

## **CONFERENCE SUMMARY**

### *EDUCATION IN PORTUGAL*

The compulsory education comprises the ages between 6 and 14 years, such education divided in nine courses distributed in three grades. There are also kindergarden for children of 3, 4 and 5 years, (non-compulsory Children's education).

The number of times a pupil can repeat the course varies, being suitable in each cycle that a student does not repeat more than two school years in order that the minor is joined with his peer age group.

They identify school failure when a student stops from going to school at all or surpasses the number of absences according to law. The school drop-out is identified when a student attends with irregularity his/her school seat but never abandons completely. When a school drop-out is localized they tend to work with the families and the minors and raise their awareness to be immersed in professional training courses, and develop a Program of Prevention and Elimination of Child Labour (PETI).

The school organization develops a coordination and collaboration mode among the school centres of a district or a part of this district, said mode is what they call "Vertical Teams", said teams exist by "Freguesias" (legal administrative demarcation, what we know by parish). Not all the schools of the Freguesia are joined, usually each school of 2nd and 3rd grade is associated with one or more elementary schools of 1<sup>st</sup> grade and to the corresponding kindergarden forming the team.

The Seminar promoted the visit to the "Team of Schools of Fernando Pessoa", one of the three teams existing in the "Freguesia de Santa Maria dos Olivais" (45.000 inhabitants).

The public education network of the mentioned Freguesia is composed of nine schools of 1st Grade Elementary Education with their corresponding kindergardens and an integrated School, the School "Vasco de Gama", which comprises the education from Nursery School until Secondary Education.

### **THE TEAM NETWORK IN PORTUGAL**

The Law considers liable to the organisms and authorities which have competence in childhood and youth matters (Schools, Health Centres, Social Services, Hospitals,...) to solve the problems of the minors. Whether not feasible, it is appealed in the last resort to the Courts, passing through the Commissions for the protection of Minors and Young People before.

The Commissions for the protection of Minors and Young People (CPCJ) play an important role, as they are official institutions, not judiciary, with functional autonomy to succeed in the promotion of the rights of the minors and youths as well as to prevent and end to those situations capable to affect their safety, health, training, education and complete development.

These Commissions are established through public and private local bodies. They have basic action principles, as the following: The higher interest of the minor or youngster, privacy, early intervention, minimum intervention, proportionality and current time, the responsibility of the parents, the prevalence of the family, the compulsory information to the family, the mandatory participation and listening and subsidiarity.

The commission presents two operative models: on the one hand, the extensive mode, preventive mode which develops energize actions in the Local Community for the protection of their minors and young people, as well as they are in charge of awareness procedures among the Bodies to develop activities to achieve the integration in the population of minors and youngsters under risk situations. Likely, said mode promotes spreading procedures for the rights of the minors. On the other hand, there exists the reduced mode, which intervenes in situations where the minors or youngsters are in danger and they carry out the procedural mentoring. Said modes own some measures of protection, according to the need of the case from the support to the parents up to the fostering in institutions for their adoption or not.

“Training is much more than merely train the student for the performance of his skills”. The characteristics of the current families present a varied and contradictory nature to the school models up to now, planning nowadays the reinforcement of the educational training, the same educative agents must make their job suitable to the real framework offering an education with sense for all the youths.

In this sense it is essential to develop new strategies to fight situations of minors and young people at risk, preventing the early school drop-out.

The Commissions are entitled to intervene in the cases of School Absenteeism and Drop-out by virtue of the article 3 of the Law of protection of Minors and Young People at Risk.

#### *THE POLICE OF PORTUGAL LIVE TOGETHER WITH MINORS*

The Public Security Police (P.S.P) is a Security Force with public service nature, with administrative autonomy in the whole national territory (with the exception of the Autonomous Region of Azores and the Autonomous Region of Madeira which have other Security Forces and Services), having as functions the defense of the democratic legality, to guarantee the internal security and the rights of the citizens, pursuant to their Constitution and legal framework.

Nowadays the mentioned police carries out an intervention program in the school population, having as a premise: “All the minors have the right to grow up with safety, in a peaceful environment, without fears nor suspicions, being an obligation of all of us to make that right a truth”. Likewise they explain: “The safety starts in each one of us. The safety is responsibility of all. Also yours. Participate in the safety of your children”.

The referred program is called “PROGRAMA ESCOLA SEGURA”, which is a joined initiative of the Ministry of Internal Administration and the Ministry of Education, whose aim is to guarantee the safety conditions of the school population and to promote school safety behaviours, through the surveillance in the schools and surroundings, through awareness procedures together with the students in matters of safety and vigilance of common routes in the access to schools.

The mentioned program is composed by a number of Agents dully trained and prepared for these kind of procedures, with vehicles exclusively used for the vigilance and protection of the school population. Said vehicles are easily identified by their external image, being assigned always the same staff to each one of the schools, being a benefit for the schools for the reinforced vigilance and a direct relation with the Police Agents in charge of this surveillance. The vigilance is secured with the patrolling in concrete hours and zones according to the specific needs of each school, as well as with recommendations to the parents about their children’s safety.

The program works both outside as well as indoors either with road traffic education or with classes for safety awareness.

The Agents who form part of the Unity ESCOLA SEGURA are chosen, among the volunteer groups which opt for the post, according to the aptitude for the position.

Finally, the P.S.P. reiterates that the police must be PREACTIVE and not REACTIVE, shall work from the prevention and not waiting to react when the conflict, damage or prejudice has already happened.

The police within the problem of the School Absenteeism work with the minors who are in school drop-out, leaving to other authorities and organisms the resolution of the rest of grades of School Absenteeism.

### *SCHOOL ABSENTEEISM IN PORTUGAL: A SYSTEMIC EVALUATION*

They present the evaluation of the causes and effects of the School Absenteeism from a systemic and multidisciplinary view. Diagnosis, Planning y Valuation of the Scool drop-out and Absenteeism of a sample of students (557 absentees students) who attend irregularly or do not attend to their school seat during the course 2004-2005, with all the data collected among the schools which wished to participate of the portuguese territory, with the questionnaires worked out within the European Project Agis.

The sample reveals the school absenteeism which is not linked to delinquent behaviours or deviate conducts. It occurs in schools of small urban old towns and inland towns. There are situations which create concern among the teachers who understand them as risk cases. Parents, both alive, with schooling lower or 1<sup>st</sup> grade. The absentee pupils have negative school record, worse in 2nd grade and high discrepancy between age and schooling. The higher discrepancy in 1st and 2nd grade at the same time that a higher volume of absences in said grades. With more than 13 absences per period the student can not recover. The efficiency of the intervention lies in the contact with the family and in those in charge of the education according to the school grade the student belongs to, as well as in the carrying out of the institutional procedures within the Network.

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