MIGRANT EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY INCLUSION

EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Migratory movements are integral to European history; they have been shaping and reshaping the continent for thousands of years. The effects of such movements, both regional and global, continue to inform daily life across the Member States of the European Union (EU). But responses to migration in recent years—by both authorities and local communities—have differed across Member States, resulting in different levels of integration and social cohesion. To promote the integrity of the European Union, it is imperative to effectively address the issue of immigrant integration in both the short and long term.

Measures established by policymakers and professionals, as well as the interpersonal dynamics within a community, are of fundamental importance in promoting the constructive interaction of different cultures and people. This policy brief focuses on such measures in the educational field. Schools can act as catalysts for positive social transformation and mutually beneficial cooperation, or they can further reproduce destructive patterns of social interaction. This makes the school a key locus, where the application of appropriate policies and good practices can effectively help the integration of immigrants.[1] To this end, the presence of the family and of local, interpersonal networks within school systems is absolutely vital. Any isolated educational efforts will fall short of guaranteeing that immigrant children and their families are effectively integrated into the labour market and civil society of their new countries.

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This policy brief reviews current measures to promote the integration of migrant students around Europe, specifically those policies and government-backed projects that include the family and community as an integral part of the educational process. The brief will focus on seven examples of good practices that might serve as an inspiration for educational policies across the continent.

I. INTRODUCTION: WHY INCLUDE COMMUNITIES IN SCHOOLS?

Throughout a child's education, a number of people will have the chance to play important roles that can greatly impact the development of the young learner. In school, teachers and tutors are at the forefront of the learning process, but they are certainly not the only people to influence students in their quest for knowledge and integration into society. Apart from the roles played by educational professionals, the importance of parental and community involvement has been indicated by a growing body of research. Such involvement is shown to improve student outcomes, including graduation rates.[2]

The positive effects of community involvement in the education of children in general—and migrant children in particular—are various. Parents, peers, and other actors outside the formal educational context may provide direct academic help and tutoring, as well as offer support in addressing interpersonal issues, transmitting values, and establishing attitudes that may remain with students throughout their lives. Migrant parents and communities often have high aspirations for their children, and can provide emotional support that will help students in school matters as well as general life issues. Direct parental or community involvement inside schools can also help to establish continuity across the various spheres of a student's life, as families make contact with teachers and other professionals, and participate in school activities and events. Finally, community members may serve as role models for children, motivating them in their educational path and furthering their involvement in society. Conversely, the mismanagement of educational policies and the lack of community involvement in formal educational matters may negatively affect the integration of immigrants and their children, with significant social and economic costs.[3]

II. RELEVANT EDUCATIONAL DIRECTIVES

European policies in the realm of education have been moving toward the recognition of immigration as a fundamental phenomenon to be considered across educational measures. Nevertheless, important steps have yet to be taken to reach the international goals set by European leaders and to truly improve integration and social cohesion.

The European Commission's Green Paper from July 2008, and subsequent public consultations, set important guidelines regarding migrant education.[4] The 2008 paper highlights the importance of involving migrant communities in schools, addressing the learning needs of both children and parents, and taking into account both parents' and children's expectations of school.

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In November 2009 the Council of the European Union published conclusions specific to the education of children with a migrant background.[5] Among the conclusions were the need to: respect and promote the cultural heritage of minority groups, offer targeted support for migrant children, and establish partnerships with local communities.

Another more recent directive relevant to migrant education is the Council's recommendations on early school leaving, published in July 2011, which notes that the average dropout rate among migrant groups is twice that of native students, and is even higher among the Roma population.[6] The Council recommended targeted measures to significantly reduce early school leaving among these populations.

III. FAMILY AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN MIGRANT EDUCATION: GOOD PRACTICES

While the latest direction set by the European framework is positive, important work remains to be done to translate those principles into good practices within educational institutions. To this end, it is important to look at some good practices—particularly those that include families and communities—across the continental, national, and local levels.

A. Bringing parents and communities into schools

Before considering how to best promote the participation of migrant parents and communities in schools, it is important to ask what barriers and challenges they face to engagement in their children's school environment. Some parents cite a lack of time to participate in school activities; others point to a lack of adequate transportation or help taking care of younger siblings. Some cite difficulty communicating with school professionals due to language or cultural differences, or around issues related to alternative family structures that may include single parents, grandparents, foster parents, and others caretakers. School policies and bureaucracies, meanwhile, are perceived as hard to understand or change.[7]

It is essential that policies address the language barriers that contribute to the exclusion of immigrant families from formal education contexts. For example, schools might offer a dedicated structure for family-school interaction, with translation and other social services available to families. Belgium presents one example of such a structure, the Pupil Guidance Centre, where parents can work jointly with a multidisciplinary group of professionals to encourage the development of their children. Flemish policies also provide for extra educational staff and additional teaching hours of up to 10 per cent for students from a minority or otherwise disadvantaged background.

Another possible strategy to engage immigrant children's families and wider interpersonal networks is to design curricula to include joint activities with students' relatives. Efforts to include relatives are particularly important among low-income families, who are less likely to be involved in school activities than their higher-income peers.[8] The Inspire Workshops in Birmingham, United Kingdom, work to directly include ethnic minorities in formal education, using an inclusive model that invites parents and extended relatives to enter schools and work with teachers in workshops, supports loaning of books and educational materials to families, and creates a link between the community and school.

B. Bringing formal education into migrant homes

Another way to build a bridge between educational systems and families is to promote home visits by school professionals. Working with students and families in their own environment can be a great source of learning for all the parties involved. Professionals can provide families with any assistance they may need and encourage families and communities to take an active role as educators of their children. One such initiative, HIPPY (the Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters), has been widely implemented in many countries, including the Netherlands, Germany, the

United States, Turkey, Mexico, Australia, and others.[9] This venture promotes parents' awareness of their potential as home educators. The main targets of this programme are disadvantaged, low-income, migrant, and/or ethnic minority families. Several independent evaluations in various countries have indicated that programme participants enjoy significant advantages in cognitive abilities, family health, and other measures versus control groups.[10]

One published review of home-visiting programmes[11] describes the most important elements of their success. A combination of early childhood care and home-visiting programmes produces more long-lasting results than either of these components implemented on their own. If visits are infrequent, this may also affect results by preventing the establishment of a close relationship between the home visitor and parents. In fact, a positive relationship between the visitor and the family is one of the most important factors of success. Promoting such a relationship may be done in several ways, such as selecting home visitors with strong interpersonal skills, training for such skills, and selecting visitors whose sociocultural background is similar to that of the families they will be assisting. Service quality must be guaranteed through pre-service and ongoing training and adequate compensation.

In Lithuania, authorities are making use of new technologies to enhance the educational process, allowing for better communication between students, families,

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Box 4. Your School: An electronic diary, Lithuania

In Lithuania authorities are promoting a new system to bridge children's various educational contexts (students, teachers, families, school administrations). The project helps family members interact and exchange information with teachers, learn and comment about school events, and participate in other activities.

The system is electronically based, and the platform can be accessed through the Internet. Parents can see information on their children's progress and achievements, communicate with teachers, and contact other parents in additional forums.

Source: Inga Blaziene, *Lithuania: ERM comparative analytical report on recent policy developments related to those not in employment, education and training (NEET)* (Dublin: European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions [Eurofound], 2012), www.eurofound.europa.eu/emcc/erm/studies/tn1109042s/lt1109049q.htm.

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and professionals, and improving building a bridge between the household and the school. The project, My School, has established the connection between formal education and families through an electronic system where parents can follow their children's developments as well as communicate with teachers and other parents directly. Apart from increasing communication and providing learning tools, the system may also help prevent early school leaving by giving parents better insight into their children's school attendance. National Lithuanian policies also take account of socio-economic status and cultural origins to tailor funding: schools receive an extra 20 per cent funding for supporting minority students and 30 per cent for supporting immigrant students. Such funding is used to pay for services such as integration classes, mother-tongue instruction, and bilingual education.[12]

C. Promoting diversity and awareness among school staff

Hiring more educators from migrant or minority backgrounds may also be beneficial as a part of broader educational policies that promote trust and bonding between educators, families, and communities. Such educators may serve as role models for immigrant children, improving their self-confidence and motivation. Diversifying school staff could potentially improve educational outcomes, as shown in research in Europe and elsewhere.[13] This does not preclude the necessity

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Box 3. HIPPY, Germany, the Netherlands, and countries outside the European Union

Initiated in 1969 as a research project in Israel, the Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters (HIPPY) has since been adopted by the Ministry of Education and other public bodies, not only in Israel but in Europe and other parts of the world. It has gained recognition as an efficient method for raising families' awareness of their potential as educators.

HIPPY involves regular home visits by tutors from the community, who teach parents how to promote their children's development using guided activities. Several research studies have shown positive results both for children and families worldwide.

Source: Deanna S. Gomby, 'Home visitation in 2005: outcomes for children and parents' (Invest in Kids Working Paper no. 7, Committee for Economic Development, 2005), http://files.givewell.org/files/Cause3/Nurse-Family%20Partnership/B/Gomby%202005.PDF.

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of high-quality instruction and the importance of teachers winning their pupils' respect, trust, and admiration through daily actions, but potentially presents an extra step toward establishing mutual trust. In Portugal the idea of hiring immigrants as classroom facilitators is a component of several projects under the Choices programme (Programa Escolhas).[14] This government endeavour works on five levels: promoting immigrants' inclusion in formal and nonformal education, professional training and employability, civic and community forums, and digital processes. Such strategies for hiring educators from immigrant backgrounds—within multi-level programmes that take into account the different facets of human development—could be a great addition to European integration efforts.

Nevertheless, while hiring migrant teachers or facilitators can be a good additional step toward building a bridge between schools and immigrant communities, the migrant origin of a teacher does not by itself guarantee the quality of instruction, nor are local teachers necessarily unable to connect with and serve as role models for minority or foreign students. Other measures are of equal or even greater importance in promoting the inclusion of students and families in schools. If immigrant families and communities are to feel welcome in schools, it is especially important that all educators, regardless of their origin, have appropriate training in intercultural education and promoting collaboration between the school and students' fami-

Box 6. SPICE, Spain, and Iceland

Arising from a collaboration between Spanish and Icelandic regional authorities and local schools, the SPICE project aims to improve policy and practice in the integration of immigrant pupils and their families in schools.

As a result of this collaboration a guide on parental involvement in education—Comenius Regio Partnership—was written and translated into eight languages. This guide and other materials produced for assessing newly arrived pupils are great assets for the training of educational professionals and integration at the community level.

Source: SPICE, 'Spice – verkefnið hlýtur viðurkenningu', 26 November 2013, http://comeniusregiospice.wordpress.com.

lies. Well-trained teachers can improve the quality of education in classrooms, in addition to being more sensitive to cultural issues and knowing how to interact with students (and parents) from diverse backgrounds. Following this line of thinking, the SPICE project—conducted by Asturias Education and Science Ministry in Spain, in collaboration with authorities in Iceland—promotes the involvement of families and community members in schools through the creation of a dedicated guide and other related materials for teacher training.

D. Helping students form balanced multicultural identities

When addressing the issue of community involvement in schools, it is important to ask how student identities are formed in the context of diverse local cultures, backgrounds, and worldviews. If a school promotes the unilateral adoption of a local identity that contradicts the values of the migrant student's original culture, this can generate important conflicts within the family and community—conflicts that not only push families away from schools, but also create difficulties for students and translate into lower educational outcomes. This is why it is very important that policies promote the balanced construction of students' intercultural identities through dedicated courses on the subject. The Larvik municipality in Norway, in collaboration with secondary schools, runs Flex-ID courses to help students learn how to live with a 'flexible identity' or as 'cross-cultural' kids. These courses work toward improving the integration of students and the immigrant community in the ducational system and society.

Box 7. Flex-ID, Norway

With a population of 42,000 people, over 10 per cent of whom come from a migrant background covering 90 nationalities, the Larvik municipality is promoting a two-year course called the 'Flexble Identity' for local students. It encourages the construction of a balanced, flexible identity within a multicultural context. The course aims to prevent potential conflict between generations and manage the challenges that follow culture shifts.

During the first year classes are group-focused, while the second year is focused on the individual. Subjects discussed include dilemmas and choices, roles, and expectations relating to parents, and building bridges.

Sources: Dag Fjæstad, 'FLEXid—A project for multicultural kids in Larvik municipality, Riga Policy Makers Forum of Experience, SIRIUS Network, 2014, www.sirius-migrationeducation.org/the-forum-of-experiences-in-riga-a-big-step-to-contribute-to-a-closer-collaboration-among-policy-makers-of-all-over-europe/; Berit Jørgensen, 'Multicultural competence and identity in young immigrants and refugees in Oslo and New York City—challenges and assets' (master's thesis, Oslo University College, 2011), https://oda.hio.no/jspui/bit-stream/10642/1152/2/Jorgensen_Berit.pdf.

IV. POLICY IMPLEMENTATION AND CONCLUSIONS

This policy brief outlines several examples of initiatives from various countries that promote the engagement of immigrant families and communities in formal education. Each relevant policy and government-backed project has a particular educational focus. While such initiatives will not necessarily solve all migrant communities' integration concerns by themselves, when part of a broader strategic outlook they can complement each other to bring about lasting improvements in social cohesion and sustainable diversity across Europe.

Policies cannot be the isolated creations of experts and government representatives who are distanced from everyday educational realities and migrant cultures.

Before summarising how such initiatives might serve to inspire policymakers, it is worth noting that policies cannot be the isolated creations of experts and government representatives who are distanced from everyday educational realities and migrant cultures. The various voices within migrant communities themselves must be heard in order to fine-tune policies through a bottom-up approach. Information and communication technologies can and should be used to maintain a continuous dialogue between members of migrant communities and experts and policymakers in order to guarantee that policies are relevant and adjusted to local contexts.

At the European level it is very important to further promote coordination across policies and projects, to generate a cohesive, mutually reinforcing framework for action. Enterprises such as the digital initiative My School in Lithuania could be expanded to other European countries in a standardised format that would allow for easier tracking and communication with students and their families, including those that move to other countries within the continent. Educational quality across the continent could be improved by the creation of teacher-training materials and workshops such as the SPICE project, the utilization of common guidelines and curriculums such as the European Core Curriculum on teaching multilingual pupils, and the dedication of appropriate central funding for educational professionals and paraprofessionals.

Within the limits of each country's borders, national authorities can also attempt a dual strategy of both approaching the migrant community within its context (such as through the home visits of the HIPPY initiative) as well as bringing families and community members into schools (such as through the Flemish Pupil Guidance Centre structures and INSPIRE workshops).

Ultimately, a basis for European educational policies that promote migrant integration has already been established.

At the regional and local levels, authorities must take into account the unique characteristics of diverse students and communities in a way that broader policies may not be able to do. Locally adaptable projects such as Flex-ID can help students and migrant communities create a balanced identity and make sense of who they are within an intercultural society.

Ultimately, a basis for European educational policies that promote migrant integration has already been established, the technology for continent-wide cooperation is available, and enough projects have been put into place to serve as examples of what may or may not work in different contexts. The good practices and suggestions featured in this policy brief may serve as an additional guide in directing efforts toward the integration of immigrant students and communities. Such efforts can help reduce early school leaving, improve learning outcomes, and promote educational and social inclusion. With the information and tools now available, policymakers can update and fine-tune policies to promote the collaboration of professionals and community members toward intercultural integration and international migration education objectives.

ENDNOTES

1   In this policy brief the terms 'migrant', 'immigrants', and 'immigrant students' are used interchangeably to refer to persons up to 18 years of age whose parents were born outside their current country of residence. This term includes immigrants who are first-generation (born outside their country of residence and arrived in the host country before or during the age of compulsory education) and second-generation (born in the country of residence and participated fully in compulsory education).

2   Lisa St. Clair, Barbara Jackson, and Rose Zweiback, 'Six Years Later: Effect of Family Involvement Training on the Language Skills of Children from Migrant Families', *School Community Journal* 22, no. 1 (2012): 9–19, www.adi.org/journal/2012ss/StClairJacksonZweibackSpring2012.pdf. Joyce L. Epstein and Steven B. Sheldon, 'Present and Accounted For: Improving Student Attendance through Family and Community Involvement', *The Journal of Educational Research* 95, no. 5 (2002): 308-18, http://silverbeach.bellinghamschools.org/sites/default/files/silverbeach/dnew/present%20and%20accounted%20for.pdf; William H. Jeynes, 'The relationship between Parental Involvement and Urban Secondary School Student Academic Achievement: A Meta-Analysis', *Urban Education* 42, no. 1 (2007): 82–110; and Charles Desforges with Alberto Abouchaar, *The Impact of Parental Involvement, Parental Support and Family Education on Pupil Achievement and Adjustment: A Literature Review*, DfES Research Report 433 (London: Department for Education and Skills, 2003), www.bgfl.org/bgfl/custom/files_uploaded/uploaded_resources/18617/Desforges.pdf.

3   Deborah Nusche, 'What Works in Migrant Education? A Review of Evidence and Policy Options' (OECD Education Working Paper No. 22, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2009), http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/227131784531.

4   European Commission, 'Commission Staff Working Document: Results of the consultation on the education of children from a migrant background' SEC(2009) 1115 final, 5 August 2009, www.europarl.europa.eu/registre/docs_autres_institutions/commission_europeenne/sec/2009/1115/COM_SEC%282009%291115_EN.pdf.

5   European Union, 'Council conclusions of 12 May 2009 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training ('ET 2020') (2009/C 119/02)', *Official Journal of the European Union*, 28 May 2009, https://ec.europa.eu/epale/en/resource-centre/content/council-conclusions-12-may-2009-strategic-framework-european-cooperation.

6   European Union, 'Council Recommendation of 28 June 2011 on policies to reduce early school leaving', *Official Journal* C 191/2011, 1 June 2011, http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2011:191:0001:0006:en:PDF.

7   National Education Association (NEA), 'Parent, Family, Community Involvement in Education' (Policy brief 11, NEA, Washington, DC, 2008), www.nea.org/assets/docs/PB11_ParentInvolvement08.pdf.

8   Kristin Turney and Grace Kao, 'Barriers to School Involvement: Are Immigrant Parents Disadvantaged?', *Journal of Educational Research* 102, no. 4 (2009): 257-71.

9   Galia BarHava-Monteith, Niki Harré, and Jeff Field, 'HIPPY New Zealand: An Evaluation Overview', *Social Policy Journal of New Zealand* 12 (1999), www.msd.govt.nz/documents/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/journals-and-magazines/social-policy-journal/spj12/12-hippy-new-zealand.doc.

10   Robert H. Bradley and Barbara Gilkey, 'The Impact of the Home Instructional Program for Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY) on School Performance in 3rd and 6th grades', *Early Education and Development* 13, no. 3 (2002): 301-11; David M. Fergusson, Hildegard Grant, L. John. Horwood, and Elizabeth M. Ridder, 'Randomized trial of the Early Start Program of home visitation', *Pediatrics* 116, no. 6 (2005): e803–e809, http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/116/6/e803.long; M. Angela Nievar, Arminta Jacobson, Qi Chen, Ursula Johnson, and Shannon Dier, 'Impact of HIPPY on home learning environments of Latino families', *Early Childhood Research Quarterly* 26 (2011): 268-77, www.hippyresearchcenter.org/files/Nievar_HIPPYonHomeLearningEnvironments.pdf.

11   Ibid.

12   Inga Blaziene, *Lithuania: ERM comparative analytical report on recent policy developments related to those not in employment, education and training (NEET)* (Dublin: European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions [Eurofound], 2012), www.eurofound.europa.eu/emcc/erm/studies/tn1109042s/lt1109049q.htm.

13   Ana Maria Villegas, Kathryn Strom, and Tamara Lucas, 'Closing the Racial/Ethnic Gap between Students of Color and Their Teachers: An Elusive Goal', *Equity and Excellence in Education* 45, no. 2 (2012): 283-301; Bruce Carrington and Christine Skelton, 'Rethinking "Role Models": Equal Opportunities in Teacher Recruitment in England and Wales', *Journal of Education Policy* 18, no. 3 (2003): 1-13; Erica Lindahl, 'Gender and ethnic interactions among teachers and students — evidence from Sweden' (Working Paper 25, Institute for Labour Market Policy Evaluation, Uppsala, Sweden, 2007), www.ifau.se/Upload/pdf/se/2007/wp07-25.pdf.

14   Programa Escholhas, 'O Que e O Programa Escolhas,' accessed 6 February 2015, www.programaescolhas.pt/apresentacao.

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