



Parent involvement of migrant children (P2T-COMMUNITY)

Project Nr. 2022-1-BE02-KA220-ADU-000087395

Discovering Barriers, Opportunities, and Ways for Parental Involvement of Migrant Children in Primary Schools

Synthesis report: SUMMARY



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Adapted by Education Centre Geoss



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Parent involvement of migrant children, P2T-COMMUNITY project is a 24-months Erasmus+ project addressed to migrant/refugee parents to allow them to be more involved in their children's school pathway. It also targets primary and pre-primary school teachers as it facilitates the construction of a deeper and more productive relationship with these parents. One of the main goals of the project is to build better communication between parents and teachers to more effectively help immigrant children in their school process. The project's activities are being implemented throughout 5 different partner countries: Austria, Belgium, Greece, Italy, and Slovenia.

Activities of the project, among others, include a transnational report that goes over the barriers and the needs of migrant/refugee parents for their involvement in the educational system in participating countries of the P2T-COMMUNITY project. Relevant national, regional, and local policies regarding parent involvement in educational systems are described and best national practices for parental involvement in the educational systems in each participating country are identified.

European schools are getting more culturally diverse. Classrooms are populated with increasing numbers of immigrant and refugee students from various ethnic-cultural, religious, and linguistic backgrounds. The number of immigrants/refugees has been, in the last years, increasing also in all of the participating countries of the P2T-COMMUNITY project, especially because of the recent war in Ukraine. According to research, good cooperation between schools, homes, and communities can lead to the academic achievements of students. Children tend to do better in school if their parents are actively involved in the school process, communicate with the school, attend school events, help with schoolwork, and provide tutoring. In the case of migrant parents, that is often not possible due to the circumstances that they find themselves in after moving to a foreign country. The majority of migrant/refugee parents have limited ability to speak the host country's language. In addition to that, they can face challenges with adapting to a new culture, are suffering due to low income/looking for employment, have transportation problems, lack of knowledge and/or confidence to help their children with the schoolwork, etc. All of this can lead to avoiding communication with the school and lower involvement in the schooling process of their children, which can contribute to the poor



educational success of their children. For example, in Italy, the dropout rate of students without Italian citizenship is three times higher than their Italian colleagues.

Actual barriers and the needs of migrant/refugee parents have been defined by conducting interviews and surveys with the parents and teaching professionals in all participating countries. Please keep in mind that since the interviews and surveys were conducted mostly locally in each country, including one or two schools, we can not say that they are representative on a national basis, but they do provide some general idea on the topic. Results show that there is a need, on the side of migrant parents and teaching professionals, for additional action to be taken in the field of migrant parent involvement in the school process.

Focus groups and one-on-one interviews were used for conducting interviews with the migrant parents. At least 15 migrant parents participated in each country. The nationalities of the participating parents were quite diverse (altogether, 25 different nationalities participated), but no matter the nationality or the country where they are currently staying, the parents agree that it is important to support their children's education. Interviews with parents showed that parents are, in general, satisfied with the school's communication regarding their children's school progress or troubles. This communication, in most cases, happens face-to-face or over the phone; in Austria, digital services were also mentioned. Nevertheless, parents reported that they currently participate little in the schools' initiatives to involve them in other activities besides parent-teacher meetings because of the language barriers and the lack of time (Belgium, Greece, Slovenia) or as they report in Italy, there might not be any structured activities for their participation within the school. However, they showed interest in attending educational workshops organized by the schools. 27 % of all participating parents mentioned that they would attend a language workshop. They were also interested in gaining knowledge on how to help their child study (20 %) and other educational activities like gaining information about the school system, learning digital skills, and helping with administration (7 %).



The survey for teaching professionals was conducted online and at least 15 responses were gathered in each participating country. The survey mainly asked questions about their contact and/or relationship with migrant parents and their views on the involvement of these parents with the schools. The results showed that the majority of teachers in Greece believe that parents are not sufficiently involved with the schools (only 25 % of teachers think they are sufficiently involved), while in Belgium the majority of teachers (81 %) think parents are already sufficiently involved. The percentage of teachers who believe the parents are sufficiently involved in Italy is 66.7 %, 44.20 % in Slovenia, and 33 % in Austria. Teaching professionals mostly agree that the school itself already does a lot to increase parental involvement. Looking only at these results, this would then mean that the teaching professionals expect parents to put in more effort to participate. Anyhow, the communication and relationship between parents and schools should always be two-way.

On the other hand, comments of the teaching professionals also revealed that some schools can be less motivated, while others more, to provide possibilities and organize activities for parental inclusion (not just teacher-parent hours and communication about the child's progress). Adequate measures for parental inclusion are missing in the framework of the school systems.

The majority of teachers (45 %) believe that migrant parents would benefit from language courses. 23.50 % believe they would benefit from workshops on how to help their children study and 19.70 % of teachers believe they would benefit from workshops dedicated to getting to know the school system of the host country better.

The results of the survey with the teaching professionals confirmed the fact that successful parent engagement programmes need a strong framework and effective implementation from the government. European Education Area 2025, among others, prioritizes the involvement of parents in educational processes and decision-making and allows moving toward wider recognition of parents as partners in education.



Among the participating countries of the P2T-Community project, Austria stands out with its positive legislation, measures, and opportunities for parental involvement in schools. Several ways for parent participation were defined, such as the parents' association, class parents' evenings, a class forum, a school forum, and a school community committee. Summer school for parents and guardians is also one of the measures for parents to get to know the school system better. The Austrian Ministry of Education also provides free downloadable materials on the topic of "understanding school" for parents in different foreign languages. Belgian, Italian, and Slovenian reports show that the legislation is mainly focused on equal education policy for pupils (offering language lessons and integration courses for students, the maximum number of migrant pupils in a class, extra funds and teaching time, etc.), while no explicit focus on parent involvement was mentioned. In Slovenia, for example, The Ministry of Education has designed recommendations that include the principles of parental cooperation but how parents are involved is up to each school. Greece is, among the participating countries, considered the least inclusive regarding parental involvement.

Nevertheless, there were good practices with a focus on migrant parent involvement found in all participating countries. These are implemented by the initiatives of schools, different NGOs, or within different national and/or international projects. Projects that focus on parent involvement in a way that P2T-Community does have not yet been set up and could be of great value to schools as well as contribute to the realization of goals of the European Education Area 2025.

Source:

The partnership of the P2T-COMMUNITY project. (2023). Discovering barriers, opportunities, and ways for parental involvement of migrant children in primary schools, Synthesis report. Available at: <https://p2tcommunity.eu/resources/>.

