to ask for permission to go to the toilet, signal health problems and report other needs;
- suggesting the use of devices with access to an on-line translator, also during written tests;
- making sure that the pupil has the necessary textbooks and supplies;
- reducing educational requirements in the initial period of education in the new school;
- in the initial period, focusing on the pupil's work during lessons and the quality of homework;
- avoiding (in the initial period) evaluation by means of quizzes
- or tests;
- avoiding linguistic correction of the child's sentences by repeating them correctly without underlining any mistakes;
- introducing language games engaging all pupils in the class. It can help new pupil learn the spoken language;
- using simple commands and adapting requirements to the curriculum content in the foreign school to date;
- referring to knowledge gathered or methods used at the school attended by the pupil abroad;
- paying attention to whether the pupil is dressed appropriately for the circumstances and according to the school's dress code;
- showing the place where the pupil can get medical help;
- not focusing attention entirely on the newly arrived pupil—there are also other pupils who need attention and support.



## 4.3

# TEACHERS' ACTIONS BASED ON THE FORM PERIOD SCENARIOS

All presented scenarios of lessons in class hosting a pupil returning to the home country should be carried out during form periods.

It is necessary to adjust the time, forms, tasks and methods of work to the age and abilities of pupils. Lesson scenarios should be treated as suggestions that can be modified after collecting information about the pupil returning to the home country (the child's psychophysical state, reasons for migration, etc.). The scenarios should be also adapted to the whole class.

The following topics of period forms are proposed in the Model:

1. We are getting ready for your arrival (Scenario No. 1)
2. Get to know me, get to know us (Scenario No. 2)
3. Meet our school (Scenario no.3)
4. Our talents - how similar are we? (Scenario No. 4)

Lesson topic: "We are getting ready for your arrival" (Scenario No. 1) should be discussed before the first new pupil joins the class. If more new pupils come to class later, it is not necessary to repeat the entire series of the presented scenarios. Always remember to inform and prepare the class for the arrival of the next new pupil. In such case, it is suggested to repeat selected elements of the "Get to know me, get to know us" lesson (Scenario No. 2).

After the "We are getting ready for your arrival" lesson, the subsequent integration lesson should be conducted (Scenarios No. 2, 3, 4). They will let the new pupil find their way in the new class. These lessons will make the pupil returning to the native education system feel better in their new class, make it easier to break down barriers in contacts with classmates and feel accepted.

Each scenario is structured around aims, methods and forms of work and uses necessary props and aids. Each lesson is divided into three stages:

- Introduction (lesson objective, subject matter, ways of its implementation)
- Activities (using active methods, involving each pupil, working around the lesson topic, stimulating reflection and drawing conclusions);
- Summary (it is the punch line of the lesson, an opportunity to share emotions, impressions) - it allows to shape the educational process conducive to the adaptation of the pupil returning to the native education system.

Depending on the age and capability of the group, classes are scheduled from 45 to 90 minutes for groups aged 6 to 15 with guidelines for working with younger pupils.



**The main objectives of the lessons that are conducted in line with the Model are:**

- familiarising pupils with the country from which the new pupil is coming;
- preparing the class to welcome the new classmate;
- paying attention to cultural diversity;
- developing empathy in pupils;
- introducing the new pupil to his/her classmates and explaining the rules of conduct in class;
- getting to know one another and integrating pupils;
- familiarising the pupil returning from another country with the history, customs, rules and organisation of work in the new school;
- presenting the school year calendar (holidays, winter break, other days off) indicating differences between the country the pupil returned from and the home country;
- developing the ability to talk about oneself (self-presentation);
- learning about common interests and developing the ability to present one's interests and hobbies.

### Suggested forms of work:

- work with the whole class;
- work in groups/pairs (uniform and varied);
- individual work.

### Suggested work methods:

- lecture (presentation);
- chat;
- brainstorm;
- discussion/guided discussion;
- elements of an illustrated lecture or a multimedia presentation;
- classes in the regional/memorial chamber - if the school has one;
- "Spider web" integration game;
- didactic (decision-making) game;
- "The wall" integration game

### Necessary props and aids for the implementation of the planned scenarios:

- interactive whiteboard/multimedia projector;
- presentation of greeting gestures and polite phrases in different languages;
- a map, a film presenting the pupil's previous country of residence;
- sheets of paper and felt-tip pens, markers, crayons;
- dictionaries with phonetic notation, device with the possibility of using a translator (Internet);
- coloured self-adhesive cards;
- video "From the life of our class";
- a ball of string;
- flip-chart;
- a video presenting schools in different regions of the world;
- presentation "Who works at our school";
- school statute, school regulations: canteen, gym;
- optionally - presentation of the history of the school;
- exhibits in the regional chamber/memorial chamber;
- props showing interests, e.g. ball, flower, musical instrument, paintbrush;
- photo of a famous character.

## 4.4

# ACTIONS TAKEN BY TEACHERS OF OTHER SUBJECTS AS PART OF WORK WITH THE PUPIL

It is worthwhile for teachers who teach in the class hosting the new pupil to take the following actions:

- observing the pupil's functioning in the cognitive, social and emotional aspects as well as reacting to the perceived difficulties of the pupil in an adequate manner. The key aspect will be the emotional state of the pupil – all the next steps in the proper adaptation of the pupil depend on his/her emotional well-being;
- involving the pupil returning from abroad in the work of groups and teams, so that they can be a contributor to the teamwork;
- referring to the pupil's knowledge regarding issues discussed in class and let them present their point of view to the extent possible;
- entrusting the foreign pupil with functions performed by other school pupils, e.g. the function of a prefect;
- planning the subject matter of extracurricular projects so that they give the pupil returning from abroad a chance to demonstrate their abilities and skills.



4.5

## EXAMPLES OF EFFECTIVE ADAPTATION PROCESSES OF PUPILS RETURNING TO THE NATIVE EDUCATION SYSTEM



Below, there are descriptions of the adaptation process of two pupils who have returned to the native education system. The situation seen through the eyes of a pupil may inspire teachers to seek appropriate solutions. Here are the thoughts of the two pupils (original spelling has been retained)





## PIOTR, 13 YEARS OLD:

*I joined sixth grade during the school year, my new class and school were in distance learning. In the first days, I didn't get to know my colleagues personally, but through the computer.*

*For six years I was going to school abroad, I did not know what was happening in Polish school. We left England during the lockdown, and I was sad to leave my friends from school behind. I couldn't say goodbye to all my friends, as the schools were closed.*

*I did not say goodbye to the class teacher and my classmates. I talked to my parents about the Polish school, about their experiences during their school years. I was afraid there would be a lot of homework. When I came to school for the first time, the class teacher showed me the school, the classroom and the cloakroom. There were no pupils at school, it was empty. I immediately started comparing the two schools, I missed the vending machines. I was hoping that things would be more similar, like in the English school.*

### What helped me with the adaptation:

- *writing to my classmates (on the Internet), which was during the lessons (someone always replies);*
- *It is good when the teacher writes down on the blackboard, it is easier to put it down;*
- *getting to know colleagues via the computer;*
- *help from classmates in getting to know the area, meeting them after lessons;*
- *classmates' explanations, teacher's additional explanations when I did not know something.*

### What made the adaptation difficult:

- *it was difficult for me to write in Polish during lessons, I wrote slowly, I couldn't keep up with notes when the teacher talked a lot;*
- *getting used to doing homework (everyone has to do it, it is not voluntary);*
- *there is less experimental work in class, for example in chemistry, which makes it more difficult to learn.*

### My advice and suggestions for people returning to the home country:

- *talk to people, seek help, ask for help, talk, chat.*

## MIKOŁAJ, 10 YEARS OLD:

*I went to kindergarten in Poland. Later, we left with my parents and went to Germany. I went to the first grade for two years there, and I already went to the second and third grade in Poland. My parents knew a little German, they helped me with learning. At home, I studied Polish and maths with my mother. I went back to the class I had been in the kindergarten with.*



### What helped me with the adaptation:

- *the class was fun, they remembered we from the kindergarten, I didn't feel lonely, everyone liked me;*
- *I attended extracurricular activities;*
- *I wrote quickly and read well;*
- *this year I changed school again (in Poland), I feel good in my class;*
- *the class received me well, I have friends;*
- *nice ladies teach me, explain well, have a sense of humour;*
- *I like to sit near the lady teacher, it is easier for me to focus and ask for help.*

### What was difficult?:

- *when you go to school for the first time, you are a bit afraid; next time I changed school, I wasn't afraid anymore;*
- *I noticed such a pattern. It is the same in every class - there are nice people and troublemakers, 2-3 naughty people, one foreigner, there are those talking in the back, there is a foreigner in front whom the lady teacher helps during the lesson;*
- *I don't like obstacle course in PE lessons, I'm not too fast at racing.*

# Conclusion

The abolition of the internal borders of the European Union and the right of its citizens and their family members to move and stay freely within the territory of the EU is a great achievement of European countries, and at the same time a great challenge for educational institutions. The migration of adults, e.g. in search of work, is related to the displacement of school-age children. For kindergartens and schools, the challenge is not only to accept a child from another country (of a different culture and language), but also to accept a child returning to their home country, who previously studied in another European country or grew up there.

The Model of Working with a Pupil Returning from Abroad to the Native Education System has been developed to meet the needs and expectations of parents and, above all, teachers. The implementation of the Model in educational institutions provides an opportunity for effective adaptation of a pupil and minimizing the negative consequences related to the change of the country of residence and the school/peer environment. Practical tips and specific actions to be taken by the Model implementers (parents, head teachers, class teachers, subject teachers, remigrant family assistant, school specialists) and the developed tools are there for the benefit of the pupil who is struggling with many challenges in the new school. May the adaptation process always end successfully.

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