

Single Parents – Fighting for Education

Grundtvig Learning Partnership

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INIBIA
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This document presents the

Conclusions and Policy Demands

prepared and raised by the single parents of the project
and accompanied by the staff of the partners:

Praxis gGmbH Marburg, Germany
ADCAVL Poet Celard, France
BOIE Lodz, Poland
Mancomunidad de Servicios Sociales del Sureste, Torre
Pacheco, Spain
PROBENS, Barcelona, Spain

Single parents – fighting for education! Conclusions and policy demands

The Grundtvig Learning-Partnership “Fighting for education – (single) parents’ and children’s needs”, undertaken with organisations from France, Spain, Poland and Germany, integrated the target group of near-illiterate single parents and their children in main parts of the project in order to focus their needs from their own perspective.

The activities and discussions during the project revealed the situation of single parents and their children in many details:

1. The target group in the partner countries:

The characteristics of the target group (near illiterate single parents) were resumed in a similar way: Single parents, who visited school, but have not necessarily a primary school degree. A significant number has a migrant background and has problems of writing and understanding. They are very often depending on the welfare system. The teaching methods in school and classes are often not effective and adapted to the needs of the target group. For all countries it is evident that unemployment strengthens and intensifies the basic problems of near-illiteracy. The political support alone is not efficient enough, because the target group has often low self-confidence and power to overcome the problems.

Research and interviews undertaken by the partners among the target group showed very often additional problems, which have different extents in the partner countries, e.g.

- Germany: Especially in Germany the social situation correlates with the school success of the pupils => pupils of near-illiterate families face low qualifications, social problems and low labour market chances
- Spain: The traditional family structures give a lot of permanent support and help through the families. But it can cause also a lot of tensions and often raises mental, drug and other problems; parents are often not a good example as they prefer to work instead of investing in qualification (e. g. people in rural areas or in the “old-industry”, or people who work only for some months in tourism)
- Germany and France: Single parents need to organize their daily life mainly without family support. In Germany there are a lot of initiatives of social help, public support, etc. The participants appreciate this help very much (e.g. child care, also during night

and weekend, e. g. for shift workers, and other kind of support, e. g. to finish the vocational training)

- Poland: The problems are very much focused on missing resources. The older generation is often not willing to adapt to the new economic system (older people are often still passive) and is therefore not a good example of the younger generation.

2. Main problems and links for improvements

The participants of the target group within the project ranged their main problems in the following order:

- 1.) Employment situation
- 2.) Child care situation
- 3.) Educational level
- 4.) Financial situation
- 5.) Family situation

They summarized that, of course, these life areas are very interdependent and addicted on the personal situation (number of children, general living conditions in the country, etc.), but the key for improvements are – from their standpoint of view - a **better employment situation** and a **high qualified child care** for their children.

With regard to the above mentioned areas the participants detailed possible links for improvements in the following ways:

- a) Family situation
 1. For the German single parents the most important thing
 2. Own flat (near to the grandparents) and all necessary finances (de)
(fr)
 3. Fathers of the children don't feel responsible, more responsibility and custody for the children (de)
 4. More general psychological support for individuals and family before anything happens (es)
 5. More sharing of responsibilities with fathers because the mothers need more time for themselves (autonomy, independence) (fr)

b) Child care situation

1. Child care with wider timetable and lower costs, more flexibility (e.g. shift work) (de)
2. More quality of child care, support of home work (de)
3. Free charge of leisure time activities with more flexibility adapted to working time schedules (es)
4. More child care places (fr) (de) (pl)
5. Support of initiatives which empower the family networks (fr)
6. More child care funded or supported in enterprises (de)

c) Educational situation

1. More special private lessons for individual pupils (de) (fr) (pl)
2. More and better funding for the special materials in school children need and can't pay (de)
3. Professional trainings adapted on the needs of single mothers, empower them (es)
4. Promoting alternative educational methods (e.g. Montessori) or schools (fr)
5. Less pupils per class, more cultural education, etc. (fr) (de)

d) Employment situation

1. Better work-life-balance (=> better conditions for part-time work and flexibility of working time, illnesses of children, etc.) (de)
2. Flexible work time also for full-time jobs (fr)
3. Increase in family-friendly corporate culture => financial compensation for enterprises who are working family-friendly (de)
4. Quota for single mothers in enterprises, special protection for single mothers (de) (es) (fr)
5. Support for drivers licences to be flexible and mobile (fr)

e) Financial situation

1. More money for child care, school, activities (de) (fr) (es) (pl)
2. More money for low-wage jobs (de)
3. More support for renting flats, education (es)

4. More individual support according to the individual needs of children (es)
5. Free legal advice (es)
6. 😊 One million Euros 😊

In fact, these points are “wishes” from the **view of the single parents**, but they focus the links for improvement strategies on different levels

3. Main conclusions and policy demands

During the discussions the participants and experts developed the following **demands** for the single parents:

1. Better and continuous public support services

Public child care needs to be extended quantitatively and qualitatively in all countries and needs to be free of charge. In general, the target groups need more educational care, support in school matters of the children, etc. so that their children have better employment and career chances in the future.

2. More moderated support for the target group by professionals

The target group defines the need for more individual counselling (with psychological elements), the implementation of self-help groups, the support by experts and counsellors to develop individual activity plans, etc. This would allow on the one side the exchange and mutual support with other single parents, on the other side it improves the self-reflection, support and help to manage the own life. Therefore there is a need to develop and offer counselling courses for experts, who are specially focused on the needs of the target group.

3. Better conditions for work-life-balancing

Employers need better conditions to provide work-life-balancing arrangements for their staff.

Proposals are:

- Rising awareness about the situation of the needs of single-parents
- Providing counselling for employers how to introduce flexible working-hours and how to individualize work-schedules
- Tax revenues or advantages to companies who employ single-parents who are in precarious situations

4. Change of public attitudes

The target group requests more respect for the situation of the clients by professionals, support services and the public: They are not (only) welfare receivers, they are part of the society and need only short-/ middle-term support. They need more understanding for their situation, which is often not caused by themselves

5. Participation and integration of the target group in activities

The integration of the target group in the project was a big success, as it led to the fact that the experts are not talking “about”, but “with the clients” and discovered more the real needs and links for improvements.

As a consequence, it seems necessary to install more “bottom-up”-projects, where the target groups in transnational exchanges can participate themselves.

The undersigners, participants and staff of:

BOIE, Lodz, Poland

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