Module 5 – How to communicate with and inspire parents

This module will give you some basic ideas on how to make teachers and parents work together in order to maximize the educational benefits for children. Also, one unit looks at the imminent issue of integrating immigrant families into the school community.

What is the goal of this module?

Unit 1 – Children in the middle: how education works if pedagogues and parents work together

Unit 2 – Learn ways how school can develop a dialogue with parents, with practical examples of activities

Unit 3 – Integrating immigrant parents into kindergarten community

Introduction into the topic:

This module will give you some basic ideas on how to make teachers and parents work together in order to maximize the educational benefits for children. Also, one unit looks at the imminent issue of integrating immigrant families into the school community.

Unit 1 – Children in the middle: how education works if pedagogues and parents work together

In this unit I will learn how to:

1. enhance the parental involvement and how to achieve a mutually satisfying result through cooperation.
2. identify the continuous line of communication through overcoming the barriers and building bridges in communication

3. prepare teachers to work with culturally diverse children and their families.

Introduction into the topic:

Modern life requires teachers and parents to unite efforts in the name of getting children the best education and upbringing. The learning system changes relatively often and it is influenced by many external factors, it can only act if teachers and parents believe in it. This chapter discussed the ways of developing effective partnership between teachers and parents, barriers and bridges to communication and the importance of achieving a cultural compatibility.

Chapter 1 – Parents and Teachers: What Does an Effective Partnership Look Like?

Why parental involvement is so important?

We used to think that professionals know better than parents what is necessary and useful for the children. We accept as normal that most of the day our children spend in institutions - nurseries, kindergartens, schools, study halls. In these institutions, qualified personnel take care of them, and they give our children proper education and upbringing. And finally, we believe that almost all the work will be done by someone else i.e. our children will be educated and socialized while we are at the workplace.

More and more people, however, realize that this model is vicious and it deprives parents of their active role in child-raising and creates unnecessary barriers. They also realize that the relationship between families and kindergartens and schools is broken and the processes that take place in both places are not connected. As a result, the child fails to get the necessary upbringing and education. To overcome this fragmentation and the gap between home and school, it is necessary teachers and parents to work together in partnership, to share information, ideas, and opinions, to improve decision-making and to share the childcare.

Unit 2 in Module 5 presents some good examples how teachers can communicate with and inspire parents, as well as chapter 2 discussed how parents can be integrated into kindergarten community.

Different points of view

Everything begins at home. But it must continue through the schools. And somewhere in the middle there are different perspectives on how to create and manage this unique relationship between home and school resulting in maximum benefits for each child.

Many parents avoid contact with a teacher until major problems occur because they are unfamiliar with the process. Because of this it is important that the partnership is built with maximum transparency and mutual trust. To meet the different points of view, two simple questions have to be answered: what the teacher wants from the parent and what the parent wants from the teacher. One of the most important parts of this process is the culture of involvement which must be nurtured and prioritized. Teachers need to be willing to work with the parents no matter their assets or deficits'. Parents need to educate and communicate constantly with their children and thus to create the necessary basis for moral values that will shape the children's social skills, attitudes and responsibilities and this way to support the main teacher's task: to teach. Children need to feel that the adults care about them and they provide a safety net when needed to feel successful in their own education and growth.

Question 1: What do teachers want from parents?

Teachers want:

- parents to be responsible.
- parents' proactively involvement in their child's daily school progress;
- parents to co-teach from home.
- parents to teach their children about moral behavior. Teachers know how to teach reading, math, science and so on but values should come from home.
- parents to "discipline–not punish–their children". Positive discipline method allows reinforcing positive behavior, promoting successful decision making and teaching expectations to children.
- parents should teach children to be responsible, speak respectively, express their own reasoned opinion, to accept responsibility for their actions and accept the consequences of their deeds.

Question 2: What do parents want from teachers?

Parents want:

- teachers to respect parents and children.
- teachers authentically care about teaching by raising standards and having high expectation for all children.
- teachers to think outside the box, because each child is unique and the learning approach must be different.
- teachers to communicate openly, share sincerely and inform timely.
- teachers must remain objective and follow their main responsibility: to teach.
- teachers to communicate for positive results not just the child didn't do homework, or was talking in class.

Question 3: Where might their interests converge?

Both teachers and parents want to have better communication with each other, which will allow them to work as a team in the child's education. However, it is hard to converge the two paths. The main dividing line is the fact that both sides do not properly define their duties and rights and very often have excessive expectations or just talk in different languages. The environment we live in is changing and evolving rapidly and society are facing more and more new challenges. It is therefore important to include a more compressive system of communication. On the one hand, teachers should make a sincere effort to know the family and make a genuine connection, from another – parents need to be more active in their children's school life. Achieving a mutually satisfying result is possible through cooperation.

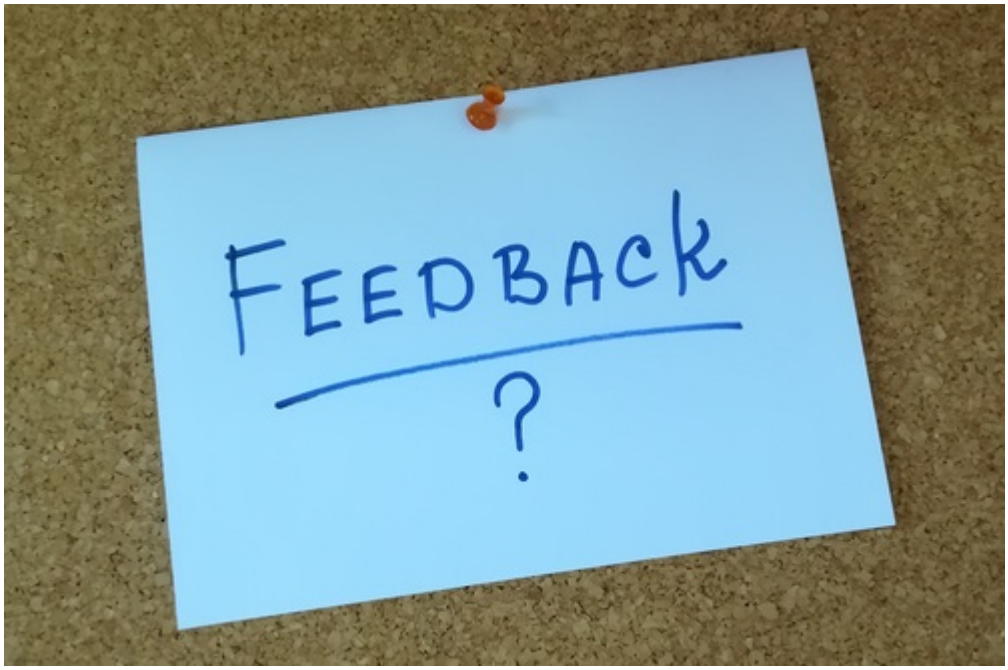
Parents, teachers, community leaders, and school administration will achieve more if the goals are met with a team approach: "Together Everyone Achieves More". Children learn at both home and school. Learning takes place during every waking hour of every day.

Good practice from Bulgaria

- Activity Sheet 1
- Activity Sheet 2

Chapter 2 – Communication is the key

Components of Effective communication



The best way to avoid misunderstandings with parents is to have ongoing, clear lines of communication from the beginning. The more you keep them informed about kindergarten's activities and include them in everyday events, the more they'll feel like a part of the team. The clear communication makes parents more supportive, understanding, and less negative.

The continuous line of communication with the parents is crucial and the factors that develop effective partnership are:

- commitment to work together;
- parent involvement;
- shared responsibility for child's education;
- mutual trust and respect;
- understanding everyone's perspective.

Carol says: (November 2, 2010 at 4:25 pm)

An effective partnership looks like this. Teacher calls home to discuss grade/behavior and the parent demonstrates that they have knowledge of the area the student is struggling or succeeding in because they have been communicating with their child. Together we discuss a way for supporting the student.

Parent calls teacher to discuss student's difficulty with homework/behavior and ask how they can help their student. Teacher shares what they have been doing in class and shows the teacher has noticed the struggles. Together we discuss a way for supporting the student.

Reality is that neither the parent nor the teacher seems to have time for the kind of in depth view this requires. We all wish we did. As a high school teacher I had 30 to 35 kids in each class period giving me about 180 students every semester, 360 every year. Even One minute on the phone or in email for each student is 3 hours of work. Every day I had grading, lesson planning, remediation planning, and tests to write so beyond the school day I already had 2 to 3 hours of work to do. Contacting parents by phone occurred when I really had to do it, but I did try to leave detailed comments on the computer grading system, and I sent notes home with students (especially for success stories). In hundreds of contacts over 19 years, I can think of 1 that met my ideal. Still its good to have the ideal to strive for."

HOMEROOM-the official blog of the U.S. Department of education

Unit 2 in Module 5 discussed some specific examples of ways school staff can connect with parents through events and innovative ways to develop a dialogue with parents.

Barriers and bridges to communication

The cultural, linguistic and ethnic diversity is growing in Europe and the kindergartens are facing many challenges to improve diversity and inclusion. Also children with disability need assistance with communication, self-care and mobility. One of the key factors in effective diversity practice is to avoid stereotyping children and families based on their gender, race, culture or other attributes. Creating an inclusive community will improve the partnership between all administration, teachers and parents.

Barrier: Too busy

Bridge: Take the Time

Parents and school principals usually report lack of time as the most important communication barrier. However, studies reveal that lack of planning towards establishing cooperation and lack of developing a mutual understanding are the most important communication barriers. In addition to that, some sort of feelings related to previous negative experiences, religious and cultural differences, transportation problems, and the incompetency and inefficiency of school members may affect school-parent relations negatively. Different forms of communications, in person, on line, in writing and in multiple languages must be utilized.

Barrier: Different levels of expectations

Bridge: Meeting expectations and driving results

Often teachers and parents have different expectations for each other as well as for the children. Children success in kindergarten is facilitated when parents and teachers clearly define and discuss the expectations for children performance and emphasize children's effort when completing tasks and ensure they understand the consequences for not meeting expectations. Academic achievement is positively correlated with realistic, high parent and teacher expectations for children's performance.

Barrier: An Inappropriate Atmosphere

Bridge: Create a Good Atmosphere

Teachers also must admit honestly about their own cultural competency and commitment to work with the diversity of children. A positive learning environment is essential for children to learn and develop. It must be rich in play, experience, exploring, and make children feel important and communicative. This environment makes parents feel welcome, involved and empowered.

Barrier: Cultural differences

Bridge: Meet cultural differences with respect and action

Cultural differences can create communication barriers if the teachers reflect their own cultural perspectives while interacting with the parents from a different language and culture. To deal with this potential miscommunication, teachers should begin a quest for knowledge to help them understand their students' parents' language and cultural differences. Along with gaining knowledge of cultural features, trying to understand cultural differences and values seems to be important from the aspect of dealing with communication barriers.

Other learning tools:

- Ideas for partnership between parents and school (in Bulgarian)
- Presentation "Working with parents" (in Bulgarian)
- Kid's Corner
- Teacher's Corner

Chapter 3 – Working with cultural diversity

How can we prepare teachers to work with culturally diverse children and their families?

New challenges for kindergarten staffs and manager rise for the integration of refugee children and families. Germany and many European countries have to integrate refugees from various countries. The kindergarten is the place where families with young children meet and where there is a way to integrate them into the European culture through direct interaction and knowledge exchange. Unit 3 in Module 5 (link) gives a complete picture of this process in Europe and suggest strategies how to build ties with immigrant parents.

But to integrate families as well as children from other countries kindergarten staff must have basic knowledge about the eating habits, the religious background and rituals for not offending the children or the parents with our European consumption patterns. Below are some suggestions for teacher and parents for achieving some forms of cultural compatibility.

Suggestions for teachers

Culture and family are essential to children's sense of identity, belonging and success in lifelong learning. Teachers play a very important role in supporting children and families with culturally diverse backgrounds. When teachers are friendly and approachable and they can respect multiple ways of living, it helps children and their families to build a sense of belonging and trust. Some ideas that might assist educators to support culturally diverse families include:

- Be open to different types of families
- Work to develop positive relationships with families
- Mutual respect for diversity
- Be thoughtful about communication

Early childhood educators across Europe must be prepared to teach an increasingly diverse population of young children. More children from immigrant households are enrolled in early childhood programs and the trend is expected to continue into the next decade. There is a great need to develop training programs to adequately prepare teachers to meet the needs of today's diverse early childhood classes.

Suggestions for families

Parenting across cultures can sometimes be a challenge, especially when the values and expectations of a culture are different from one another. This can make it difficult for families to feel a sense of belonging to any community. The ability of the family to develop a cultural identity and a sense of belonging is important for children, because a sense of belonging and a strong cultural identity supports their mental health and wellbeing. There are lots of things that can help families to develop a sense of belonging, including:

- Identifying your own culture - children's cultural identity develops through language, storytelling, relationships, and traditions and routines.
- Building social networks - build connections across many different social and cultural groups.
- Seek support - find the right person or organization to help you and your family.
- Remember that it takes time to integrate - adjusting to a new life after migration can have lots of challenges for families and children.

Diversity through food and other activities

Food-related events can provide a brilliant focus for engaging a diverse community.

There are many ways to celebrate diversity for example:

- Involve children (module 3)
- Have a feast (module 4, unit 3 and module 5, unit 2)
- Outdoor learning (module 3)
- Involve parents (module 5, unit 1)

Other learning tools:

Food Mapping is a great activity that combined geography, with some science and nutrition thrown in.

School lunch around the world

Planting with kids

Tastes Around the World Party

Food museum – exploring and celebrating food

Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework, Evidence Paper, Practice Principle 4: Equity and Diversity, Saffigna, Franklin, Church and Tayler / Department of Education and Early Childhood Development 2011

Ozmen, F., Akuzum, C., Zincirli, M., & Selcuk, G. (2016). The communication barriers between teachers and parents in

primary schools. Eurasian Journal of Educational Research, 66, 26-46, http://dx.doi.org/10.14689/ejer.2016.66.2

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Unit 2 – Events and innovative ways to develop a dialogue with parents

In this unit I will learn how to:

1. Implement a shared vision of engaging parents in their children's education.
2. How to create events to involve parents and the community in cooking and growing activities.

Chapter 1 – Vision for engaging parents

School districts and school staff need to connect and build positive relationships with parents before they can effectively engage parents in improving school programs and activities. First, it is essential for school staff, parents, and community partners to recognize the advantages of working together to guide children's health and learning. This can be accomplished by having a shared school vision for engaging parents in their children's education and communicating that vision to everyone in the school community. The school's vision for parent engagement can set the tone for a positive relationship with parents and the expectations parents have for being involved in school health and academic activities.

Furthermore, school staff should be prepared to work with parents. School administrators can enhance staff knowledge, ability, and confidence to engage parents by ensuring ample opportunities for professional development on effective parent engagement strategies. For example, teachers can learn how to involve parents in students' education homework, how to encourage parents' visits to school and participation at formal and informal school activities or how to reach out to uninvolved parents. Schools might invite community partners to provide professional development in these areas and make staff aware of existing parent engagement resources. In addition, school staff can be given dedicated time to plan and organize parent-friendly activities and events.

Finally, school administrators and school staff should ensure that all parents feel welcomed in the school and should provide a variety of opportunities for them to be involved in school health/gardening/cooking activities. School administrators might use a survey to assess the needs and interests of parents related to academics and health/gardening/cooking. The results from such an assessment can inform school administrators about the best ways to communicate with parents and help administrators prioritize the types of activities to implement throughout the school year to increase parental participation.

Examples of ways school staff can connect with parents

- Ensure the school or school district has a clear vision for parent engagement that includes engaging parents in school activities.
- Does the school mission reflect the importance of parent engagement and establish a foundation for parent engagement in school activities?
- Does the school have a well-planned program for parent engagement?
- Are policies and procedures in place to maximize parent engagement in the school's health/gardening/cooking activities, services, and programs?
- Does the school have a friendly, welcoming environment for parents?
- Does the school welcome parents to participate in and contribute to the school's health/gardening/cooking activities, services, and programs?
- Ensure that school staff members can connect with parents and support parent engagement in school health/gardening/cooking activities.
- Does the school have a dedicated committee of teachers, administrators, and parents that help the school plan, implement, evaluate, and continually improve its outreach to parents and the quality of parent engagement activities?
- Are there school health/gardening/cooking activities that address the interests of parents, such as healthy

eating/cooking seminars?
- Are school staff members provided with opportunities to learn how to increase parent engagement in school?

Chapter 2 – Events to involve parents and the community in cooking and growing activities

Involving parents and the community is a key focus of current education policy, and with good reason. Pupils' achievements have been shown to be greater where parents and the wider community are actively involved in school life. Food-related events can provide a brilliant focus for engaging a diverse community.

Below are some ideas to get you started.

The best of „national/regional" food

This theme could be used to celebrate regional food from around your country or focus more tightly on local food traditions. It could be a stand-alone event or run alongside another school event such as an open day.

Opportunities could include:

- encourage representatives from local food producers, growers and food businesses to serve tasters/samples of their products, recipes and ingredients.
- the school gardening club could display what they have grown
- the cooking club could offer samples of dishes made using the school grown produce.
- the school catering team might showcase regional dishes they are serving at lunchtime. Samples could be offered and evaluation cards filled out to help identify the most popular dishes to go on the lunchtime menu.
- food Technology/Catering students could be set a piece of coursework to produce dishes that are typical for your country or region, especially using local foods/ ingredients.
- the school parents' club could run a competition to find the best picnic lunch using local foods. This would help raise awareness of what constitutes a good packed lunch.
- local chefs could be invited to demonstrate how to use local and seasonal ingredients.

Many cultures, many foods

This theme can be used to showcase cooking from around the world, using authentic ingredients that may be unfamiliar

to some members of the community, along with locally produced and home-grown foods. It could take the form of a sit□down evening meal for fundraising purposes or a more casual tapas style tasting event or even a picnic in your school garden.

Opportunities could include:

- involving a range of groups from the school community, all working together, e.g. students from a local secondary school, members of the Cooking Club, the school cook and staff, the school parents' club, teachers and teaching assistants and local community members.
- displays of ingredients, artefacts and pictures could help to evoke the culture behind the recipes.
- consider showcasing a different culture with each course, e.g. Italian antipasto starters, an Indian main course and a dessert from Greece.

Summer food celebration

The timing of this event could be at the end of the summer term or the beginning of the autumn term. It could be an afternoon or early evening school event, or form part of a bigger community event.

Opportunities could include:

- a vegetable show for the school and local community with sections for:
  - the most unusual fruit or vegetable
  - the largest vegetable
  - the best produce grown by pupils from seed given out in class
  - the best dish using a specified fruit or vegetable ingredient.
- outside agencies, e.g. allotment association or composting association, could be involved in encouraging families to grow more produce at home,
- developing the skills that the children have learned at school.
- community cooking clubs could sell dishes using produce from the school garden.
- a variety of awards could be offered, e.g. cooking the best recipe using home-grown produce.

Seed swap day

Seed swapping connects and sustains the local gardening network. It offers staff, pupils, parents and the local community a chance to learn about growing their own food and to try different varieties, thus keeping our heritage vegetables from extinction. It gives more experienced growers in the community a chance to share knowledge and seed that has adapted to local conditions.

Flyers can be made to remind everyone to save their plants' seed. Seed envelopes can be bought very cheaply from stationers or can be easily made in school, and seeds look good being dispensed from glass jars. Various stalls can be set up and manned by pupils/parents/teachers etc.

Opportunities could include:

- seed saving demonstrations
- a seed swap stall
- children's activities, e.g. guess the number of seeds in a jar, make a collage using different seeds
- a seed sowing demonstration by the pupils.

Garden Experiments

Experiments are simple trials or observations designed to be carried out at home, in a school garden or on an allotment. They give you the chance to learn about, and experiment with, new (and old) ideas or techniques and to share the knowledge gained.

The whole school community, including parents and the wider community, can be encouraged to participate in one of the Experiments. Participants can attend regular ‘get-togethers’ to exchange tips, ideas and information. The pupils can co-ordinate the distribution of information and feedback on the results.

The content of the Experiments could be prepared by the gardening, biology, chemistry or any other subject teachers. This could consist of:

- background information
- basic instructions on how to set up and run the trial
- advice on what information you will need to record
- results sheets which make it simple to record your observations and data as you go along
- where appropriate, basic materials such as seed.

Teacher will then compile and analyze the results, then report them in your school magazine or notice-board.

Grandparent Gardening Week

Taking place in early spring weeks, Grandparent Gardening Week aims to help schools settings get support from the local community to kick start their gardens into action after the winter.

Hosting gardening activities is a great way to reach out and engage grandparents, careers and local residents (including local allotment holders) in your school or nursery activities, and to get your garden in tip top condition along the way.

Hosting a gardening activity

Identify a time during the week (even after school) to host your Grandparent Gardening Week activity.

Find out what crops everyone would like to see grown, think about where you might plant them or how your cook could use them in their recipes, linking the crops with the kitchen and classroom learning. Share ideas and plans across your school or nursery to involve everyone in the fun!

As spring returns Grandparent Gardening Week is the perfect time to kick start your school or nursery garden, and to engage grandparents, careers and the wider community (including local allotment holders) to provide support, advice and guidance on gardening.

Other gardening opportunities could include:

- School gardens are not one-person projects. To truly thrive, the gardens need support from volunteers. It's especially exciting to have parents volunteer because it gives the garden staying power—it will live on even after the school has graduated. It's a win-win: the garden gets extra hands and parents get to go home with fresh produce to eat at home!
- The school could start gardening and cooking clubs, develop links with a local organic farm and set up an annual 'village show' where pupils can display what they have been growing.
- Stall on Friday afternoons where vegetable plants grown in the school garden are sold to children and their families to grow on at home. School canteen cooks or pupils themselves can prepare homemade soup using vegetables and herbs from the school garden or bake bread and cake and offer them to parents and local community.
- Funds raised are ploughed back into the gardening club.
- Throughout the year, members of the local allotment society visit the school, help in the garden and give advice.

Unit 3 – Integrating immigrant parents into kindergarten community

In this unit I will learn how to:

1. see immigrants as a part of Europe, because Europe has always had a mixed identity
2. what are the specifics of immigrant families
3. integrate immigrant parents and children into kindergarten community

Introduction into the topic

Leaving home country in order to find a better life is usually the ultimate solution for people. Smart destination countries and countries with long immigrant history know, that they should integrate migrants into everyday' s life as soon as possible and profit from their skills and knowledge. But because of different cultural background and ways of life, this process has some specifics.

Chapter 1 – Where migrants come from and the countries of their stay

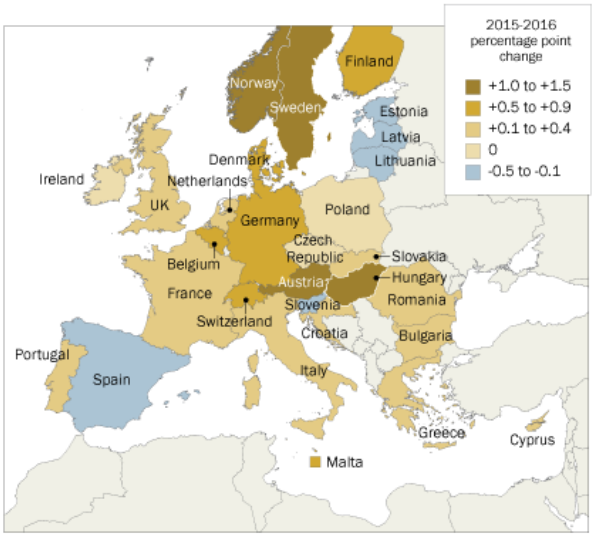
Europe has mixed identity

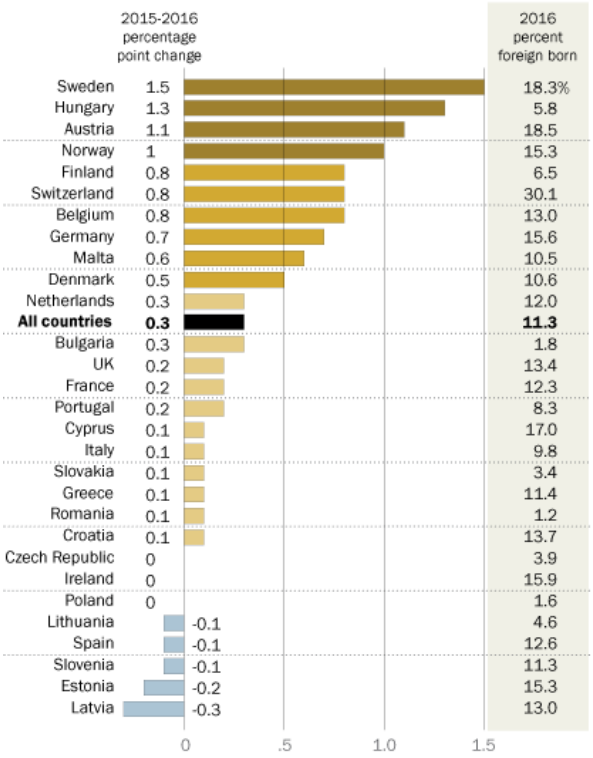
Europe is already intercultural and it will remain so, but the fear and hate need to be kept out of the public discourse. However, until now, Europe did not manage to offer a sense of common identity beyond the common values and an idea of Europe, which maintains its "mixed identity" (Europe´s Journal on Psychology, https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4894286/)

Immigrant share of population in European countries:

Migrant surge drives big increases in immigrant share for several European countries

Percentage point change in share of population that is foreign born, 2015 to 2016





Notes: Percentage point change is based on differences between 2015 and 2016 percent immigrant in each country. Numerator for immigrant percentages in 2016 is based on total international migrant population estimated by the UN in 2015 plus number of asylum applications from July 2015 through May 2016 (number of asylum seekers for April through May 2016 unavailable for many countries). Annual increase/decrease of non-asylum seeker migrants – based on change in total number of international migrants from 2010-15 – was also added to the numerator. Denominator is based on the UN 2016 population estimate without migration plus newly arrived migrants estimated in the numerator. Estimates are midyear. Shading reflects rounded numbers; rankings for the bar chart are based on unrounded numbers.

Source: Pew Research Center estimates based on analysis of United Nations data and Eurostat data accessed June 13, 2016.

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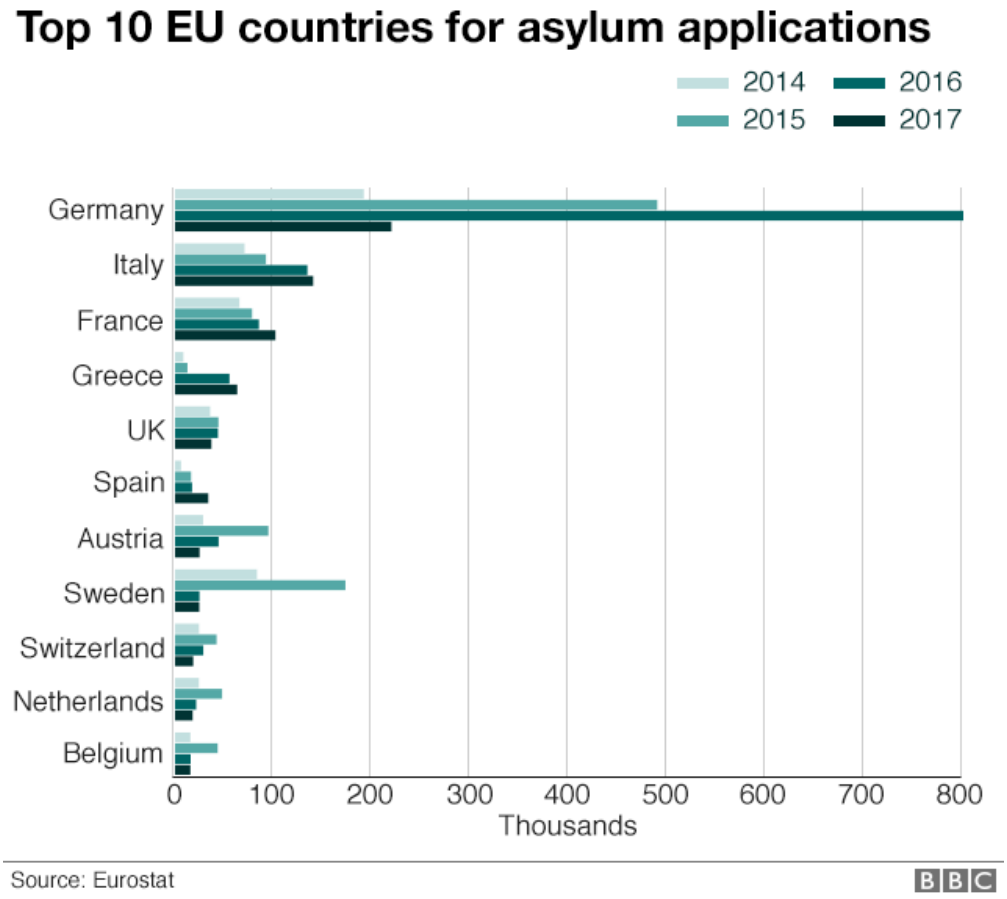
In 2016, more than 1 million people applied for asylum in Europe. The immigrants share of the population increased most during this time in Sweden, Hungary, Austria and Norway, with at least 1 percentage point. While that rise might seem small, even a 1-point increase in a single year is rare, especially in Western countries. Recent migrants added to already substantial foreign-born populations living in Sweden, Norway and Austria – all nations in which the foreign born make up 15% or more of the population in 2016. Sweden had the greatest increase, rising from about 16.8% in 2015 to 18.3% in 2016, a 1.5-percentage-point increase. The foreign-born shares in Norway (15.3% in 2016) and Austria (18.5% in 2016) increased by about 1 point over the same period. The United Kingdom and France – countries with significant immigrant populations – received far fewer asylum applicants relative to their population size in 2015-16 than other countries, and each saw a relatively modest 0.2-percentage-point increase in their foreign-born shares (to 13.4% in the UK and 12.3% in France for 2016).

Countries which received the most asylum seekers

Germany received the most asylum seekers of any European country. But because of its large population, its foreign-born share rose by an estimated 0.7 percentage points to 15.6% in 2016, a substantial but significantly smaller increase than in other European countries. On the other end of the spectrum, nations including Lithuania, Spain, Slovenia, Estonia and Latvia saw their immigrant shares decrease during this time. This is in part because these countries did not receive a high number of asylum seekers during the past year.

(PewResearchCenter, 2017)

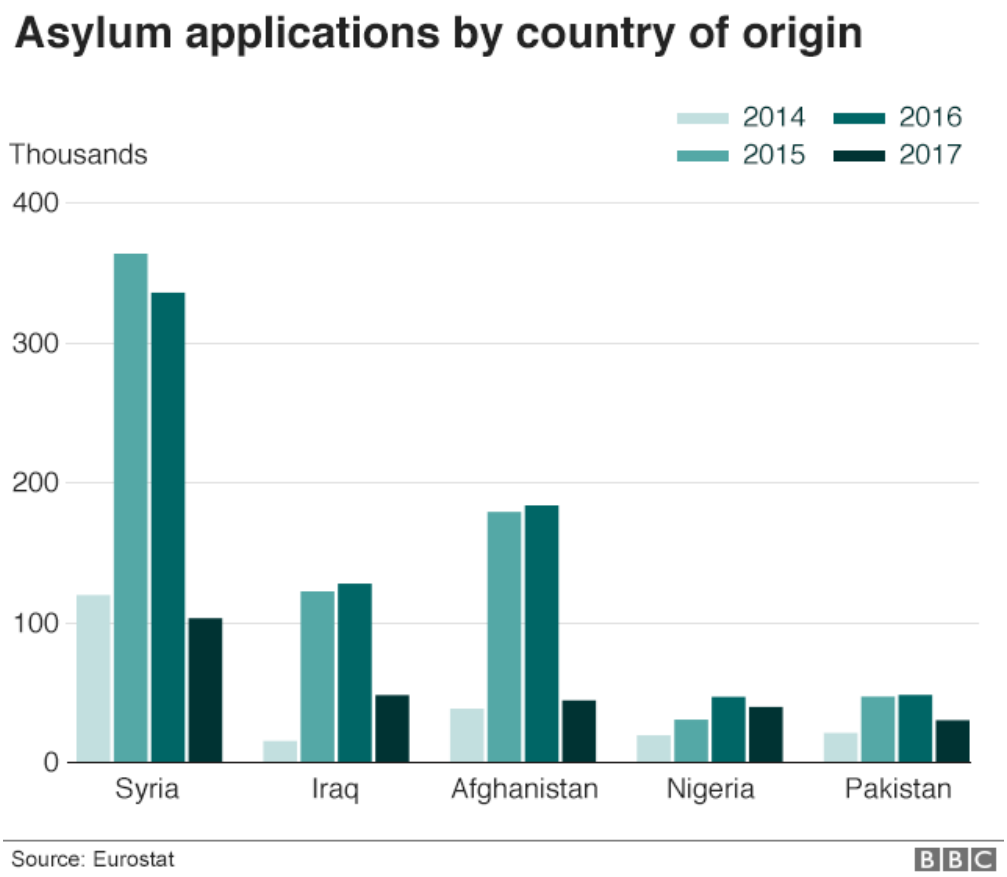
http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/06/15/immigrant-share-of-population-jumps-in-some-european-countries/



Where the migrants come from

The top countries by origin of asylum seekers in the EU since 2014 are Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Nigeria and Pakistan, which are countries with recent or ongoing conflicts. Asylum seekers from Eritrea, Bangladesh, Somalia, Iran and a number of Sub-Saharan countries are among the top 10 countries of origin of those who have been applying for asylum

in the EU since 2014. BBC News, (2018).



Chapter 2 – Starting life in a new country

Starting life in a new country

Leaving home country is never easy. People leave there not only their property, but also their social network, job, reputation, they must start a new life, where no one knows them. Future in a new country is uncertain, often with a new lifestyle and habits they don´t know. Starting a kindergarten or a school in a new country could be stressful for a child and his parents, but on the other side, this is a good opportunity to bond with other families and kindergarten/school community.

Educators and other professionals should recognize parents' needs for the following:

- **Acceptance of them as people**, rather than as a category.
- **Help in seeing the positive aspects** of the future.

www.teachervision.com

In kindergarten immigrant families may require extra assistance due to their specifics Immigrant families may require extra assistance enrolling in the program due to language and literacy challenges, transportation, work-schedule logistical challenges, and difficulty meeting application documentation requirements. (Julia Gelatt, Gina Adams, and Sandra Huerta Supporting Immigrant Families' Access to Prekindergarten)

Problem with transportation and long working hours Immigrant parents particularly are likely to work nonstandard hours, work long hours, and have inflexible work schedules that do not allow adjustment to children's kindergarten schedules (Bernhardt et al. 2009; Enchautegui 2013). Further, immigrant parents may be less likely to drive compared with other parents (Chatman and Klein 2013). As a result, logistical obstacles facing most low-income parents, such as a

prekindergarten program's hours or location and the availability of safe, reliable transportation for children, may affect immigrant families particularly strongly. Addressing these barriers can assist the enrollment of low-income families overall and immigrant families in particular. (Julia Gelatt, Gina Adams, and Sandra Huerta Supporting Immigrant Families' Access to Prekindergarten)

Chapter 3 – How parents can integrate into kindergarten community

Role of parents on children success

Parent engagement is now seen as an important component of program success in early learning. Parent and family engagement is building relationship with families that support family well-being, strong relationships between parents and their children and ongoing learning and development for both parents and children.

Parents from culturally diverse backgrounds should be encouraged to join parent organizations and share their cultural points of view.

USA has a long history of immigrants and their integration into society. One major finding of MPI´s research has been that foundational skills provided by basic literacy, adult ESL (English as second language) programs and cultural and system´s knowledge training are crucial supports for immigrant parents seeking o access parent engagement programs on an equal footing with their peers. Language is almost insurmountable barrier to many immigrant and refugee parents.

For children success in early years in US programs addressing parent´s skills and involvement are important. Parents are child first and most important teachers. Socioeconomic differences lead to varying child experiences that can cause large gap in cognitive and language development at a very early stage. Longitudinal data demonstrated an achievement gap between many immigrant groups and their native peers that begins even prior to kindergarten enrolment. (Immigrant parents and early childhood programs, pg.12-14)

Role of community-based organizations

They serve immigrants as a way of reaching immigrant families through a trusted mediator. With their strong community ties, they inform immigrant families about available services and public benefits, and can easily add information about prekindergarten to their message.

Chapter 4 - Strategies to build ties with immigrant parents

Educators need new skills to work with refugee and migrant children.

In different countries, teachers can be trained to work with immigrant children and their parents.

There are many ways how to bond with immigrant parents. Countries around the world have similar approaches but there can be differences from country to country. Here are some ideas:

1. All parents and children who interact with prekindergarten staff must be treated in a friendly manner and with respect. Staff should learn at least to say hello in their language.
2. A trained interpreter who shares the cultural background of the parents, helps building strong communication between parents and programs.
3. If possible: all staff should clearly communicate with immigrants: from bus drivers to administrators to teachers, that the program intends to be inclusive of all children in the community, whatever their backgrounds.
4. Cultural sensitivity training for teachers and staff are very useful.
5. Inviting parents into their kindergartens/schools for a variety of activities.
6. Parents sometimes may not be familiar with how kindergartens operate and what they expect from parents.
7. "Cultural nights," where parents can share food from their home country.
8. Monthly breakfast, where parents can stay at school after dropping off their kids, enjoy some food, and hear from

a local celebrity, such as someone from the local news station.

9. Educational and informational sessions, covering topics such as children's health and discipline, children's early brain development, and the importance of early education; such programs could be focused on topics of particular interest to immigrant parents.
10. Programs reported working toward more culturally competent programs through two main strategies: hiring from within diverse communities and training existing staff. Hiring bicultural assistant teachers is also possible. Bringing parent volunteers into the classroom can support cultural competency.

(Julia Gelatt, Gina Adams, and Sandra Huerta, Supporting Immigrant Families' Access to Prekindergarten; and other authors)

Chapter 5 - Examples of good practice

Good practice is to be found in the communities with comfortable and welcoming environment for new coming families. Programs which are successfully with diverse partners and families have an explicit parent engagement and outreach strategy that all staff understand and support.

Take a look at this two videos and you will see how Austria and Greece integrated refugees in their comunity and have created win-win situation.

<iframe width="560" height="315" src="https://www.youtube.com/embed/jGd9sPVRpOQ" frameborder="0" allow="autoplay; encrypted-media" allowfullscreen></iframe>

Speak language of immigrant's parents

At the beginning of programs is very important to speak in parent's language - otherwise they are just wasting their time and don´t understand anything. Parent support in their own language is very important - they will enroll their child where this support is.

You can, for example ask someone from the community who can speak your language to be translator. (Immigrant parents and early childhood programs, pg. 22)

Workshops for developing multicultural skills

In Slovenia, these workshops are organized for parents, children and educators. The aim is to encourage them for better and respectful relationships and understanding each other. In workshops, they try to point out language and cultural similarities and differences. Activities can be organized only for children or for children and parents. If parents are involved, workshops must be organized at afternoon and they have to be invited in time with an written invitation. At workshops, different opportunities for parents and children in local environment are presented: public organizations, NGO, which offer different supportive networks. (Priročnik za izvajanje programa Uspešno vključevanje otrok priseljencev; ISA institut Ljubljana, 2015)

Examples of workshops for parents and children

- **Fortifying the families:** workshops where families represent their country: presentation of culture, country, food, celebrations. They can have activities as: making Christmas cards, preparing food together...
- **School for Mums**, where mums from different country and school teachers meet at afternoon once per month. They talk about their countries, eat typical food, prepare food or tea together. Point of meetings is to bond, help immigrant mums to integrate into a society and explain them how country works.
- **Foreign language for parents, which goes together with presentation of school/kindergarten**, city where they live, important buildings they will use in everyday life. They get to know words and expressions they will use in school/kindergartens: rooms in kindergartens, timetable, web sites of school/kindergarten, menu, written

apology of non-attendance (they write one example). (Priročnik za izvajanje programa Uspešno vključevanje otrok priseljencev; ISA institut Ljubljana, 2015

- **Program for immigrant wifes: getting to know the local environment**. Program is designed especially for wifes of immigrants, because they usually stay at home, so their chances to integrate into a new society are very low. Women in program and their mentor visit important buildings in local environment, which they will use in their everyday life and organizations who offer help to immigrants: library, centre of social work, employment service, market ... and also cultural and natural sights, so that they can get the impression about their new environment and new cultural habits. Participants will meet local people, speak language of new country and practice communication skills in positive atmosphere. Beside getting to know local environment, women will also get in touch with each other, what couldn´t be possible if they would stay at home. Another useful part of the program is visit to possible interested employees. Mentor chooses the most appropriate employer regarding interests of the group. Both, women and employees have to be prepared for the visit and cooperate actively. (Barbara Fajdiga Perše, Tanja Krpan, I AM AN ACTIVE MEMBER OF A MULTINATIONAL SOCIETY Programme for social integration of women – third country nationals: Methodology and guidelines for train the trainer course, Ljudska univerza Nova Gorica, 2016)

Other learning tools:

- Migrant Education and Community Inclusion, Examples of Good Practice; Sirus Network Policy Brief Series, 2015
- http://solskilonec.si/
- http://prehrana.si/moja-prehrana/predsolski-otroci
- http://www.ellynsatterinstitute.org/index.php
- Erin K. Eliassen,The Impact of Teachers and Families on Young Children's Eating Behaviors

Tips: how to implement the topic to everyday life:

Strategies to build ties with immigrant parents - please see above

Tips for more information outside of the course:

- Priročnik za izvajanje programa Uspešno vključevanje otrok priseljencev; ISA institut Ljubljana, 2015
- Smernice za vključevanje otrok priseljencev v vrtce in šole; zavod Republike Slovenije za šolstvo, Ljubljana, 2012
- Inkluzija otrok priseljencev v izobraževanje, eknjiga, Ravne na Koroškem, 2016

Key Actions

1. **Parental involvent is important - make sure you overcome any bariers and start communicating**
2. **Welcome diversity and try to make most of it through food**
3. **Involve parents and community members in the school life around good food**
4. **Try to integrate immigrant familes in the daily life of the school**