

Foyer nieuwsbrief internationaal (Verzending datum: 19/05/2011)

## **Foyer International Newsletter: Special Edition**

**Welcome to this special edition of Foyer's International Newsletter, dedicated to the scrapping of a long-standing and critically acclaimed Foyer project.**

**The Education Minister for the Dutch-speaking community of Belgium, Mr Pascal Smet, has decided to cut the support for Foyer's Education & Multilingualism Cell. That means that it can no longer organise multilingual and multicultural teaching as it has done for the past 30 years.**

Multicultural and multilingual teaching is a broad approach to teaching, which includes language courses and classes on culture for children who speak another language at home (LCO in French – OETC in Dutch). These children take a part of their courses in their mother tongue.

Since 1981, Foyer and the Education & Multilingualism Cell have promoted multicultural and multilingual projects in Dutch-speaking pre-schools and primary schools. At present, more than 500 students are enrolled in programmes in Italian, Spanish and Turkish in six Brussels schools. Over the years, Foyer's multicultural projects have attracted researchers who have published a number of studies in journals and in the media, nationally and internationally.

Multicultural teaching has a positive impact on the linguistic integration of students. Learning a foreign language is easier if the knowledge of the mother tongue is sufficiently developed. It also makes it easier for students to create an identity, because it boosts their self-confidence by recognizing the value of their foreign mother tongue within the school. By the time the pupils reach secondary school (age 12), they are multicultural young people who achieve higher grades than other pupils of non-Belgian origin. 90% of the children that followed our project graduate whereas the results for the average group of immigrant students are: 70% for the boys, 75% for the girls.

Why the minister decided to cancel the project, leaving 500 children and their families in the cold, is totally incomprehensible.

*A group of 500 parents whose children are enrolled in the multicultural and multilingual projects have launched an [online petition](#) that we invite you to sign as well. Do spread the word!*

This is the parents' motivation:

“The majority of us have consciously chosen this type of education, because we want, above all, the well-being of our children. A child feels fine when it feels understood, when it can express itself, both in the local language and the language spoken at home. This enables a child to learn better and to further develop. Every teacher knows this.

[...]

In the interest of our children, we ask you not to abolish the OETC projects. You cannot simply dump a project that has functioned so well for over 30 years, certainly not without dialogue with the schools, the teachers, the organizing non-profit, the parents or the children.

[...]

We started this petition in the hope that you will reconsider your decision.

In name of 500 dumped Turkish, Spanish, and Italian-speaking parents, their children, and many people who sympathize with our cause.

Dank u vriendelijk, Many thanks, Muchas gracias, Merci beaucoup, Grazie, Shukran

Ignacio del Campo."