Integrating children from disadvantaged backgrounds

EU project unites pre-school teachers to share experiences and methods to integrate children from underprivileged environments

Children from disadvantaged and culturally different backgrounds can become excluded from the mainstream education system if they display frustration resulting in aggression or other undesirable behaviour. To help prevent this, teachers should work on ways to integrate them and address their needs early on.

One EU-funded project brought together 45 pre-school teachers from the Czech Republic, Slovakia and the UK to share their experience in supporting underprivileged children and parents.

A project participant said:

"This project helped teachers to be comfortable addressing the needs of children from disadvantaged families as well as those whose backgrounds may lead them to have trouble with linguistic and cultural issues such as Roma children."

During training events, pre-school teachers discussed the challenges children and parents face when integrating into a new society. They then shared ideas on encouraging parental participation through coffee meetings, cultural trips, training and one-to-one meetings.

Participants discussed techniques like using aspects of sign language along with speaking to attract children's attention and help those facing a language barrier. Teachers also shared the merits of devoting whole lessons to respecting the rules of the school, class, and other pupils. Other methods included incorporating discussions about feelings and creating a feelings board in class to help children express themselves.

In the second phase of the project, pre-school teachers implemented the methods and activities in 30 nurseries with more than 1,000 pre-schoolers. The project was particularly successful in Slovakian pre-schools with high numbers of Roma children.