

SIRIUS

Parental Involvement Report

Part I:

**Initiatives by parents or organisations of
immigrant or ethnic minority background**

January 2014



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
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**Work Package 3:
Educational Support Projects**

**PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT
Report**

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Introduction

The overall idea of Work Package 3 is to identify best practices which involve the immigrant communities or were even initiated by these. Looking at parents in the context of school and education offers two basic perspectives here: schools reach out to parents or the parents claim their participation in the school. A variation to this second perspective are intermediate non-school based organisations, striving for empowering parents to take a more active role towards the education of their children and the institutions where this happens.

SIRIUS aims to take both perspectives on board and collect good practice examples from different countries on both aspects. This report represents Part I of this effort, describing good practice coming from outside the schools, i.e. involving initiatives started and taken by parents themselves, and initiatives, projects or programs organised by migrant self organisations, NGOs or private foundations (Part II of the report will be produced in the first semester of 2014 and look at school-based good practice examples).

Why Parental Involvement?

Studies of different kinds in different countries have shown that parents taking an *active* role in the education of the children have a clearly measurable positive effect on the educational outcomes of their kids. The TIES Study, for example, let see that in Germany and Austria children from low-educated parents of Turkish origin had statistically almost no chance to access higher education when their parents were not able or willing to take this active part – in the sense of regularly seeking contact with the school and talking at home about school issues with their children. The effect went in a similar direction, even though with less dramatic consequences, in the Netherlands, France, Switzerland and Belgium. Sweden was the only country in the survey in which no statistical effect of higher parental engagement was found (Crul, Schneider, Lelie 2012). A longitudinal study in the USA proved that parental engagement during the education of their children, ideally beginning already in pre-school, had a significant positive effect on the later trajectory of these children: their chance of a high school diploma increased in 40% and for finding a job in 35%. Their risk to become dependent on social welfare at age 19 or to be convicted to jail dropped between 55 and 40% respectively (Sacher 2012).

These effects can be attributed to two aspects: the home as a learning environment and the sensibility of schools to parental interventions. Especially at early ages, the homes and the

families of children have to be considered as important complementary learning environments. Reading books together, playing games and leading conversations are important support elements for the cognitive, emotional and social development of children. If that does not happen at all in the childrens' homes, schools are hardly able to fully compensate resulting deficits. However, depending on the educational level of the parents and the wider social and economic situation of a family, many families are not able to provide this stimulating environment – be it because of lack of time (fully working, working in shifts etc.) or lack of resources and familiarity with this kind of activities. Parents with low levels of education, coming from families which had no books etc., and which moreover lack the economic resources to buy books and games and the necessary materials for drawing and painting cannot really give their children this kind of support, they need to be supported themselves. The more vulnerable the situation of a family is, the more important is any sort of compensation from outside the family. And which institution could be better suited to address parents in this regard than the school?

At the same time, schools are generally quite sensible towards the interventions of parents. On the one side, this has to do with the not unfrequent attitude particularly among middle-class parents of continuously putting the school and the teachers under the suspicion of not providing the best possible education for their children. But, on the other side, it has also to do with the fact that the relationship between schools and parents has received surprisingly little attention and reflection in the ways schools are organised in most countries. Schools seek the contact to the parents on parents' evenings and parent-teacher-conversations, but they mostly resent parents who become too proactive on their own initiative. Schools expect parents to help their children with homework and learning for exams, but they hardly ever do anything to *enable* them to so, or at least take an interest in the factual capacities of parents in doing so. At the other extreme, there are also school systems which take for granted that parents should *not* are not required to intervene in the school education of their children. But in these cases, a valuable resource is missed – especially in primary and pre-school education.

In the ideal case, the educational success of children does not depend on whether parents intervene and become active or not. Schools should be able to and strive for providing all their pupils the same educational chances and possibilities according to their talents and interests, and *not* on the basis of the family background, be it social class, ethnic background or the educational level of the parents. However, in the ideal case, schools and parents work hand in hand in the same direction and with the same objective of providing children with an environment which is supportive to a holistic understanding of child development. Even with their children attending an ideal school, parents can do a lot for social-emotional and cognitive support, but despite many natural talents among them there are also many who need and would like to receive support and knowledge to do so.

In the past years, the concept of “cooperative parental participation” has gained momentum in the educational debates in many countries. Today, it is hardly ever questioned that involving parents into the functioning of a school and the educational process is desirable – and be it only to avoid the negative effects of a distorted relationship between school and parents. The first question, however, is how to concretise this and how to profit from good experiences and best practices that are already there. This report is aimed at giving at least some ideas on what is happening in different countries in Europe and what parents themselves and other non-school based actors can do to promote the idea of cooperation and participation of parents in the school context. The second question is how the positive experience here and there can be evaluated in the sense of developing quality standards for what projects or concepts of parental involvement should entail.

An interesting initiative in this direction has recently been taken by the German Vodafone-Foundation, whose “Quality Standards for Parental Involvement in Schools” are reproduced on the following pages. They are directed mainly towards the schools themselves, but they may also provide an orientation for non- school based initiatives what to strive for and claim in the cooperation with schools.

Quality Standards for Parental Involvement in Schools

A compass for the cooperation in partnership between schools and parents

Quality Standard A:

A Culture of Welcome and Meeting

Mission Statement: To strengthen the school community: All parents consider themselves as part of the school community and they feel respected and valued.

A1: An inviting and friendly atmosphere

A2: The school community is inclusive and characterised by mutual respect.

Quality Standard B:

Diverse and Respectful Communication

Mission Statement: Parents and teachers regularly inform each other on everything which is relevant for the education and development of the children – also independent from specific occasions.

B1: School, parents and parental representatives regularly exchange informations also when there is no special occasion or need for that.

B2: School and parents use a diverse range of communication means and forms.

B3: At the transition points from kindergarten to primary school and from primary to secondary school a regular exchange of informations and transfer of knowledge is guaranteed.

Quality Standard C:

Cooperation for Education

Mission Statement: Parents, teachers and pupils work together for educational success and coordinate the learning objectives and content. The individual participation in decision-making of parents and pupils is provided.

C1: Parents can contribute to the school life and the teaching in diverse ways

C2: Parents accompany their children in the learning process and they express their interest in the school experiences of their child.

C3: Parents and the school are aware of the programs of external actors and integrate them into the day-to-day school practice.

C4: The interests of the pupils are respresented by their parents and themselves. The parents see themselves as advocates for every single child.

Quality Standard D:***Participation of Parents***

Mission Statement: The collective co-determination and participation of parents is provided. If wished for and adequate, they are incorporated in decisions on the school life and the lessons. Also the pupils are adequately incorporated.

D1: Parents are sufficiently informed about their rights and possibilities to participate.

D2: Parents from all social backgrounds and groups participate adequately in the decision-making and school development processes, and they are represented in the parental boards of the school according to their demographic weight.

D3: The parent representatives are included in the social, political and external networks of the school.

Source: Vodafone Stiftung Deutschland (<http://www.eltern-bildung.net>)

Croatia

Prepared by Forum for Freedom in Education (FFE)

School open to parents – parental involvement in schools

Parents of school children in Croatia mostly have too few opportunities to participate in decision-making in the school and the local community for the benefit of their children. On the other hand, parents and all who care for the welfare of children are obliged to exercise the rights of children in the best possible way and this is possible only if they openly communicate and collaborate. Parents' Association Step by Step, Croatia is implementing the project *School open to parents* since 2007; which encourages collaboration between parents and schools and empower parents to actively participate in the community.

The project is primarily provided to Parents' Councils in schools, but the activities can include all interested parents. The Parents' Council consists of representatives from each classes and one member is participating in the work of the School Board. The Parents' Council is established under the Law on Education in Primary and Secondary Schools, in order to achieve the task of education and linking school with the social environment. Some of the tasks of the Parents' Council are: discussion of issues relevant to the life and work of the school, giving opinions and suggestions regarding the proposal of the school curriculum and the annual work plan and program of the school, in connection with the improvement of educational work, success of students and extra-curricular activities. Although the Parents' council enable many opportunities for parent involvement, active participation of parents in school is often missing, and the Parents' Council exists only formally, without actual participation in the work of the school.

Project *School is open to parents* has resulted in the need for information and education of parents, especially those who are members of the Parents' Council. By a combination of required skills for empowerment and their active role in the establishment of partnerships between schools and families, parents become more effective in representing the interests and needs of children and families through active participation in the life of the school and the local community. During the current implementation, the activities included 14 schools in the Republic of Croatia (Primary School Ljudevita Gaja, Zaprešić; PS K. Š. Gjalskog, Zabok; PS Marija Bistrica; PS Frana Galovića, Zagreb; PS Dobriše Cesarića, Zagreb; PS Trnsko, Zagreb; PS Kuršanec; PS Sveti Đurđ; PS Ludbreg; PS Eugena Kumičića, Velika Gorica; PS Martijanec,

Varaždin; PS Dr. Jure Turića, Gospić; PS Bogumila Tonija, Samobor; PS Dr. Franje Tuđmana, Lički Osik).

Activities include two workshops for members of parents and other interested parents with the topic of how to constructively participate in school life and to represent and advocate the interests of children and families in the school and the local community (Caring Communities & Empowerment for change). During the workshop, parents choose some actual problem and prepare an action plan to resolve it. Led by trainers, they're taught how to make a realistic and actionable plan and how can goals and changes occur through small directed action. Action plans were indeed different from school to school, and here are some.

In elementary school Dobriše Cesarića in Zagreb, recognized problem was reduced safety of children in traffic in front of the school building. Specifically, overside of pedestrian crossings often are parked cars so cars driving down the street couldn't notice that child wants to cross the road, because of reduced visibility. The problem has existed for several years, and two years ago safety speed bumps were set. However, the problem has not been solved and children from the lower grades are especially vulnerable. For this reason the Parents' Council filed a petition to local government for setting the uprights fence to prevent parking around the pedestrian crossing. After the official letter, parents personally claimed the request, and after two months fence was actually placed.

Quick response as well as the satisfaction of parents to solve problems has encouraged parents to new activities in cooperation with the school, namely arranging school playgrounds and abandoned athletic track.

Activities conducted after the workshop include follow-up meetings to review previously carried incurred activities and concrete results of parental action. Selection and solving a specific problem in the community usually provides fast results and is associated with an increase in parents' motivation and readiness for further active participation. Upon completion of the activities, parents are usually connected to each other enough so they can continue the mutual communication, to solve specific problems in school as well in local community.

In all schools involved in the project, satisfactory results have been achieved, but in the future they will depend on the further support on which parents can count. Parents need continuously encouragement, and project trainers periodically meet with parents and attend parent council meetings to provide parents encouragement to continue active participation and action. Difficulties in some schools refer to the lack of interest in cooperation with parents, especially by teachers who do not recognize the importance of joint involvement in activities. Better cooperation was observed by principals and associates.

Evaluation of the project included two levels, the satisfaction of parents and their perceived usefulness of workshops as well as evaluation of the consequences, ie, specific changes in the school or community as a result of small organized actions of parents.

The reactions of parents involved in workshops on advocacy were beyond all our expectations, and contrary to the widespread view that parents are not interested in what is going on at school. Parents want to actively contribute to the improvement of their children's school, they want to get their opinions and suggestions heard with understanding and respect, they are willing to invest their time, knowledge, skills and resources in the implementation of these ideas, in other words, they want to be active partners in schools. What they need is a perception that their involvement in the school is accepted and recognized as valuable. They also need knowledge and skills to constructively advocate for the necessary changes and an assertive way to represent the interests and needs of children and families.

Empowerment of Roma parents in Međimurje and Sisak-Moslavina County



Open Academy Step by Step, Croatia

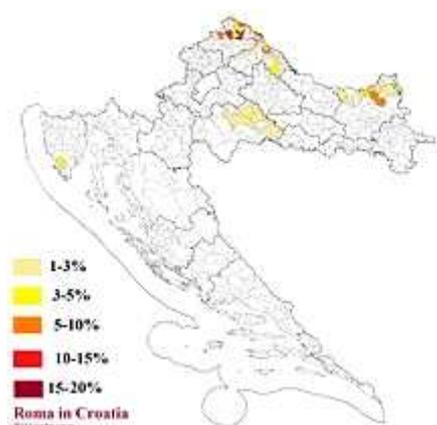


Image 1 – Roma population in Croatia (Source: Wikipedia). The blue arrow is pointing Međimurje County and the green arrow is pointing Sisak – Moslavina County.

“I thought - I have four kids already, what could I possibly learn here? But I’ve learned so much. You learn and you spend time with your child.” Workshop participant, Međimurje

1. Context

According to the data of the 2011 Census, in Croatia live 16.975 member of Roma national minority (0,4% of the inhabitants), yet “(...) this number is estimated to be significantly higher, between 30.000 an 40.000.” (Government Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities). Civil society organization Open Academy Step by Step Croatia has implemented a 2-year (2011 – 2013) project *Empowerment of Roma parents in Empowering Roma parents in supporting their children's development and education* in 2 Croatian counties with a large number of Roma population – Međimurje and Sisak Moslavina. The project has been implemented in 3 communities of Međimurje (Macinec, Orehovica, Mala Subotica/Drzimurec Strelec), and 1 in Sisak-Moslavina (Town of Kutina). In 4 primary schools of these 4 communities, over 50% of pupils are Roma. Just like in many other countries, Roma in Croatia live in poverty and have much lower life standards than other groups in the society – e.g. UNDP *Faces of Poverty, Faces of Hope* report (2005) states that “the poverty rate of the Roma in Croatia is 2,5 times higher than that of the non-Roma living in proximity to them”. This claim could be applied to the communities that we worked in, even though that some differences between these communities do exist.

The idea for project began was the initiative of OA Step by Step, yet its detailed planning was done together with school educators, leadership, education specialists and Roma assistants who at the same time had the important role of community representatives. It was decided



to focus on the parents of (Roma, but also other) children who are at the preschool age, i.e. who will enroll into 1st year of primary school in the next school year. It is worth mentioning that in all 3 communities of Međimurje County where the project was implemented, all Roma children age 6 attend 10-month preschool program funded by Roma Education Fund (REF) and Međimurje County. In this case, since it was possible to do so, the project has seized to create a synergy with the preschool program.

Furthermore, a survey was conducted among Roma parents focused on several areas – (a) general information about the child; (b) experiences with school so far (e.g. how well do they know the school and school staff; the expectations that they have from teachers; the expectations that they have for their child’s achievement...); (c) child’s experiences at home (e.g. language; toys/objects/ materials available for playing and learning at home); and (d) upbringing (e.g. persons involved; concerns regarding child’s education and the ability to support the child...). This way, we got a more precise insight on the differences between the participating communities and the findings were discussed with parent facilitators and used for the adjustment of the project to each community accordingly.

“I think that now we have put our heads together, we are smarter.”

Teacher – Workshop facilitator talking about the changes that the project produced, Međimurje

2. Aims and activities

The project was created based on the overall goal of supporting wellbeing and successful development and learning of children, since the vicious circle of exclusion is also determined by low educational achievement of a child. Based on the planning and consultation phase, the implementers decided to do this through supporting and developing capacity of parents and school - the two sides that influence children’s lives the most. On one side, this included creating a good home learning environment and on the other, it included strengthening collaboration between school and parents. Finally, we expected to influence the issue of the integration and social cohesion within these communities.

“There were always prejudices in our community between the Roma and the Croats. ‘Yours and Ours’. These workshops helped us to overcome it because we were together. And this would have the same effect on other people if they would participate.” Workshop participant, Međimurje

Within this project, almost all members of the school staff of the 4 participating schools were educated about different strategies of collaboration with parents, but also about intercultural learning and education for social justice, which has proved to be crucial not just for participation of parents from ethnic groups different than the dominant one, but also for improving the quality of entire school. Besides being educated in communication and training skills and pre-literacy and pre-mathematic themes, the facilitators were also ‘equipped’ with various adapted materials - Children’s Activity Sets, Parent Facilitators Guide and Parent Activity Guide, brochures for parents, and picture books. In addition, the project team and facilitators organized the follow-up meetings on regular basis. All of this resulted in the fact



that 17 members of the team consisting of Roma assistants, preschool educators, teachers, education specialists and school principals have conducted educative workshops for parents and other members of the family on weekly basis for 2 years. In some workshops, consisting more of the learning activities and games, the children were present as well. In other workshops, focusing more on discussion about education issues, the parents were exchanging their opinions without

presence of the children. All participants got the materials to be taken and used at home together with children, such as picture books, materials with learning tasks, crayons etc. The experiences from this project show that parents react extremely positively to this type of activities (interactive educative workshops) and that they apply the skills and knowledge acquired at the workshops. The data from the attendance sheets showed that over these 2 years around 245 parents and other members of the family (grandparents, uncles, aunts, older siblings etc.) participated continuously at the workshops.

“My daughter was so satisfied that she got the crayons from her teacher. It meant to her more than it would have if I had bought it for her.” Workshop participant, Međimurje

Finally, it is worth mentioning that one of the initiatives that created by the parents/family members was the joint excursion of all participants of the workshops. For some of them it was the first time to go somewhere outside their village. This kind of informal gathering has proved to be a strong additional motivator for participation in this educative program.

3. Evaluation

The evaluation of the project was done both externally and internally.

The external evaluation was undertaken by the Croatian CSO – Center for Peace Vukovar (contact person – Mr. Ljubomir Mikić) within the Decade Intelligence Initiative (DI) of the DECADE OF ROMA INCLUSION 2005 – 2015. The general conclusion on the impact of the project was: *“Results of the internal evaluation speak in favor of the project’s both short and long-term positive impact on local Roma parents and children, as well as their wider local communities.”*

OA Step by Step has undertaken internal evaluation based on the data got from the attendance lists (see the section 2. *Aims and activities*), as well as on the results of the focus groups with parents and facilitators in all 4 locations. The results of this evaluation are briefly presented in the section 4. *Challenges and Benefits*.

4. Challenges and Benefits

Challenges	Benefits
<p>Periods of lower attendance, especially in the time of spring and summer, due to the work opportunities for parents available in those periods. Other remark by the facilitators connected to the attendance was the challenge of <u>creating a new habit of continuous participation in a new type of school activity</u>.</p>	<p>All parents in all 4 communities are very satisfied with the workshops and would like to continue attending the workshops even after their child goes to school</p>
<p>Short duration of the workshop (1, 5 hour)</p>	<p>All parents in all 4 communities stated that they have applied a significant part of what they learned at the workshops. The parents also mentioned that the children enjoy working with them at home.</p>
<p>Parents’ skepticism towards certain activities at the beginning of the project, due to the assumption that the trainers will mock at them for their ‘incompetence’.</p>	<p>In all 4 communities the Roma parents have stated that the Croatian language performance improved significantly since the beginning of the workshops.</p>
	<p>In 3 out of 4 communities the group was ethnically mixed – parents from the majority and other groups have participated and the relations between them improved.</p>
	<p>One of the changes that the trainers recognize is the change in the relationship with parents - they feel that the level of trust between the school and the parents has significantly increased.</p>

5. Transferability

Learning from the experiences of this project, the implementing team believes that this project is transferable to all communities/schools with Roma population. The argument for this is also the success of the project in all 4 communities, despite the differences of these contexts – urban/rural areas, more developed/less developed area etc. We also believe that this model, with certain adaptations could be applied to the schools and communities with the immigrant population.

ESTONIA

Prepared by Praxis Center for Policy Studies

The role of parental involvement in founding Tartu International School

In 2001, a group of new immigrant parents joined their forces with the aim to establish an educational institution that would provide education in English as a language of instruction to their school-aged children. These six families from four different countries had seven children between ages 6 and 12. The founding parents were involved as students or teachers in two of the higher educational institutions in Tartu - University of Tartu and the Baltic Defence College. As related to their work or studies, these families were staying in Estonia on temporary basis, from one to three years. They found, after having been introduced to some local schools, that sending their children to an Estonian-speaking school was not the most suitable option for them.



At the beginning of the new millennium a new immigrant student was defined as someone who had lived in Estonia less than three years, and yet the Estonian educational system and legal framework approached the new immigrant students as the students who had lived in Estonia for more than two generations and whose language of communication was Russian (EMER, 2004). The Estonian schools lacked experience and knowledge on how to support and educate the children who did not speak Estonian or Russian, or how to help the students and their parents with transition to a new cultural and educational environment. Moreover, the Estonian national curriculum for basic schools, which is a basis for every school curriculum,



did not give much possibilities for the multicultural approach. The major parts of several subject syllabi concentrated on topics about Estonia and it was difficult to maneuver around the themes that were compulsory by the national curriculum (e.g. on Estonian literature, history or natural science). From year 2004, with the help of Integration and Migration Foundation, the staff of schools and kindergartens in Estonia started to get training on how to educate the new immigrant students, and the first study about

new immigrant students in Estonian educational institutions was published in 2007 (Kasemets et al., 2007).

In order to start a school for their children, the group of parents, who had newly arrived in Tartu, started an NGO to run a private English-speaking basic school, found suitable rooms and hired teachers. Together the philosophy and objectives for the school were defined: “Tartu International School brings together children of diverse nationalities, languages and heritages, who by learning and associating together, are better able to understand and appreciate each other’s background and cultures” (The Curriculum of Tartu International School, 2004). Although over the years the wording of TIS educational philosophy has changed a bit, the child and its development are still the central of the school’s vision: “Tartu International School is a valued educational institution that provides high quality modern and multicultural education in English. Our mission is to foster and educate graduates that are confident, adaptive, tolerant, and succeeding in life” (The Development Plan of Tartu International School, 2012).

Opening the school was an impressive achievement considered that none of the parents spoke Estonian, they had lived in the country for one year or even less, and were not familiar with the local legal and administrative policies and practices. The local municipality recognised the effort of the parents, yet there was no practical help from the local municipality to set up a school for international community in Tartu. These difficulties did not stop the parents from materialising their vision, and with help from their Estonian friends and colleagues the educational activities started. The first goal for the parents was that their children would get high-standard education in English, and find opportunities for social interaction. Soon it was clear that the school also plays a vital role in the transition process of the whole family.

Also today, the parents are always welcome to visit Tartu International School. It is important that they can come, see and sense the relations between the people who work and study together, and feel the climate of the school. Over the years, the school has developed strategies to facilitate parental involvement in school development through various activities. For example, the parents can learn Estonian or English at school during the hours when their children have lessons or attend the afternoon care. The student council of TIS organises childcare for the parents’ nights, a parent volunteer leads a weekly community sports club, which gives a great opportunity to meet and talk in a more informal way. The families stay in contact with the school even after they have left Estonia. When the school was celebrating its 10th birthday several families happily accepted the invitation and traveled to Tartu to celebrate and meet their friends. The former students of TIS have a chance to stay in touch with the school and their friends also through online English club that is run by TIS English teacher.



The school community has actively participated in local level activities as well as sharing the experience and best practice at national level. The parents and teachers of TIS have participated in public discussions on immigrant and international education (e.g. Tartu Interna-

tional School organized or participated in roundtables at local and governmental level in 2005, 2009, 2010). In 2005-2006 the teachers of Tartu International School were involved in training Estonian educators on how to help new immigrant students to adjust to a new learning and cultural environment. During the first two academic years the staff and parents



worked together to develop a curriculum that would meet the needs of a multicultural school, and composed other necessary documentation in order to apply for a formal schooling license in Estonia. This process was time-consuming and complex because it was not easy to match the practices of an international school with the legal framework of that time. Estonian current Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act sets policies which give the schools more flexibility than before to compose a curriculum that would

meet individual needs of a specific school, this gives a good ground for educating immigrant or international students either in an Estonian- or English-speaking school. Therefore, it can be said that Tartu International School has, with its existence and activities, influenced the educational policies and practices in Estonia.

People from different backgrounds meet at Tartu International School. It is clear that sometimes it can be challenging to make this diversity work in harmony. TIS is a private school, which is governed by a non-profit organization. The majority of the members of this organization are the parents or the teachers. About 30% of families leave TIS every year to return to their home countries or serve in next positions. With this turnover every effort is needed in order to ensure the continuity and stability of the organization that runs the school, and therefore the school itself. Managing a multicultural and changing organization, and putting the people of different cultural backgrounds to work in harmony can be challenging sometimes. Nevertheless, in nearly 13 years of existence, the role of Tartu International School has broadened in many ways and diversified community life and opportunities – the school offers daycare service, preschool and basic school education, language courses for adults, helps immigrant and international families to adjust in Tartu and Estonia and serves as a community centre for its families and staff members of whom many are of international background also. The local Estonian families whose work or studies take them abroad are more and more interested in enrolling their children in TIS activities because this gives a great opportunity for an early English language learning. Also, the individual approach that TIS offers, helps the children of the returnees (who often don't speak Estonian) to adjust to Estonian again.

Today, when the TIS pioneers who started the project, are not connected to the school on daily basis anymore, the school has still kept its ethos, and is continuously keeping the high level of parental involvement. The result of the school's external and internal evaluation are a basis for the evaluation of the project. TIS has successfully renewed its basic school licence in 2008, in 2012 the structure of the school was changed and now the school is fully accredited to teach in pre-school and basic school level. Feedback from the educational authorities, parents, students and teachers and other staff members are basis for school development

where everybody has its important role. According to the results of a recent survey at TIS, 95% of the parents said that they have a chance to play an active role in school life (TIS Parents Feedback Survey, 2013). In 2012, the school received a public recognition for implementing good practices of parental involvement.

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Getting to know one's ethnic roots: The Ukrainian Language Sunday School

City: Sillamäe, Estonia

School: Sillamäe Kannuka Kool (Sillamäe Kannuka School)

Period of time: Since 2003

Ukrainian language and cultural studies as an elective subject

There are representatives from more than 100 different nationalities living in Estonia. Estonia, historically, from the migrant wave between the years 1950-1988 has a considerable number of immigrants of mostly Russian origin. Thus many of them speak Russian as their first language. The biggest language minority groups in Estonia are Russians (approx. 25% of the whole population) followed by the Ukrainians (2%).

Since the re-independence of the Estonian Republic in 1991, the minority groups have increasingly started to pay more attention to their mother tongue and ethnic culture. Many cultural societies of language minorities have been created and they have expressed desire to have possibility to study their mother tongue in general education schools. Starting from 2003 such a possibility exists. According to the legislation, the parents of students with a mother tongue different from the language of instruction can apply for mother tongue lessons as an elective subject within the framework of the school curriculum in all Estonian basic schools. The Ukrainian language community has proven to be the most successful in using this possibility.

It is the role of parents usually to write an application for the language studies at a particular school. The school management is responsible for finding teachers and organizes appropriate study materials to enable studying the language. However, in Sillamäe (the city is located in North-East of Estonia, Ukrainians are the second biggest minority group living in Sillamäe composing 3% of the inhabitants in the city), the Ukrainian Cultural Society named Vodograi took the responsibility to find the teachers, study materials, and to compile the subject curriculum for the elective subject of Ukrainian language and culture. The Ukrainian Cultural Society in Sillamäe was created in 1999, the Sunday school for children in Ukrainian also in 1999, and starting from 2004, the Ukrainian language and culture is an elective subject in Sillamäe Kannuka Kool.



Event in Sillamäe Estonian School, the Ukrainian music and traditional musical instruments were presented. (Source: <http://etnoweb.ee/Media/182d4743-e34a-4e3f-a0b5-0bc0d903dd4c/Pdf/Infolyst-179-2012-rus.pdf>)

The Ukrainian language and culture as part of the school life

The main goal of the Ukrainian Cultural Society “Vodograi” in Sillamäe is to introduce the Ukrainian language, culture, customs and traditions to wider community. At the same time, it aims to support people with the Ukrainian origin to integrate into Estonian society because Sillamäe city has a very limited number of Estonians which means that there are only a few possibilities to use the Estonian language and get to know Estonian culture in everyday life.

The Ukrainian Cultural Society is an umbrella organization governing the activities of the museum, library, song ensemble, the Heritage language school (Sunday School in the Ukrainian language) for children and organizing Ukrainian language studies in Sillamäe Kannuka School. The main purpose of the Ukrainian language and cultural studies in basic school and in the Heritage language school is to create opportunities to learn Ukrainian language and gain knowledge about Ukraine, Ukrainian music, art, customs and traditions, typical Ukrainian handicraft.

The broader goal is related to sustainability of the Ukrainian language and culture. Creating opportunities to learn the language, enhancing the basis for valuing multilingualism and maintaining opportunities to speak and study mother tongue in a foreign country enable sustainability, especially in a situation in which the Ukrainian language is not the most popu-

lar foreign language to learn. It is equally important objective of the Society to build up a direct and personal connection between the Ukrainian people in Estonia.

The main target groups of the activities are Ukrainian origin students between the ages of 7 and 16 years in formal education and children and adolescents aged 4 to 18 in the Heritage Sunday school. There is no restriction to participate in these activities for students with different mother tongue and cultural background. The learning activities are age-appropriate, including activities targeted at various age groups and collaboration between parents and children.

In cooperation with the Sillamäe Kannuka School and Sillamäe City Council, the language lessons and cultural studies are included in the school curriculum. The main target group is students with the Ukrainian origin. However, every student in Sillamäe has the opportunity to learn the Ukrainian language and culture, regardless of their ethnic background. Most of the students are from ethnically mixed families, for instance Ukrainian-Russian, Ukrainian-Estonian.



The Ukrainian Language lesson (Source: <http://etnoweb.ee/Media/df75cf1e-27d5-44e7-aa1c-87f2a66e0ef6/Pdf/Infolyst-184-2013-rus.pdf>)

The Ukrainian language and culture (literature, history, art, music) lessons in basic school take place twice in week. Language skills and knowledge are developed not only in the language lessons but are integrated in the curriculum of other subjects, e.g.. Art, Music, Literature. In the latter case, the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) methodology is

used. The main emphasis in the lessons is to develop Ukrainian language skills. The students are encouraged to use Ukrainian language in after school activities, organized by the Ukrainian Cultural Society Vodograi and the Heritage Language School. The best examples of the language skills development include summer and winter camps, various hobby activities, study visits to Ukraine.

The Cultural Society Vodograi has built up a diverse contact network and collaborative relationships with different institutions in Ukraine, including teacher education institutions. There is a tradition to invite guest teachers from Ukraine to teach in Sillamäe Kannuka Kool, also in the Heritage language school. Teachers and tutors from Estonia participate in different in-service trainings organized by the Ukrainian universities for teachers who teach the Ukrainian language abroad.

Beneficiaries, progress and success

The Ukrainian Cultural Society in Estonia is financed by the Ministry of Culture, the Heritage Language School by the Ministry of Education and Research. The organizations must provide an overview about the activities provided and report on the usage of funding every year. According to the audit-reports, all activities initiated by the Cultural Society Vodograi are appropriate effective and diverse, offering possibilities for different target group participation, including school- aged children. It is noteworthy that students that participate in the Ukrainian language and culture lessons in Sillamäe Kannuka Kool and in the Heritage Language School are able to participate in different competitions, concerts and other events that are held in the Ukrainian language. The number of participants in the lessons and other activities has been stable over the years – there are approximately 30 children participating in various activities every year.

Research shows that being able to speak one's mother tongue is an important pre-condition to achieve positive personal identity and academic success. There have been many attempts by parents to start teaching mother tongue of various languages in the frame of school curriculum, but most of them haven't been sustainable because of the small number of students, multiage groups, or because of the parental preference to other elective subjects and not the mother tongue lessons. Financial cover by the Ministry of Education and Research is offered for elective subjects in the school curriculum and not for mother tongue lessons as an additional option apart from electives. The Ukrainian community in Sillamäe has surpassed all these challenges.

The main beneficiaries are the students from Ukrainian origin and their families, who due to the language and cultural lessons are able to have a closer connection with their country of origin along with an opportunity to continue their studies in the Ukrainian universities should they choose so. They are able to participate in different activities provided in the Ukrainian language in Estonia as well as in other countries. The activities initiated by the Cultural Society Vodograi have enabled other Estonian inhabitants, especially in Sillamäe, Tartu

and Valga to get familiar with the Ukrainian culture and therefore increase their understanding of one language minority group living in Estonia. This enhances multicultural competencies of all students, including those, who are not directly involved in the activities of the language studies or Sunday school, which enables more competent communication in culturally diverse settings and deeper understanding of people with different cultural background, especially by having contact with them.

The activities related to the Ukrainian language and culture have expanded to other places in Estonia. The Ukrainian Sunday School has two subsidiary schools in two other towns in Estonia – Tartu and Valga. These Sunday schools are not yet related to general education schools, but the students have an opportunity to participate in events organized by Sillamäe school. The expansion has occurred mainly due to the initiative of the Ukrainian community members as they have been able to successfully involve new families in other parts of Estonia who could be interested in the Ukrainian language studies for their children. The local authorities support the initiative by helping to find suitable rooms for the activities. In addition, the Ministry of Education and Research as well as Integration Foundation have supported the Ukrainian Cultural Society financially, but also with communication with promoting and presenting the activities of Vodograi to the general public.

More information can be found at:

<http://web.zone.ee/vodograi/est/index.html>

<http://www.etnoweb.ee/vodograi>

SPAIN

Prepared by AM Rosa Sensat

Tales from the World

Description

The parents associations in nursery schools have a short period of time to organize activities, since the families stay there for a maximum of three school years. That's why their task is so valuable. The families launch projects which, in many cases, will never be finished.

What we present here is an initiative by the parents association of the Cadí nursery school. That nursery school has a high rate of children from newly arrived families which, in most cases, it's the first time they come in contact with an education institution. The group of mothers and fathers which form the association have designed a project aimed at making the country's culture known to the newly arrived families through story telling, in order to establish both communicative and affective links.

The families who launched the project planned two different kinds of activities:

-Visiting children's libraries

In order to learn about which tales they had to put in the hands of children and families, they got in touch with two libraries in the area: the Sant Pau-Santa Creu library and the Rosa Sensat Teachers Association's library. At the Association's library they held four sessions with the librarian. The first three were only meant for the families, the fourth was also for children.

-Telling stories to children

From the indications they got from the librarian different sessions were organized to tell popular stories within the school. Furthermore, since at the Raval neighbourhood many activities are held during St. George's Day (the Day of the Rose and the Book in Catalonia), they organized a story telling session open to the whole neighbourhood. This activity took place in a haima (a bedouin tent) placed at the Rambla del Raval (the main street in the neighbourhood).

Evaluation

The evaluation of the project has been very positive. There's been a high participation from the families, both native and immigrant. The satisfaction level is so high that they want to extend the experience by including musical language to it.

Any project launched in a nursery school is a big challenge. Specifically in this one there existed the concern of offering children from 0 to 3 stories which were appropriate to their evolution and maturative stage, and, on the other hand, which transmitted to the newly arrived families aspects and features of our cultural heritage.

All the stakeholders who have participated in this project consider that the nursery community, made up by educators, teachers, families and children, has been the most benefited since thanks to that project a more fluent interrelation and communication among all the community members has been achieved.

We have no knowledge about it having been implemented in other nurseries.

The ALIF Project

Introduction

Sant Celoni is a town with 17.000 inhabitants at the Baix Montseny region. The non-profit association Almadaa-Horitzons was created there eleven years ago with the main aim to promote a respectful coexistence among different cultures and to promote cultural exchanges.

This association works towards a multicultural society in which everyone can find their place, where the newcomers can live together normally with the people from the community which welcomes them. But this inclusion within the new culture can only take place through one's own language and culture. That perspective led them to design the ALIF project.

Description

The ALIF project aims at making the language and the culture of their ancestors available to the Catalan children from Maghrebi parents. They wanted to launch such initiative after observing that the ignorance of the family culture and values led the immigrant children and youngsters to a certain uprooting which, often, gave place to problematic attitudes. They realized that these children and youngsters couldn't accept the values of our culture without knowing and loving their parent's language and culture. So, this project raises from a collective concern: that the newly arrived children or those already born here know their family's language in order to be able to fully integrate in the Catalan society.

The main activity of this project are Arabic language classes for kindergarten and primary school children. The classes are taught by Maghrebi mothers who have established a work group to discuss which are the best methodologies and didactic strategies.

The project aims basically at facilitating the acquisition of strategies to learn the Arabic language incorporating the transversal competencies, as well as to build each one's own identity based on the command of their language of origin. On the other hand, they also want to strengthen the link of the newly arrived families with the school setting.

Such activity takes place during out of school hours and in a government-subsidised private school in town. The fact that it takes place in such a school is something purposeful, since the project promoters believe that this is the most suitable place to favour intercultural coexistence.

Evaluation

So far, both families and children are evaluating this project very positively, although there aren't yet concluding data about the positive impact of such training.

Launching such a project in the cultural and linguistic environment where it has been launched is already a challenge, since not everybody has understood and supported it. But with perseverance and by explaining its positive aspects to the different education stakeholders, they have managed to keep it going.

The main benefit of such a project is for children and youngsters who participate in the training, but also for the whole community, both native and migrant, since the ALIF project promotes the integration of immigrants which, in turn, improves the coexistence of different people and cultures.

Right now, they are establishing links with other associations to try to create synergies and alliances with other collectives with common concerns.

Germany

Prepared by verikom

"Reaching for the stars..."

The Diesterweg Scholarships for Families in Frankfurt/Main, Germany

"My parents gained many new friends and have started to speak more German. Sometimes, they can now even help me with the homework." (a participant child)

Adolph Diesterweg was an educator and pedagogue in 19th century who promoted the idea of equal access to education for everyone and invented the concept of "Volksschule", a school for "the people". He was also co-founder of the Polytechnical Society which, through its own foundation, in 2008 began to give incentives to immigrant families for striving for more ambitious educational goals for their children.

The program "Diesterweg-Stipendium" is unique in the way it combines educational support for children at the transition from primary to lower secondary education – in the German school system this is the most crucial transition point in any educational career¹ – with an empowerment approach towards the parents and with financial support directed to the families.

Center piece of the activities are the so-called "Saturday Academies" which are offered in parallel to children and parents. While the children are given extra lessons in math, German language, literature, science and technology, theatre, music and arts, their parents sit next door and learn about the German school system and their rights as parents, but also how to become engaged and active in the system's participatory structure.

¹ In most German federal states this transition happens after 4th grade at the age of 10. Lower secondary education is divided into three levels: academic, middle vocational and lower vocational. There is a clear tendency in the German system to more comprehensive types of school, but as a logic of *internal* differentiation the three tracks or levels are still applied in most states. Differently from many other school systems, changing from one track to another is not easy and almost exclusively used for *downstreaming* children with certain difficulties.

Next to this basic program, there are joint excursions in order to "explore" Frankfurt and its surroundings and to become familiar with the diverse range of cultural and educational places in the city. During parent cafés and with the help of voluntary mentors for the family as a whole the parents are encouraged and empowered to define ambitious educational goals for their children. The foundation moreover offers individual counselling whenever there are individual or particular problems to be solved. The full duration of the program for a family is two years and consists of a minimum of six "academy" days for children and parents respectively.

A significant incentive for the low-income families is also the financial support up to 600 Euros per year for educational material and equipment.

The program looks particularly for children with promising potentials for an academic trajectory in secondary education. The foundation runs a program for German language courses during the summer holidays ("DeutschSommer"), and not few participants are recruited from these courses. But the program also has fixed cooperation relationships with a number of elementary schools which can propose candidates for participation. Each application must be accompanied with a recommendation letter from the school principal and a qualified statement from the class teacher. The selection process also includes an interview with each applicant family.

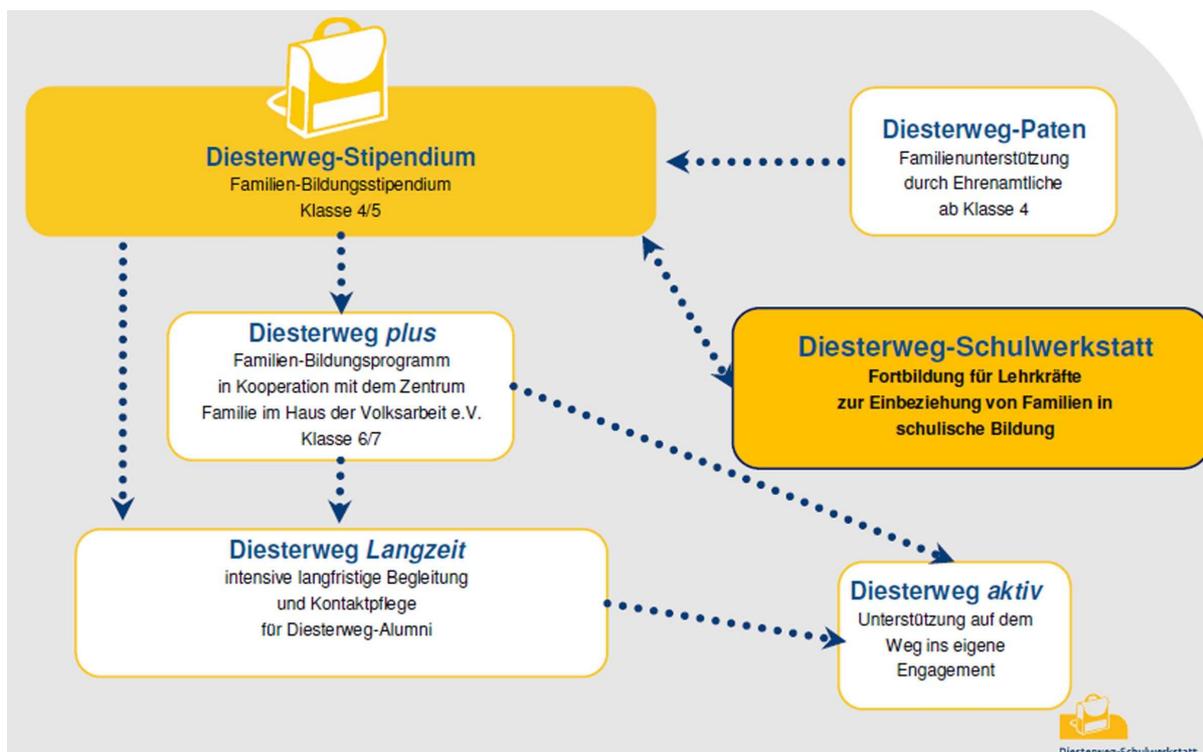
The program is now in its third term (the "third generation"), i.e. currently the third group of families benefits from the program's activities. The first two "generations" have been evaluated by the European Forum for Migration Studies (efms) of the University of Bamberg with very promising results:

- two thirds of the grantees successfully made the transition to the academic track ("Gymnasium"), the rest went to the middle vocational track ("Realschule") or a comprehensive school. All children managed the entry into the new school well and were transferred to 6th grade after one year;
- many parents make use of the informations and qualifications received during the parent academies and become more active in the schools.

After the two years, even though the successful transition to lower secondary education has been accomplished, the families are not left alone. In cooperation with the family education center in the Haus der Volksarbeit e.V. the families can participate in a program called "Diesterweg *Plus*" and even move on into "Diesterweg Langzeit", a support program of non-defined duration – if necessary and wished for. Through these two possibilities the Polytechnical Society can practically guarantee the sustainability of the effects of its "academies" on the families.

The foundation also knows that supporting the families cannot be sufficient in a school system which for too long did neglect the special responsibility of schools for children and families of low income and social status. Since many teachers are not very familiar with ways to work with parents and families, the program also founded the "Diesterweg-Schulwerkstatt", a workshop and program for the training of teachers in methods and concepts for the effective inclusion and participation of families in school education.

Finally, the program also has a component promoting and preparing the engagement of parents as volunteers in other projects: "Diesterweg Aktiv". The following figure shows the schematic connection between the different program components:



In Frankfurt the program has rapidly increased its scope. Today, grantees of the scholarship program have come from 39 of the 84 elementary schools in the city. They have moved on to 14 out of 16 Gymnasia, half of the 14 middle vocational schools and 8 out of 14 comprehensive schools (total: 412 participants with a background in 28 different countries since 2008).

Because of its success the Diesterweg Scholarship was awarded as a leading "idea for the educational republic" of the Federal Ministry of Education and Science in 2012 and has begun to spread to other urban areas in Germany. It started in Hannover in 2011, in Hamburg in 2012 and in Darmstadt in 2013. In 2014, Dortmund and Kirn are going to join in.



M E R H A B A

*Sag »Hallo«
zum Lehrer Deines Kindes!*

*Çocuğunun öğretmenine
sen de bir*

M E R H A B A

*de ki,
çocuklarımız diplomasız,
gençlerimiz mesleksiz kalsın.*

"Merhaba - Say Hello to the Teacher of your Child" A Campaign of the Turkish Community in Hamburg

In 2006 in reaction to the latest round of negative results in the PISA survey, the nationwide roof organization Turkish Community Germany (TGD) initiated and educational campaign directed toward Turkish immigrant parents in Germany, called "Education for the Future" (*Bildung für die Zukunft*). The campaign consisted of ten different forms of action with the objective of significantly increase the educational participation of Turkish children and families in Germany.

Specifically, the campaign formulated the goal of decreasing in 50% the number of pupils of Turkish origin who leave school without a diploma and increasing the share of pupils of Turkish origin with a middle vocational or an academic school diploma. The larger campaign formulated the following "10 Points for Better Participation":

1. Creating more educational awareness through the Turkish-language media (in cooperation with TV stations and print media)
2. Creation of a internet-platform with all kinds of informations and addresses of Turkish parents' and teachers' associations.
3. Nomination of 100 "Educational Ambassadors" in the different federal states

4. Foundation of “Parent Academies” in each federal states, offering all kinds of information and coaching seminars for parents
5. Nominating Turkish-origin high school-graduates for an official ceremony of recognition with the Federal Government
6. Equipment of an “Educational Bus” that addresses Turkish parents in selected educational context (time and space) in big cities
7. “Say Hello to the Teacher of Your Child” (see below)
8. Mapping of Good Practice examples of parental involvement nationwide and selected funding by Turkish entrepreneurs
9. Initiating mentoring-projects for pupils
10. Production of specific and targeted information material

The campaign was mostly funded by German-Turkish entrepreneur-organisations and intended to run over four years (2007–2011). However, despite getting started with a lot of attention by media and politics, for different reasons, the campaign never really gained momentum – probably the program was simply too ambitious and too costly.

This description wants to highlight particularly one of the ten points, i.e. the local campaign “Merhaba – Say Hello to the Teacher of Your Child”. This part of the campaign was initiated as a pilot project by the local branch of the Turkish Community in Hamburg with the idea Turkish parents should be encouraged to actively seek the contact to their children’s teachers, to learn more about the german schoolsystem, and to enlarge their knowledge about the future possibilities of their children. Also this campaign got stuck at a certain moment, but for some time the Turkish organization went into schools and organized Turkish-language parents’ evenings – with the effect that some schools for the first time got in contact with a migrant self-organization.

In a way, the campaign was ahead of her time because most of the academic evidence that parental self-involvement makes a difference for the educational outcomes of the children became known or was even collected only since 2007. Despite its apparent lack of persistence the project is presented here for two reasons:

- (a) the concept is extremely simple and easy to realize in almost all imaginable educational contexts – provided there is a community of parents determined to change the situation of their children;
- (b) it directly connects to scientific evidence: parents taking a proactive stance and approaching the schools and teachers on own initiative make a difference. Obviously, there is not necessarily an immediate link between the parental initiative and the obtained grades of their children, but at least these children will not stay unattended and unperceived by the teacher. And as a multiplied attitude it may even change the overall perception of a particular immigrant group or ethnic minority.

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