







ARCKA “Assessing, recognizing competences and certifying knowledge acquisition valuing human capital of children of foreign origin in education and training in Europe” Project  
Number: HOME/2009/EIFX/CA/1880 - Project co-financed under the European Integration Fund

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## 1. THE FIELDWORK

In the Italian contest has seen. 2 focus groups with their students and 1 focus groups with their parents. The main difficulty was to reach the target and the fixed number. Specifically, it was:

- 1) difficult to contact parents and encourage their participation, especially in activity that takes place aside their working hours job. Many parents could not attend because they live in the suburbs of Milan, or of evening shifts at work the work also involved the evening hours;
- 2) difficult to identify homogeneous groups of students from the first or second generation, so it was possible to identify separate groups of Italians and foreigners and carry with them a focus group.

The focus has been carried out Istituto Professionale di Stato B.Cavalieri of Milan.

### 1.2 Target groups - parents

The research has enabled us to reach the following target groups:

1. Foreign and italian students - total no. 39 students: 19 foreigners and 20 Italians;
2. Foreign Parents – for a total of 5 mothers of students attending the Professional Institute B. Cavalieri.

**TAB. 1 - FOREIGN PARENTS**

Parent (Mother or Father)	Country of origin	Years of arrivals in Italy	Occupation in Italy	Qualification	Number of children
n. 5 Mothers	N. 2 Equador	n. 2 - 2000	n. 1 Family Assistant / n. 1 ironer	n. 1 Degree / n. 1 diploma	n. 2 / n. 1
	n. 1 Philippine	1991	n.1 Household	Degree	N. 2
	N. 1 Moldova	2007	n. 1 Librarian	Degree	n. 1
	N. 1 Egypt	2008	Undeclared	Degree	n. 3
<b>Total No. 5</b>	<b>Total: No. 5 mothers of Third Countries</b>				

As noted in the Table above, only 2 mothers are newly arrived migrant (2007 and 2008), the others have been in Italy for more than 10 years. Four



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mothers have a university degree and only one has a high school diploma, even if the qualification has not been spent or has not been possible to spend in the workplace. So there is a mismatch between educational qualifications (obtained in the country of origin and not recognized / equivalent in Italy) and the work done in Italy.

The last data is the average number of children (the average number is 2) held by foreign mothers. This is an element that has not been related to any other variable, but it is useful to define the composition (dimension) of the family.

### 1.3 Target groups - students

Focus groups realized in the secondary school level II - Professional Institute B.Cavaliere - involved 39 students of which, as anticipated, 20 Italian and 19 foreign. Were involved No. 2 classes: a first and a fourth. In the first class (21 students) the majority of students are foreigners (15 foreigners - Italian 6), while in fourth class there are 10 Italians and 8 foreign nationals - (Tab No. 2a).

School year	No. students	Italian students	Foreign students
Primo anno	21	6	15
Quarto anno	18	10	8
<b>TOTALE</b>		<b>20</b>	<b>19</b>

TAB 2a - FOREIGN AND ITALIAN STUDENTS

Foreign students (19 in total) participated in the focus groups are 12 females and 7 males.

The **country of origin** differs greatly within the sample. Based on the nationality criteria, out of the 19 foreigners: 2 are born in Europe (France and Romania respectively), 3 are from Moldavia, 9 are from Central America (El Salvador) and South America (3 from Peru, 3 from Ecuador, 1 from Brazil and 1 from Colombia). 1 of the pupils from this sample is from Africa (Sierra Leone) and 4 are born on the Asian continent (1 in China, 1 in the Philippines and 2 in Sri Lanka).

Female	Male	From European Community	From Centre and South America	From Africa	From Asia	From Est of Europe - Not in EU
12	7	2	9	1	4	3
<b>19 Foreign students</b>		<b>TOTAL 19 FOREIGN STUDENTS</b>				

TAB 2b - FOREIGN STUDENTS

Compared to data on the year of arrival in Italy (TAB N.2c):

- Only 3 students arrived before 2000: one was born in Italy (1992), the second arrived in Italy at the age of 6 (about 1998) and the third arrived at the age of 7 (1999);
- 7 students arrived in Italy between 2000 and 2005;
- The majority (9 students) arrived in Italy between 2006 and 2010.

Foreign students have many linguistic competences. As the table shows, all students speak at least 2 foreign languages, as many as 57.9% speaks 3 languages, speaks 4 languages, 10.5% and 10.5%, speaks 5 languages.

Years of arrival in Italy	
1992-1999	3
2000-2005	7
2006-2010	9

Spoken languages
100 % No. 2 languages
57,9 % 3 No. languages
21% No. 4/5 languages

TAB 2c - FOREIGN STUDENTS

Finally, with regard to age of students, there are differences depending on age and class attended by the students (Italian / foreign).

Students	14 years	15 years	16 years	17 years	18 years	19 years
Italian students	1	1	4	3	0	0

Foreign students	1	4	5	1	0	1
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TAB 2d - FOREIGN STUDENTS – first class

As showed in Table 2d above:

- 2 students (one Italian and one foreign) are in line with their educational trajectory;
- 5 students (4 Italian and 1 foreign) are 15 years old and are beyond their standard educational trajectory of 1 year, this is because they have either changed schools or they have been refused access to the next grade;
- the majority of Italian students (7) and of foreigner students (7) were older than the forecasted age at time of registration. These students too therefore might have changed schools or might have refused access to the next grade.

The fourth grade presents instead a different situation when dealing with age range (TAB N.2e):

- Italians attending the fourth year are in line with the expected age range (except for one student who is older);
- 2 foreign students are also in line with the expected schooling age, while the majority of them is older of either 1 or 2 years. Two students – aged between 20 and 21 have arrived in Italy in 2009 and in 2007 respectively.

Students	18 years	19 years	20 years	21 years
Italian students	3	6	1	0
Foreign students	0	2	4	2

TAB N.2e - FOREIGN STUDENTS – fourth class

#### 1.4 Target groups - teachers

We interview No. 2 teachers:

- 1) 1 teacher of primary school;



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2) 1 teacher of secondary school (Professional Institute B. Cavalieri in Milan).

There is a different point of view between the two teachers because they come from two different kind of school. This is an important element because they gave us a description of two different approaches regarding:

- entering in the school for the first time;
- educational path and the activities for foreign students;
- prospective of the future: one is about the passage from the primary school to the secondary school; the other one is the transition to the job market.

## 1.5 Topics

The focus groups that were conducted have touched upon 3 main areas:

- 1) choice of school, welcoming and admission;
- 2) school placement and educational-training path;
- 3) out of school and first contact with the labor market.

Within these macro areas, more specific topics have been investigated for each of the three areas:

### 1.5.1 Element of analysis of the focus group with students

#### 1) Choice of school, welcoming and admission:

- a. evaluation and selection criteria;
- b. subjects who took part in the decision process;
- c. support to the school entrance - subjects and modalities;
- d. procedures and tools for evaluating inbound;
- e. Italian language - knowledge / no knowledge to the entrance.



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## 2) School placement and educational-training path:

- a. school activities / extracurricular activities that are supportive for foreign students (learning Italian, study, inclusion, etc.) - subjects, places, methods and tools;
- b. activities in support of their parents;
- c. parental participation in school life of their children.

## 3) Out of school and first contact with the labor market:

- a. project for the future of their children - subjects, recommendations, personal experience, etc.;
- b. internship / stage / other work as tools for job placement - opportunities and restrictions;
- c. formal, non formal and informal skills of students who are / are not expendable in the workplace.

### 1.5.2 Element of analysis of the focus group with parents

The macro-areas investigated with parents are the same as those treated with students, have been minimally altered the specific elements of analysis. Specifically:

## 1) Choice of school, welcoming and admission:

- a. evaluation and selection criteria;
- b. subjects who took part into the process;
- c. change of school;
- d. school enrollments and documentation;
- e. difficulties in proceeding and possible changes.

## 2) School placement and educational-training path::



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- a. school activities / extracurricular activities that are supportive for foreign students (learning Italian, study, inclusion, etc..) - subjects, places, methods and tools;  
difficulties encountered and / or difficulties which still exist.

### 3) Out of school and first contact with the labor market::

- a. project for the future - who attended the choice?
- b. internship / stage / other work as tools for job placement - opportunities and restrictions;
- c. formal, non formal and informal skills of students who are / are not expendable in the workplace.

#### *1.5.3 Element of analysis of the focus group with teacher*

Three topics have been investigated by the interviews of teachers:

- 1) choice of school, welcoming and admission – many important aspects;
- 2) school placement and educational-training path – involving families in the school;
- 3) passages from schools; out of school and first contact with the labor market.

## 2. METHODOLOGY AND TOOLS

### 2.1 Methodology

The method used for data gathering is interviews carried out within focused groups. We have chosen this method because, in line with the objectives of this research, has allowed in social interactions between the Italian and foreign students created during the focus group:

- to collect important information concerning the themes mentioned above;
- bring out the awareness of the roles of foreigners;



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- to support the cultural development of participants and researchers who conducted the focus groups (in terms of learning about: cultural dynamics, roles and awareness of being foreign).

The management of the focus group was delegated to two researchers for each focused group, and each had a specific role:

- 1) **interviewer** - who has led the discussion, so there was a dialogue between participants, and through his moderation has enhanced the participation of all focused group members and the active listening of informants' own stories;
- 2) **participant observer** - *who has supported the conduct of the focus group, has collected the most important information emerged during the questioning process and has discussed with the interviewer/moderator the insights that they both had gained.*

All focus group discussions were audio recorded and transcribed in order to ensure adequate and correct qualitative analysis of the data.

## 2.2 Tools

In this phase of the research we used no. 2 specific tools:

- 1) N. 2 tracks for the management of focus groups: No. 1 used with students - n. 1 used with parents. The No. 2 tracks have allowed the investigation of the areas already described in paragraphs 1.4.1 and 1.4.2 of this document (ANNEX ANNEX No. 1 and No. 2);
- 2) board for data collection (anonymous) student and parent (ANNEX ANNEX No. 3 and No. 4).

For the interviews with the teacher we use one track that mixed the point of view of students and the view of parents. This is important to deepen some key point emerged during the different focus groups.

## 3. QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS - AOCUS GROUP STUDENTS

We conducted two focus groups with students (Italians and foreigners of the first or second generation) who attend respectively the first and the fourth class of the same school, vocational school "Knights" of Milan. The choice of these two specific school years was carried out to verify the steps:

- 1) from the secondary school first level to the secondary schools (second level). In particular in the first class has discussed the topic of choice and the entrance into the new school;



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- 2) second degree by secondary school to the labour market / higher education / universities, to capture opportunities, constraints, plans and future perspectives of young people.

The focus groups with students of the first class is focused on the welcoming phase, to bring out the procedures, tools, strategies, etc.. used in many different situations:

- at the entrance to the school, in connection with previous experience (in the school of a lower level in a school in the country of origin, or more frequently, in another school previously attended);
- the perceptions, emotions, relationships that students have tried/built with people (teachers, managers, peers).

The focus with the fourth class, however, has given space for deeper work experience already experienced by students (Stage or work experience), and the projection for the future of the students and the working world, picking up their projects, the doubts, expectations.

Looking the answers given by students (first and fourth year), you can have an overview of the different joints of schooling and, in particular, those more delicate: the arrival at school and access to the labour market. For this reason, the results of two focus are reported jointly in this section of the report, referring to the areas investigated.

### 3.1 Main Theme 1: Choice of school, welcoming and admission

The first part of the focus group was devoted to the investigation of methods for **choosing the school** that children attend: the reasons for choosing this type of school, and this Institute in particular, and the sources of information by which students have had access.

The first-year students, but also those of the fourth, recounted in detail the reasons for their choice and identified the role of key players: families, peers or friends who have attended this school, teachers from the school attended previously, the Internet, etc.

For many students the choice of this school comes from a previous school failure - sometimes this failure, however, was the result of a choice by the children - a result that prompted families to intervene then, choosing the school for their children, as told by a student of first class:

*[...] Io ad esempio ho parlato con I miei genitori perché volevo fare una scuola che avevo scelto io, sempre dopo aver parlato con amici; sono andato a fare*



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*quella scuola e però mi hanno bocciato. Quest'anno così ne abbiamo riparlato e visti i voti che avevo e le mie capacità, abbiamo deciso di fare questa scuola, per [...] imparare a fare delle cose, per acquisire delle competenze.*

Some students gave way to an opposite process: the student follows the indication of the parents to choose a school, but when it is rejected, only to choose a new vocational school, a school that feels closer to their aspirations and abilities.

Someone does not tell in detail the process of choice, but says he chose the school, according to the wishes and advice of parents or, not infrequently, making a decision with them, as remembered by a student of fourth class:

*[...] lo ho scelto con i miei genitori, ci piacevano le materie... c'è l'economia che può essere utile per dopo, per il lavoro.*

In general, families have an important role also in the experience of foreign students.

In addition to families, the **peers have an important role**. And here we refer to friends, classmates, cousins, which suggest the schools because they attend the same school, or because, themselves, have heard good things about the school from other peers. In particular, this last option reflects the experience of those who were rejected and seeks, through peers, a new school environment, that is closest to their attitudes and aspirations, as told by a student in the first class:

*[...] L'anno scorso c'erano dei miei amici che andavano in un'altra scuola, ci sono andato anch'io però sono stato "cannato" perché non studiavo. Poi è stata una mia amica più grande a suggerirmi questa scuola e questo indirizzo perché mi ha detto che era uguale all'indirizzo tecnico ma un po' più facile.*

The criterion of choice is often the "easiness of the school" and affordability for students who have had a previous unsuccessful school career, sometimes in contradiction with the expectations of their parents:

*[...] Questa scuola me l'ha consigliata un'amica che studia qui in quarta; mi ha detto che è una scuola un po' facile ma comunque bisogna studiare. I miei volevano che io facessi il liceo di scienze umane...*

More rarely, in the words of students, teachers play a crucial role in the secondary school level, which can guide children to a vocational school and to



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suggest anything other than what themselves want to do, also coordinate with families:

*[...] Io volevo fare un'altra scuola, ma poi i miei genitori, parlando con la professoressa di italiano dell'anno scorso (delle medie) hanno scelto di farmi fare questa scuola; io avrei voluto fare il linguistico, mi piacciono molto le lingue e sono già avvantaggiata perché so lo spagnolo...*

Finally, the students arrived recently in Italy, say they found this school **Online**, finding themselves in a situation of displacement for the recent arrival in a new country, as told a student of fourth class who was included directly to the second school year:

*[...] Ero appena arrivata in Italia e mi sono messa a cercare su internet. Avevo già fatto il liceo nel mio Paese, ma gli anni che avevo fatto non erano validi... però la preside mi ha fatto entrare già nel II anno. Sono venuta qui prima di finire le scuole nel mio paese perché dovevo partire prima dei 18 anni. [...] Dopo vorrei fare l'università...*

### 3.2 Main Theme 2: school integration

In the first class, students tell with great accuracy the incoming at school. For many students arrive at school is a **moment of displacement**, exacerbated by linguistic and cultural heritage of those who recently arrived from another country. Initially the students explain that the first situation that has due a moment of "displacement" has been the discovery to have different ages and have complex educational pathways:

*[...] Sono arrivato e non conoscevo nessuno così ho dovuto imparare ad interagire con gli altri. All'inizio pensavo di dover interagire con quelli del 97 e poi quando ho scoperto che c'erano anche quelli del 95 ci sono rimasto male.*

*[...] Anch'io quando sono arrivato non conoscevo nessuno, poi abbiamo iniziato a parlare e abbiamo scoperto che la maggior parte delle persone sono del 95 o del 96.*

The theme of rejection is immediately highlighted by students as an element of discomfort and sometimes shame, however, in a short time, discovered to be shared by most of these guys.

The discussion quickly leads to the first experiences of knowledge in the classroom, usually not formalized, but favoured by some games to get to know, as told a student in the class first:



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*[...] Abbiamo fatto anche dei giochi che servivano per conoscerci meglio, per capire qualcosa in più di chi erano gli altri perché all'inizio posso anche pensare che una persona mi sta simpatica e che mi può piacere ma non lo so veramente, ho bisogno delle prove; poi questi giochi sono serviti anche a capire che per tante cose abbiamo dei problemi comuni.*

Other ways of mutual knowledge is the allocation of seats in the class. Students say that teachers "make change" often classmate and this leads to a deepening of mutual understanding:

*[...] Ad esempio la prof ci fa cambiare il compagno di banco così un po' siamo obbligati a parlare con persone diverse e questo ci aiuta a conoscere gli altri. All'inizio abbiamo fatto una lista di persone con cui volevamo stare in banco e la prof ha cercato di accontentare tutti, poi abbiamo iniziato a fare questa cosa di cambiare compagno di banco per conoscerci meglio.*

To the question: what are the **most important moments** where you can know and accept everyone in the class? Students answer with examples: the school trip is a privileged opportunity for integration into the classroom:

*[...] Sicuramente le gite; sono un momento in cui ci si conosce ma sono complicate da organizzare e i professori hanno una responsabilità troppo grossa perché se succede qualcosa ci vanno di mezzo loro. Ad esempio la gita che abbiamo fatto a Torino è andata bene.*

Foreign students newly arrived in Italy explained that the main difficulty at the beginning, is the **language barrier** that is overcome over time:

*[...] All'inizio è difficile perché non capisci, a volte non capisci proprio niente e non ti senti sicuro e quindi non ci provi a parlare perché hai paura di sbagliare. Poi piano piano inizi ad imparare e allora ci provi e diventi anche più sicuro di te.*

Some students of the fourth class remember well the first phases of **welcoming** at school. A girl from the second generation, for example, says that just arrived at school, she took the test in Italian language, language that is familiar from childhood. Only after the test is declared not need a course in Italian, but this moment of evaluation seems to be stuck in her memory.

*[...] Sono in Italia da 11 anni. Uscivo dalle medie, non ho fatto nessuna scuola prima di questa... mi hanno fatto fare lo stesso il test di italiano ma mi hanno detto che non avevo bisogno di recuperare... infatti sono qui da tanto tempo.*



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*[...] Quando siamo arrivati ci hanno fatto fare un test per valutare l'italiano... e poi ci hanno chiesto da quanto tempo eravamo in Italia. Mi ricordo quel momento.*

Different, instead, is the experience of children newly arrived in Italy. Many of them have tried to school or other places where learning Italian.. In every story of foreign students there is a significant figure: a teacher, a classmate who has played a positive role entering in the new context.

*[...] Quando sono arrivato io mi hanno tradotto tutto in inglese. Non capivo niente... Mi hanno aiutato, una prof. mi è stata vicino per sei mesi, per aiutarmi... soprattutto durante alcune ore come economia, italiano, storia.*

*[...] Sono arrivata in Italia un mese prima dell'inizio della scuola... facevo un corso di due ore alla settimana per imparare l'italiano. Ho conosciuto lei (compagna di classe) e mi sono un po' ambientata.*

Another example of positive interaction with their peers is the "learning weeks", a full immersion week (morning and afternoon) composed by several activities to facilitate the learning of Italian language, but also the socialization.

*[...] Abbiamo fatto anche le "learning week", qui nella scuola, per una settimana venivamo tutti i giorni dalla mattina fino alle 5, parlavamo di musica , ci conoscevamo di più, anche tra italiani e stranieri...*

To the question: what students' **prior knowledge**, Italians and foreigners, are recognized at school? The answers given are not very positive. Most students think you have skills that are not "useful" for the school. Examples: knowledge of the language of origin or an informative or have a versatile skill in languages, mathematics, or know well, because it has been studied in the country of origin in detail.

For many students the knowledge of some concepts or matters is almost a barrier to learning: "you already know a little 'a matter" and was not motivated to study it, he tells a boy of the second generation of the fourth class:

*[...] Io ho trovato qui delle materie che già sapevo. Era tutto già visto, non mi interessa molto. Solo la matematica mi interessa di più...*





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believe they have better understood what they want and do not want to do after the end of their present schooling career.

*[...] Io ho fatto lo stage a Compass, mi occupavo della parte amministrativa... Facevo i contratti, dovevo gestire i dati dell'azienda, e consegnare le tessere per i buoni pasto. Mi hanno dato anche la password dell'azienda... era una grossa responsabilità! Mi è piaciuto, lo farei come lavoro...*

In general, foreign students demonstrate clearer ideas than Italian students, and the willingness to change the country to find a job, because they have already this experience early on in their lives.

#### 4. QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS - AOCUS GROUP PARENTS

The research activities with foreign parents has examined the same macro-topics addressed with the students.

##### 4.1 Main Theme No. 1: Choice of school, welcoming and admission

The experience of foreign students about school choice is the same as reported by their parents. In particular, when parents talk about choice, the selection criteria and the persons involved in the decision making process, they say that the choice was made from:

- previous experience (previous school courses failed);
- recommendations of teachers, parents' network (friends), classmates of their children;
- desire for their children - even though to a lesser extent.

*[...] Mia figlia voleva fare la traduttrice, quindi ha scelto il linguistico.. noi mamme sappiamo bene cosa possono o meno fare i nostri figli, ma si dice di lasciare loro la possibilità di sbagliare.. e le è costato 2 anni, alla seconda volta che è stata bocciata mi ha detto "mamma forse non sono portata per le lingue.." quindi ha cambiato scuola.*

*[...] Ho detto io a mia figlia di fare questa scuola perché le dà più possibilità dopo non come mio nipote che ha fatto il liceo e dopo non aveva più voglia di studiare e non ha in mano un titolo che vale nel lavoro.*

*[...] Mia figlia ha scelto questa scuola grazie ad una sua amica che voleva farla ...*

*[...] Questa scuola mi è stata consigliata da un'insegnante di un'altra scuola.*





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*non si dice/non si fa nulla e i professori pensano che uno non ci arriva o non ha voglia di studiare o cose del genere;*

*[...]Non si riesce bene a fare amicizia, magari ci si riesce meglio con stranieri che parlano la tua lingua o vengono dal tuo stesso Paese...*

These difficulties in entering the school seem to be "mitigated" by the presence of important figures in the school - teachers and school director - supporting foreign students in their path, creating intra-and extra-curricular activities that promote socialization among Italian and foreign students, but also between children of different classes.

*[...]So che fanno le "scuole pomeridiane" che servono al recupero scolastico quando vai male. Sono aperte solo a chi va male e non a tutti... secondo me dovrebbero essere aperte a tutti perché per esempio mio figlio non ci può andare perché non va così male in alcune materie dove fanno recupero.*

*[...]Fanno anche delle attività al pomeriggio come quelle della musica - mia figlia ha fatto il corso di chitarra - ma anche sporto - pallavolo - e servono.*

A school is made of activities for students, but are made to work for foreign parents?

All responded that the Professional Institute of the State Knights is a very open and welcoming school, then the school already supports the parents - in the inscription, insertion and throughout the educational path - but also helps them by providing, at the beginning the school year, useful information, so parents know what their child do at school:

- description of all activities to be done and who is required to participate;
- the name of all the teachers and matters;
- school timetable for every class.

*[...]Questa scuola è molto "organizzata" e aperta agli stranieri, i professori sono molto disponibili e gentili e soprattutto la Preside che è sempre molto accoglienti con i genitori e soprattutto con gli strani*

In fact, the parents do not know the activities for themselves, even if they say they are useful hours receiving of the teachers for parents; these hours are an important opportunity for exchange, as well as mutual understanding. Parents reported the "limited family-school communication," they argue the need and the importance of expanding opportunities to communicate - between these important subjects which rotate around the lives of children.

To take the investigation further, we have asked parents about their participation in school life of their children? All participants in the focus group have argued the



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difficulty of following closely the educational path of their children. In that, these restrictions are mainly related to their work that engages them for several hours per day. This involves the limited knowledge of the place and what children can do. This brings out again the need already expressed: greater communication between schools and families so that parents be told in advance if there are problems at school, but also for absences "unjustified" or early departures from school, etc.

### 4.3 Main Theme 3: first match with the labour market

The last theme dealt with foreign parents is the transition from school to work, starting with a reflection on the projects that they and their children have about what they "want to do after school ..."

The replies of the mothers are different, even if they have supported what the students have already said: many foreign students have a clear idea of what they want to do after the school experience.

*[...]mio figlio mi ha detto che vuole aprire un ristorante, sapeva perfino che il Comune dava dei soldi a fondo perduto ai giovani per aprire delle attività e, ovviamente, voleva che io gli dessi una mano ad aprire e a far funzionare il ristorante ...*

*[...]Mia figlia vorrebbe andare all'università e ci ha chiesto se noi l'aiutiamo con le spese per fare l'università. Noi vorremmo sempre che i nostri figli studiassero proprio perché è forse un aiuto in più per il suo futuro.*

The study is important for the job, but the qualifications acquired in Italy or another European country is more expendable in Third Countries (not the EU).

*[...]Nel mio Paese (sud America; Egitto; etc.) è molto importante prendere un diploma qui, perché nel mio Paese si trova subito lavoro con quel pezzo di carta, anche se qui in Italia non si andava bene a scuola.*

How, foreign students choose "their working future"?

If foreign parents seem to be more present in the choice of school, in the transition to work, changing the role of parents: from decision makers to support their children in their choice of what will be their future.

*[...]La scelta del futuro di mia figlia deve essere solo sua, certo noi genitori possiamo darle una mano, ma il suo futuro è solo suo, io le mie scelte e la mia vita l'ho già fatta.*

*[...]I figli hanno sempre bisogno di una guida - noi genitori - senza però sostituirsi a loro. Spetta a loro la decisione del futuro.*



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Another "dilemma" arises in comparing life project of foreign students and their parents' life project. Parents appreciate Italy and what the country has offered them - work, family, building a network of friends, etc.. - But they want to return to their country and be able to conclude their lives there. This "up against" with the wishes of their children - to go to school, look for jobs in Italy, but do not return to his country of origin - partly because many of the foreign students are second generation, being in Italy for many years.

Linked to the theme of transition to work, there is the topic of work experience and/or internship/placement of their child, including the experiences that the school offers to its students - as a training tool "on the job." Only a parent tells a bad experience placement of her son.

*[...]gli facevano solo spinzettare dei fogli... tornava a casa con le mani tutte rovinare e se non faceva quello se lo dimenticavano lì seduto alla scrivania, ma non perché è straniero per in quel posto hanno fatto la stessa cosa anche con gli italiani.*

Other parents say positive internship experiences: useful moments to learn specific skills.

*[...]Mia figlia è andata a fare uno stage in un posto molto buono, ha imparato molte cose e soprattutto il "lavoro pratico". Ha anche imparato cosa significano le regole e "il lavorare" più in generale. In realtà negli stage si può scoprire di essere capaci di fare cose che nemmeno si credeva di poter fare o magari di essere negati per altri.*

Finally, talking about activities "on the job", a parent reported an activity to support young people (Italians and foreigners): institutional activities with Consulate (South America) and Municipality of Milan. The institutional communication activities are about funding or the opportunity to request facilitated loans for young people - the funds are to open new economic activities and facilitate youth entrepreneurship.

*[...]Il consolato (Sud America) fa degli incontri con i cittadini stranieri e spesso collabora anche con le istituzioni comunali: l'ultima volta è venuto un assessore del Comune di Milano e ha spiegato quali sono i progetti giovanili e le attività che vengono proposte per i giovani, anche per il lavoro (es. finanziamenti agevolati).*

This activity has a dual purpose:

- 1) promote the participation of the foreign population in social, cultural and working life of the host society;
- 2) to support youth activities not only in the Italian population, but also in the foreign population in Italy.



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## 5. QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS - ANTERVIEW WITH TEACHERS

The research activities with teachers has examined the same macro-topics addressed with the students and parents.

### 5.1 Main Theme No. 1: Choice of school, welcoming and admission

Very often, students and families choose school according to their residence: "the school closest to home". School cannot decide to avoid welcoming foreign students.

1) Very often, in the primary school, parents new arrived in Italy have not documents of previous school path in the country of origin. This is the reason why the school ask parents information about the previous experience. In this phase, parents have also to choose which kind of permanence at school they prefer. Usually, foreign families choose a full time modality (work of parents; home-school distance; cultural approaches).

2) In the secondary school, usually parents chose school for their son, according to the precedent analysis.

Language is the most important obstacle for students and parents:

a) for students because they have many particular difficulties at school, regarding in particular reading and writing Italian language;

b) for parents because they have some difficulties to understand Italian language, they have difficulties to understand school rules, communications of teachers (very often in a strong Italian!) and they are "faraway" from school life.

The linguistic mediator is a key-figure, as a bilingual figure (e.i. relatives living in Italy since long time or friend of family) who can translate communications from school to family.

In primary and secondary school, new arrived students have a exam based on many different questions about different disciplines. This is a way to decide in which class the new student have to enter.

Foreign students many times cannot complete this exam, because of the language. Very often, teachers decide also during the school year to prepare some specific exams based on their specific level of Italian language.

The teacher of primary school would like to change some aspects of school:

- the structure of school, not more single classrooms but level paths to offer to foreign students the opportunity to learn what they have to learn.
- the opportunity to have a single year dedicated to Italian language



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- the opportunity to offer to parents a part-time modality inside school, and offer other opportunity to socialize outside school, useful to practice their Italian.

## 5.2 Main Theme No. 2: school integration

The teachers talked about the several activities for foreign students and parents (Following Tab. No. 3 AND Tab. No. 4).

ACTIVITIES FOR FOREIGN PARENTS	ACTIVITIES FOR FOREIGN STUDENTS
Specific project to involve foreign parents (es. Italian/European project)	Only 20 hours for Italian language - small group - foreign student with different age and from different classroom.
Italian language and culture for foreign parents c/o C.T.P (Centri Territoriali Permanenti)	Facilitation of many disciplines
	CD-rom for learning Italian language ad pc (few cases)
	Extra-school activities to study and socialize – not only for foreign students

Tab. No. 3 - Activities in the primary school

ACTIVITIES FOR FOREIGN PARENTS	ACTIVITIES FOR FOREIGN STUDENTS
Communications for parents regarding the main school activities	“Special prix to study”, a prix for the “best student” not only regarding career but the way to socialize and welcome newcomers.
	For foreign students: Italian language course A1 and discipline facilitation B2
	Empowerment of linguistic competences of foreign students, encouraging them to continue to study their language of origin.

Tab. No. 4 - Activities in the secondary school

For both levels, there are many activities for students and fewer for parents.



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For teachers of both levels, the most important problem is involving foreign parents, for many reasons:

- Lack of time (many parents have very hard-working)
- Cultural differences (the mother is at home but she cannot participate to school).
- Conditions linked to the immigration status (absence of a familiar network helping them).

Parents have in many cases some difficulties to help children to do home-work, because of their different school experience.

*[...]Noi come maestre non abbiamo riscontrato, per i bambini stranieri, aiuti familiare a supporto dei loro apprendimenti scolastici.*

Schools have try to involve parents in school life:

- By linguistic mediators or other people speaking both languages and able to translate rules and main communications;
- Avoiding the use of children as mediators;
- Facilitating communications by non-verbal communication.

Teachers have also difficulties to find texts and other instruments useful for foreign students, but also more understandable to Italian students.

*[...]abbiamo dei libri di grammatica preistorici! Sono libri pieni di contraddizioni e che spiegano l'italiano in maniera troppo complicata. Qualcuno ha provato a realizzare dei libri più coerenti, che per esempio eliminano il predicato nominale o lo spiegano in altro modo ... Poi c'è un altro problema, i professori non sono sempre disponibili al cambiamento. La scuola è un luogo conservativo.*

### **5.3 Main Theme No. 3: the transition from a school to another or the switching context and the first match with the labour market**

We have investigated the passages from one school to another.

1) Passage from primary school and secondary school – many activities:

- To bring up documents from one school to another;
- Meeting for teachers and students together.

2) Transition phase from different secondary schools: the main activity is to bring up documents from schools and, in many difficult cases, a meeting for teachers.



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*[...]nel passaggio dalle medie alle superiori, ci piacerebbe avere maggiore collaborazione con le scuole, ma non è semplice. Siamo stati inseriti nel programma "Passaggi" del Polo Start 1, ma le scuole medie coinvolte sono troppo lontane da noi, difficilmente i ragazzi di quelle scuole vengono da noi.*

Another problem regards the orientation of foreign students: very often teachers offer them the only opportunity to go to vocational school, also if their attitudes are different.

*[...]Abbiamo invece un rapporto stretto con gli Enti di orientamento degli studenti stranieri, che però indirizzano quasi sempre questi ragazzi al professionale, solo perché sono stranieri e si pensa che non possano fare di più. È una scelta che dobbiamo dire è razzista. C'è anche da dire che se orientassero questi ragazzi al Liceo, i professori non saprebbero come gestirli, non sono abituati e sono poco disponibili ad accogliere degli alunni che fanno errori in italiano.*

- 3) From the school to the labour market - there are many different activities inside the school, to orient students in the labor market: stages, short work experiences; work trips; etc. But today many difficulties depend on the economical crisis.

*[...]Una volta riuscivamo a collegare meglio la domanda e l'offerta. Adesso con la crisi è tutto bloccato. I ragazzi imparano comunque a preparare il loro CV, escono di qui che lo hanno pronto.*

## 6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In line with the main research findings emerged through the work packages of the project ARCKA and, in particular, within the WP 5 (i.e. the elaboration of guidelines and recommendations to promote third country national students well being and school success and parents devolves to cooperative actions to support children in school careers) it is understood that:

- 1) In the schools of the city of Milan (area of this phase of the research), there is not a general rule that regulate the processes of welcome and the entrance to the school (as evidenced in other phases of the project) and this is perceived and reported by foreign - both students and parents. Many schools say also that "foreign students are not more difficult than Italian students".
- 2) the welcoming is not a process but a physical place, made up of people who welcome foreign students. For students, the welcoming is done by several persons, who are warm and helpful, people who carry out



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activities to promote acceptance, integration and socialization of children. For the parents the welcoming passes through the school context, more generally. Parents capture more of the children, the size of "totality" of the acceptance, while the boys live as welcoming people who "welcoming";

- 3) In general, there are more Italian language than socialization activities. These activities are very important in the students' opinion.
- 4) There are some key-figures in the school path and in the passages from one school to another, in particular: parents, peers, teachers of the previous school. Families are very important also for the passage in the labour market.
- 5) Stages, short work experiences and other little work activities are very important occasions to understand work world. Not very often work world recognises specific competences of foreign students, getting in informal or non-formal situations.
- 6) Many activities are involving public institutions (Comune of Milan, Consolati, etc.), and these are very important opportunities to link foreign young people to the Italian society.

There are few differences between different levels of schools, for this reason we underline similarities:

- 7) The choice of school depends on the location of the house and parents have a strong influence. Teachers have not opportunity to orient students in other schools.
- 8) there are some standard test to evaluate level of competences and knowledge of foreign students. The school path is supported by Italian language courses and specific instruments of evaluation.
- 9) The teachers think that is very useful to have a previous experience in an Italian school. These students have not specific problems.

*[...]gli studenti stranieri che hanno frequentato prima qualche anno scolastico in Italia non hanno particolari problemi, anzi nel passaggio alle medie non trovano particolari problemi e riescono a terminarle senza grosse difficoltà, così come gli studenti italiani. Anche il livello di integrazione è alto[...]*

- 10) There are few activities for students and in particular for parents, faraway from the life school.
- 11) The most important moments are passages from one school to another. In the primary school there are more opportunities to communicate among schools, not in secondary school.



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## 8. ALLEGATI

### 8.1 Allegato No. 1 - traccia per il focus group - studenti

**TARGET DEI PARTECIPANTI AI FOCUS - studenti stranieri (prime e seconde generazioni) in Italia**

#### A1. Dettagli intervista

Numero intervista (Id)	
Data dell'intervista (giorno, mese, anno)	
Luogo dell'intervista (edificio, sala), indirizzo, regione, paese	
Durata (minuti)	
Intervistatore	

**Obiettivo** del focus è verificare se, all'ingresso, durante e all'uscita dal percorso scolastico/formativo ci sono delle buone pratiche riconosciute come tali dai ragazzi in grado di sostenerli nel loro inserimento nel percorso scolastico/formativo, accompagnamento, uscita dal percorso formativo, ingresso nel mercato del lavoro (stage, esperienze dirette).

**Tema principale 1: scelta della scuola ed ingresso**



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- 🍏 Se dovessi aiutare un tuo compagno straniero nell'ingresso a scuola, cosa faresti? – *verificare possibili cambiamenti nella "procedura in ingresso" alla scuola.*
- 🍏 Quando sei entrato a scuola ha fatto un test d'ingresso o un colloquio? (strumento e materie di valutazione)
- 🍏 Parlavi già italiano (dove l'hai imparato?) o l'hai imparato in Italia?

## Tema principale 2: inserimento scolastico

- Adesso quali difficoltà sono rimaste e quali cose ti sembra più facile fare/comprendere? (*scarsa conoscenza della lingua: limite?*)

## Tema principale 3: primo confronto con il mercato del lavoro

- Dopo lo stage hai capito meglio cosa fare/scegliere?
- 🍏 Qualcuno ti ha aiutato a capire meglio quali scelte fare? *Genitori? Amici? Tutor? Docenti? Altro .. - Attività di orientamento/accompagnamento verso il mondo del lavoro o la formazione superiore – chi? Quando? Utile?*



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- 🍏 Competenze “spendibili” all’interno del mondo del lavoro .. Cosa hai portato all’interno dell’azienda? Cosa ti sei portato a casa al termine dello stage?
- 🍏 Quali difficoltà/conferme positive hai avuto durante il periodo di stage? Sono le stesse per tutti?
- 🍏 Oltre allo stage hai avuto altre esperienze lavorative?



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## 8.2 Allegato No. 2 - griglia per il focus group - genitori

### TARGET DEI PARTECIPANTI AI FOCUS - genitori stranieri

#### A1. Dettagli intervista

Numero intervista (Id)	
Data dell'intervista (giorno, mese, anno)	
Luogo dell'intervista (edificio, sala), indirizzo, regione, paese	
Durata (minuti)	
Intervistatore	

**Obiettivo** del focus è verificare se vi sono pratiche che possono sostenere i genitori nell'ingresso, durante e l'uscita di scuola dei figli.

#### Tema principale 1: scelta della scuola e iscrizione

Vi è stato utile in questa fase?

- 🍎 Quali documenti avete dovuto presentare per l'iscrizione a scuola? Con quali persone avete interagito in questa fase?
- 🍎 Quali sono stati per lei i problemi principali in questa fase? Quali sono stati i problemi principali per vostro figlio?



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- 🍏 Cosa secondo voi potrebbe essere cambiato nella "procedura in ingresso" alla scuola?

## Tema principale 2: inserimento scolastico

● I vostri figli partecipano a queste attività:

- 🍏 Sono state organizzate attività a supporto dei genitori? Se sì, quali? Lei ha partecipato?
- 🍏 Riuscite a seguire le attività scolastiche di vostro figlio (come/quando)? Quali sono le principali difficoltà? Quali sono gli aspetti più semplici da seguire/capire?

## Tema principale 3: primo confronto con il mercato del lavoro

● In base alla vostra esperienza, quali competenze bisogna avere per entrare nel mondo del lavoro?

- 🍏 Vostro figlio ha fatto attività di stage, tirocinio, o ha già avuto esperienze di lavoro? Ritiene che queste attività siano utili nel passaggio dalla scuola al mondo del lavoro o della formazione superiore?



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### 8.3 Allegato No. 3 - scheda raccolta dati - studenti

#### Dettagli dell'intervistato - focus group

<i>Genere</i>	
<i>Età</i>	
<i>Città di residenza</i>	
<i>Paese di nascita</i>	
<i>Eventuale anno di arrivo in Italia</i>	
<i>Hai vissuto in altri paesi?</i>	
<i>Altre scuole superiori frequentate prima di questa</i>	
<i>Quale classe stai frequentando?</i>	
<i>Lingua madre</i>	
<i>Altre lingue parlate</i>	



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## 8.4 Allegato No. 4 - scheda raccolta dati - genitori

### Dettagli dell'intervistato - focus group - WP5

<i>Indicare se: madre o padre</i>	
<i>Residenza: Comune/Città; Provincia</i>	
<i>Paese di Provenienza</i>	
<i>Anno di arrivo in Italia</i>	
<i>Professione</i>	
<i>Indicare il Suo titolo di studio e paese in cui è stato acquisito</i>	
<i>Indicare l'età dei suoi figli e la scuola frequentata</i>	



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**WP5. Experiences of TCN students and TCN students's parents: Guidelines and recommendations to promote TCN students school well being and success and to involve parents in cooperative actions to support children school careers**

## ARCKA

"Assessing, recognizing competences and certifying knowledge acquisition valuing human capital of children of foreign origin in education and training in Europe"

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**WP5 - EXPERIENCIAS OF TCN STUDENTS AND TCN STUDENTS'S PARENTS:**  
*Guidelines and recommendations to promote TCN students school well being and success and to involve parents in cooperative actions to support children school careers*

Spanish Qualitative Report



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## ARCKA Junta de Andalusia-Universidad de Huelva Team

### Authors:

Junta de Andalucía.	Universidad de Huelva. <i>Estudios</i>
Consejería de Justicia e Interior,	<i>Sociales E Intervención Social</i>
Dirección General de	Estrella Gualda (Project Leader)
Coordinación de Políticas	Marta Ruiz García
Migratorias.	Juan Carlos Andreo Tudela
Israel Jesús Adán Castilla (Project	Patricia Ruiz Ángel
Leader)	Isidro Marín Gutiérrez
Giuseppe Beluschi Fabeni (Principal	Iván Rodríguez Pascual
Researcher)	José Andrés Domínguez Gómez
Marc Ballester Torrents (Researcher)	Carmen Márquez Vázquez
Beatriz Aguas Solo de Zaldívar	



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## 1 INTRODUCTION: DEMOGRAPHIC CONTEXT

### 1.1 Spanish Demographic Context

Compared with other countries in the UE (as Germany, France, United Kingdom, The Netherlands, etc.), Spain has been considered a new country of immigration that has received several millions of immigrants in the last decades<sup>1</sup>. Nevertheless, with the economic crisis, immigration flows have moderated and emigration of Spaniards have recently increased<sup>2</sup>. Similar evolution has been observed in the case of Andalusia<sup>3</sup>.

On the other side, there is not a lot of children of immigrants in Spain or in the Andalusian region if compared with adult foreign population. People younger than 16 years old represent around a 15 per cent in Spain and a 14 per cent of Andalusia out of total of the foreign population (105.660, and 878.330 respectively), and from this a big number of them is younger than 11 y.o. (around 72.259 in Andalusia and 614.339 in Spain).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Instituto Nacional de Estadística (2012): “Explotación estadística del Padrón”. In: <http://www.ine.es/jaxi/menu.do?type=pcaxis&path=%2Ft20%2Fe245&file=inebase&L=0>. Accessed: 5-4-2012.

<sup>2</sup> Instituto Nacional de Estadística (2012): “Explotación estadística del Padrón de Residentes en el Extranjero a 1 de enero de 2012”. In <http://www.ine.es/prensa/np705.pdf>. Accessed: 5-4-2012.

<sup>3</sup> Instituto de Estadística y Cartografía de Andalucía (2012): “Padrón Municipal de Habitantes. Población residente por año, sexo, lugar de nacimiento y nacionalidad”. In <http://www.juntadeandalucia.es/institutodeestadisticaycartografia/iea/resultadosConsulta.jsp?codConsulta=31675>. Accessed: 24-4-2012.

<sup>4</sup> Own data from Instituto Nacional de Estadística (2012): “Avance de la Explotación Estadística del Padrón a 1 de enero de 2012. Población por comunidades y provincias, nacionalidad, edad (grupos quinquenales)”. In



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Municipal registers at 31/12/2011 (Padrón Municipal de Población) report around 127.334 foreigners in Andalusia (17 per cent) and 1.055.041 (18.5 per cent) in Spain comprising in the ARCKA Project’s targeted ages (11-25 y.o.).

**Table 1. Foreigners by groups of Age, regarding Total Foreigners in Andalusia or Spain**

		Andalusia	Spain
Less than 16 y.o.	N	105660,2	878330,20
	%	14,2	15,3795141
Less than 11 y.o.	N	72259,2	614339,2
	%	9,7	10,757046
11-25 y.o.	N	127334,4	1055041
	%	17,1	18,4737106

Source: Own data from Instituto Nacional de Estadística (2012). See footnote 4.

In addition, inhabitants from No-EU15 Countries in Spain and Andalusia are younger than those born in the UE15<sup>5</sup>.

Some nationalities provide with younger people to the educational system (Morocco, Romania, etc.), specially if there is a big number of their members that are settled in Spain since the 80’-90’ (for instance, Morocco, United Kingdom), or are from a

<http://www.ine.es/jaxi/menu.do?type=pcaxis&path=/t20/e245/p04/provi&file=pcaxis>. Accessed: 7-5-2012.

<sup>5</sup> Instituto Nacional de Estadística (2012): “Explotación estadística del Padrón”.In: <http://www.ine.es/jaxi/menu.do?type=pcaxis&path=%2Ft20%2Fe245&file=inebase&L=0>. Accessed: 5-4-2012.





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country of origin with intense figures of immigration in Spain already in the first decade of 2000 (as for instance is the case of Romania, Ecuador or Colombia).

Nevertheless, even if there is a predominance of people from certain countries, in Spanish educational system it is usual to find young people proceeding from a great variety of countries. Different patterns of settlement in Spain help to configure the demographic realities in the educational centres.

Regarding official statistics, the majority of young immigrants in Spain and in Andalusia belong to a “first or first and a half generation (1.0 or 1.5 generation), and genuine “Second Generation” (2.0)”<sup>6</sup> is not very big (see below).

## 1.2 Concepts: First – Second Generation and Fieldwork

Scientific bibliography uses to conceive in different ways the 1.0, 1.5 and 2.0 and further generations of immigrants and it has implications for the fieldwork in this area.

Moreover, these definitions are much more used in some countries than in others. In any case, since decades ago, scientists used to take into account also different variables to classify and distinguish between “generations” of immigrants, trying to connect integration in receiving societies with basic socio-demographic variables as, for instance, place of birth or duration of the stay, or even with traits of personality (Rumbaut, 2004; Warner & Srole, 1945). Different variables were usually collected in migration studies to delimit which “generation” (as constructed concept in this area) does an immigrant belong to. Interviewee’s country of birth, parents’ country of birth and age at the arrival are the common variables that allow us to observe

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6 Rumbaut, R. G. (2004). Ages, Life Stages and Generational Cohorts: Decomposing the Immigrant First and Second Generations in the United States. *International Migration Review*, 38 (fall), 1160-1205.



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(after the fieldwork) if people who have been interviewed or have participated in a focus group pertain to 1.0, 1.5, 2.0 or to other generations. As the generation of belonging has been sometimes taken as a relevant element in the international bibliography regarding children of immigrants (Portes, etc.), we also considered useful to collect the basic demographic information in our fieldwork that could have allowed us in the analytic phase to explore if some differences were found regarding the generation of belonging (used by the researchers as a variable of analysis more than an explicit element in the informants speech).

As some investigations found in different countries, there are differences in the integration processes among immigrants of different generations<sup>7</sup> By this reason at the time of writing this report, we tried to observe not only differences between children, adolescents or young immigrants, or differences attending areas of origin, but even generation of belonging.

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<sup>7</sup> Portes, A., & Fernández-Kelly, P. (2008). No Margin for Error: Educational and Occupational Achievement among Disadvantaged Children of Immigrants. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 620(12), 36. ; Portes, A., & Rumbaut, R. G. (2006). *Immigrant America. A Portrait.* . Berkely: The California University Press.; Portes, A. y Rumbaut, R. (2001) *Legacies. The Story of the Immigrant Second Generation.* California, Russell Sage Foundation; Alba, R. (2005) "Bright vs. blurred boundaries: Second-generation assimilation and exclusion in France, Germany, and the United States", *Ethnic & Racial Studies*, January, vol. 28, 1, pp.20-49; Crul, M. y Pásztor, A. (2008) "Patterns of integration: between group and within group differences in the Dutch context. A contribution to the segmented assimilation debate", *The Immigrant Second Generation in Europe and the United States*, Bellagio Conference, Italy; Crul, M. y Vermeulen, H. (2003) "The Second Generation in Europe", *International Migration Review*, vol. 37, 4, pp.965-986; Levitt, P. y Waters, M.C. (Ed.) (2002) *The Changing Face of Home. The Transnational Lives of the Second Generation*, Nueva York, Russell Sage Foundation; Gualda Caballero, E. (2001) *Los procesos de integración social de la primera generación de "Gastarbeiter" españoles en Alemania.* Universidad de Huelva, Huelva.



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The following Chart 1 briefly exposes how these concepts are usually defined in the international bibliography.

**Chart 1. Generations of Immigrants and Integration processes**

	First Generation (1.0)	One half Generation (1.5)	Second Generation (2.0)	Two and half Generation (2.5)	Third and beyond Generation (3.0...)
Definition (strict)	Foreign origin, born in the country of origin	Foreign origin, born in the country of origin, arrived at the destination country at an early age	Born in the country of destination from – at least- one of their parents	Those with one native parent and one foreign born parent	Born in the country of destination of both parents
Definition (flexible)	Foreign origin, born in the country of origin. It also includes those arrived at the destination country at an early age (*)		Born in the country of destination from – at least- one of their parents. It also includes those arrived at the destination country not at an early age (*)	Those with one native parent and one foreign born parent	Born in the country of destination of both parents
Integration	Mostly oriented to home country	Mixed orientation (home or host country) It depends on a great variety of circumstances			



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Source: Gualda (2007)<sup>8</sup>. Note: “At an early age”. There is not a complete consensus, for some authors is around 12, or 14, 16, 18, etc.

So, one important distinction for describing integration processes consider that age of arrival is important, as it could not be the same arriving at the destination country at childhood that in adolescence<sup>9</sup>. In this sense, as 1.0, 2.0 generations are concepts that use to represent very different sociological identities (born in the country of origin, or in the destination), the 1.5 generation concept is referred to those people that arrived at a destination country at different ages and consequently integration processes use to be very different. Just to know if in our study these distinctions could play a role in the educational arena we collected this information of every participant in the qualitative fieldwork.

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<sup>8</sup> Gualda, E. (2007): “Researching "Second Generation" in a Transitional, European, and Agricultural Context of Reception of Immigrants”. CMD Working Paper #07-01; Working Paper Series Centre for Migration and Development, Princeton University. En <http://cmd.princeton.edu/papers/wp0701.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup> Rumbaut, R.G. (2004): “Ages, Life Stages, and Generational Cohorts: Decomposing the Immigrant First and Second Generations in the United States”. *International Migration Review* 38 (3), pp.1160-1205; Rumbaut, R.G. (2005): “Turning points in the transition to adulthood: Determinants of educational attainment, incarceration, and early childbearing among children of immigrants”. *Ethnic & Racial Studies*, November, Vol. 28 Issue 6, pp.1041-1086.



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## 2 METHOD: THEORETICAL AND ACHIEVED SAMPLE AND FIELDWORK

### 2.1 Theoretical or “ideal” Sample: Focus Groups

As we wanted to collect discourses about parents and children’s experiences on the issues interesting by this Project, Focus Groups was the technique chosen for this aim. As a first step a theoretical sample was established by the ARCKA team for selecting participants in focus groups, so different types of respondents were of interest for this WP5:

	Natives or Second Generation	From outside Europe (Latin America, Africa, Asia...)	European but non from EU27
Pupils	Native pupils of Immigrant background	TCN pupils from outside Europe	TCN European pupils from outside EU27
Parents	Parents of native pupils (2.0 g.)	TCN parents of pupils from outside Europe	TCN European parents of pupils from outside EU27

### 2.2 Process for the selection of the participants in the focus groups

Different steps were given in the Andalusian context previous to the selection of participants in focus groups. As the Andalusian region is very big and the migration history is different by provinces, the first step consisted in analysing statistical data of enrolment rates trying to choose places and educational centres in Andalusia where focus groups could be carried on. After this, we asked for institutional



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permissions and support for doing fieldwork, trying to follow the criteria that we gave them. If Educational Centres were the places where the focus groups would have been set, the Regional Ministry of Education and its representative body in the provinces<sup>10</sup> mediated in order to establish the contact with the Directors of each Centre, though in some cases this contact was directly established<sup>11</sup>. In other cases, the local municipality, through its *ad hoc* Office<sup>12</sup> for migrant population residing in its territory, supported us to contact with families and offered the place where the focus groups was set. These different levels of institutional support permitted to reach as much as possible the categories of informants we identified, due to the different competences and offered services and, consequently, the distinct population they are in contact with. Nevertheless, in the execution of the fieldwork, some problems occurred connecting to local realities as they are explained in the following sections.

### 2.3 Some problems to achieve the “theoretical” sample and strategies for a solution

The majority of problems to achieve the ideal sample were derived from demographic data and from the possibility of teachers, staff in the educational centres or local institutions to select the participants in groups, invite them to participate and final success achieved. In concrete, due to the lack of second generation immigrants in the Andalusian educational centres in the targeted age groups, and due to their scattering all over the Andalusian region, it was impossible

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<sup>10</sup> Consejería de Educación de la Junta de Andalucía y Delegación Provincial de la Consejería de Educación en Almería.

<sup>11</sup> I.E.S. Juan Ramón Jiménez (Moguer, Huelva).

<sup>12</sup> Oficina Municipal de inmigración del Ayuntamiento de Roquetas de Mar



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to organize a group with all the participants born in Spain. And added problem was that for teachers and other informants it was completely unknown if some students were born in Spain or if they arrived at Spain at a short age (1.5 generation). As solution, as we show in the following section, we got mixed groups with the inclusion of 1, 1.5 and 2.0 generation students to get their discourses. As we know by other studies 2.0 generation in the Andalusian context<sup>13</sup>, 1,5 generation students that arrived at early age and 2.0 generation ones use to have similar experiences in the educational contexts.

The second problem was to achieve European third country nationals (from outside EU27) as this group is also not very big in the region at the targeted ages and at the same time that happened with 2.0 generation is scattered in the region and in educational centres. As a solution we achieved non EU15 third country nationals, incorporating in our targeted group people from places as Romania and Poland, that arrived to the region specially in the XXI century, when they were not from the EU27 and students and parents could tell and remember their experiences also at that moment. So we also gathered together people from outside UE15 and European Third Countries in mixed groups, as a way adapting the fieldwork to our demographic reality.

## 2.4 Achieved sample: Seven Focus Groups celebrated in the Andalusian Region

### Pupils

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<sup>13</sup> Gualda Caballero, E. (Ed.) (2010): *La Segunda Generación de Inmigrantes en Huelva. Estudio HIJAI*. Ed. Diálogos-Red, Valencia.



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TCN pupils from outside Europe (FG2\_Moguer)

TCN European pupils from outside EU15 (FG1\_Moguer)

Mixed Profile: TCN pupils from outside Europe & 2.0 (Native pupils of Immigrant background) (FG3\_Roquetas) (FG5\_La Cañada)

Mixed Profile: 2.0 & TCN pupils from outside Europe & from outside EU27 (FG4\_La Cañada)

### Parents

Mixed profile: TCN parents of pupils from outside Europe & 2.0 G. (FG7\_Roquetas)

GG6\_Mixed Children & Parents of Pupils from outside EU27 (FG6\_Roquetas)

Saturation of discourses was key to stop the fieldwork, as in qualitative sociology use to be<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> Morse, Janice M. (1995). The significance of saturation. *Qualitative Health Research*, 5(3), 147-149; Mason, Mark (2010). Sample Size and Saturation in PhD Studies Using Qualitative Interviews [63 paragraphs]. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 11(3), Art. 8, <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs100387>.



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## 2.5 Sociodemographic profile of participants

Chart 2. Sociodemographic profile of participants in Andalusia

	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	MEN	FEMALES	COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN
<b>TOTAL</b>	51	22	29	17 different countries of origin (2 Azerbaijan, 1 Rusia, 3 Guinea Bissau, 5 Ghana, 1 Guinea Konackry, 4 Spain, 1 Bulgaria, 7 Rumania, 4 Ukraine, 2 Poland, 12 Morocco, 2 Argelia, 2 Senegal, 2 Colombia, 1 Ecuador, 1 Cameroon, 1 Guinea Rep, )
<b>CHILDREN</b>				
FG1_TCN European pupils from outside EU15 (Moguer)	12	1	11	1 Bulgaria, 7 Romania, 2 Ukraine, 2 Poland
FG2_TCN pupils from outside Europe (Moguer)	9	5	4	4 Morocco, 2 Argelia, 1 Senegal, 1 Colombia, 1 Ecuador
FG3_Mixed Profile: TCN pupils from outside Europe & 2.0 (Native pupils of Immigrant background) (Roquetas de Mar, Almería)	7	2	5	2 Second Generation, 1 Guinea Konakry, 3 Ghana, 1 Guinea Bissau
FG4_Mixed Profile: 2.0 & TCN pupils from outside Europe & from outside EU27 (La Cañada, Almería)	6	5	1	1 Second Generation, 3 Morocco, 1 Senegal, 1 Rusia
FG5_Mixed Profile: TCN pupils from outside Europe & 2.0 (Native pupils of Immigrant background)	5	4	1	1 Second Generation, 4 Morocco
<b>MIXED CHILDREN AND PARENTS</b>				



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FG6_Mixed Children & Parents & European and Non European (Roquetas de Mar)	4	1	3	2 Ukraine, 2 Azerbaijan
<b>PARENTS</b>				
FG7. TCN European parents of pupils from outside Europe (Mixed: 2.0, 1.5 and 1.0 children) (Roquetas de Mar)	8	4	4	2 Guinea Bissau, 1 Cameroon, 1 Morocco, 1 R. Guinea, 2 Ghana, 1 Colombia



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## 3 ENTERING THE SCHOOL

### 3.1 Procedure of entering the school system

As described in the previous report on legislative framework, the entrance of foreign students in primary and compulsory secondary educational levels does not need any kind of accreditation of titles or documents. In Spain, neither legal residence permit is required for students to be accepted in school, in order to guarantee the right of education of all. The student is assigned to the educational centre that correspond to the area where he/she lives. Sometimes, when the number of students assigned to an educational providers exceed the number of the places in the centre, they can be assigned to a different one corresponding to one area nearby. In other cases two institutes can correspond to the same area and families have, in some grade, the possibility to choose. This can generate sometime ghettoization tendencies of native students, whose families try to avoid the centre with higher concentration of migrants students.

Educational providers have competences on the assignment of the educative level in which each student must be incorporated and to establish compensatory measures to supply gaps identified in the entrance assessment process. Students are, in principle, assigned to the level and course corresponding to their age. If the student is assigned to compensatory classes, he/she will attend them during the ordinary school time, temporally substituting some topics, as the second foreign language, in which he/she could not progress. The students attend the reinforcement classes until the identified gaps are filled. Linguistic reinforcement is the most common.



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Nevertheless, if the first assessment shows up deep lack of competences the assessment committee (usually formed by the languages teachers, the tutor of the course, and the Head of studies, responsible of the curricula development) can choose to assign the student to the level corresponding to a one-year below the age of the student. In really extraordinary cases, and just in primary education levels, the student can be assigned to a level even two year below the one corresponding to his/her age.

### 3.2 Experiences during the period of entering school

2.0 and 1.5 generations' migrant students, who entered in educative itineraries in the first level or in really early stages present practically no difficulties for integrate in Spanish school system, at least in terms of difficulties specifically related with migration experience. For these reasons, sometimes we encountered some difficulties during our data analysis in distinguishing which gaps or limitations that students reported were proper of a migratory context or generalizable to their Spanish pairs.

## 4 AT SCHOOL

### 4.1 Gaps, monitoring and tracking

#### 4.1.1 Languages used in education and instruction language.

The topic of linguistic competences and deficits is one of the most important fields of intervention to ensure success and integration in school. It is clearly the more urgent support that no-Spanish speaking newcomers students require.

This group of students, who entered in a later stage in Spanish educative system, clearly presented and reported more memories, experiences and difficulties felt in



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the first moments of adaptation, specially related to Spanish language comprehension and production, what sometimes create feeling of shame and weakness in informal social relations and formal educative settings (for example, oral and public presentation of homework in front of the class group) among the new context, depending also on the idiosyncrasies of the personality of each person. Language is also reported as one of the element that makes difficult their integration in school especially at the beginning of their incorporation at school.

Even though, as we will observe, linguistic gaps may be present in a long time after the first moment of entrance and, as it is explained by the scientific bibliography<sup>15</sup>, there is a consensus between our informants regarding the importance of Language to achieve success in the school.

Students regret that it happens that, even when they perfectly know the contents, due to language mistakes their marks are not so good, due to incomprehension in the assessment but also because teachers don't admit, in written examinations, orthographical faults and give bad marks even when contents are shown to be known.

Speaking about Spanish linguistic support, ATAL<sup>16</sup> classes (Temporary Classes for Linguistic Adaptation, promoted by the Regional Ministry of Education and

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<sup>15</sup> Klevenow, U. (2003): Die Bedeutung der Sprachentwicklung für die Schullaufbahn von Kindern aus Familien mit Migrationshintergrund, *Gesundheitswesen*, 65 (12): 683-687. DOI: 10.1055/s-2003-812674; Portes, A. and Rumbaut, R.G. (2006) *Immigrant America. A Portrait*. Berkeley, The California University Press; Walker, D., Greenwood, C., Hart, B. and Carta, J. (1994), Prediction of School Outcomes Based on Early Language Production and Socioeconomic Factors. *Child Development*, 65: 606-621. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-8624.1994.tb00771.x.

<sup>16</sup> Aulas Temporales de Adaptación Lingüística



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implemented in those educational providers that require them) are very well appreciated by the whole of the actors we involved in our fieldwork: schools' staff, Administrations' professionals, as well as parents and students. While children of 2.0, or 1.5 generation that arrived at early age, do not require linguistic support in school, and their parents neither express this demand for them, the ATAL support offered to newcomers appears to be satisfactory. Students have generally good memories about the help they received by ATAL teachers for their first step in both linguistic and social adaptation. Control of language is obviously one of the main instruments for their learning tools, as well as in all the socialization process. Nevertheless, other type of help seems to be needed. Students we interviewed expressed some difficulties they encountered related with linguistic competences and after the first period of adaptation.

The first one is in written Spanish, where the use of accents and other orthographic signs (the use of 'b' or 'v', 'j' and 'g', that correspond to the same sound, or the presence of unvoiced 'h'), are typically sources of errors also in Spanish students, add up to codification difficulties proper of not being native Spanish speakers and caused by languages interferences, that can appear in all the level of the second language (Spanish) proficiency (i.e. phonological, morphological, syntactical, and so on):

*Here exist accents, but not in Rumania and our teacher is very strict with orthographical mistakes, you fail only with some mistakes... (Romanian pupil).*

They reported that they had less success and worse grades if teachers gave them less marks by problems with writing, handwriting, grammar, expression, and spelling.



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For instance, they use to have problems at writing or expressing ideas, mixing verbal forms, using accents, etc.

*I use to speak French, and I use to confuse their accents with the Spanish ones (Senegalese student).*

Students identified two aspects of importance in linguistic support to meet these gaps: one is the need of modularly structured assessment and help, in order to permit the identification of gaps in specific sub-competences of the languages, the other is the centrality of a professional support during the first period of adaptation and learning of the language. As one informant from Morocco affirmed, 'if they initially learn on their own, they can *learn* mistakes, and later is much more difficult to correct them'. We also add that it is important that staff of linguistic support, and generally all the staff of languages areas, count on competences and knowledge about process of languages contact and cognitive processes involved in multilingual contexts. Generally, expectations and fears about language gaps and learning experienced by students during the adaptation period are well defined and more than one informant affirmed that he/she would have not imagined that she/he would have reached such high control of the language as the one who got during the year or couple of years after the entrance.

Other difficulties related with language some foreign students frequently present are in Mathematics. This is apparently surprising if we listen only to a part of the discourse that the same children do. They often consider that language and mathematics are ideally 'opposite', and that linguistic competences are less important in Math than in other subjects, as History or Environmental Sciences. 'Math is the same in all the world', but many of those who got bad results in Language had also bad ones in Mathematics, while they are good students in other



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subjects in which contents are more important than logical relations between concepts and symbols. This seems to be the point. Even if Mathematics 'are the same in all the world', they are a formal language that must be explained through the natural language (Spanish), with the added difficulties that its structure, lexicon, and internal references system are more sophisticated in this area than the one used, for example, in a History lesson; consequently, it requires a high domain of the language. Consequently. Language in Mathematics could represent an important area in which non-Spanish speaker students could need specific support.

What all informants used to explain was that young people used to learn Spanish very quickly (especially if arrived at early age). Unknowing the language at the very beginning was a shock. Lot of students had the same experience: everybody speaking to them, but they could not understand anything. But fortunately there was a great language support in the classroom (ATAL experience) that allowed them to learn Spanish. Even some students reported that they learnt Spanish without a specific support, "I learnt it by myself", said proud of himself a Romanian student..

#### ***4.1.2 To what extent is mother tongue education supported?***

Regarding attitudes with native languages, we can observe differences between parents and students, but also by country and linguistic context of origin, what is also related with migratory phenomena. For example, students proceeding from Morocco, or from Moroccan families residing in Andalusia, are used to speak Arab (Morocco variant) and Berber in the same household, what is facilitated by the presence of both Moroccan parents in household and of a larger Moroccan



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community in the territory. Migrations from Morocco, related to agricultural job market, are characterized by a first phase of male immigration, followed by aggrugation of the whole family. Similar patterns characterize other African context (Republic of Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Senegal) and from East Eastern countries. The use of native languages in family context can be seen reduced in those households where one of the mate in a mixed marriage is a native Spanish speaker, something that happen more likely in migrations contexts from European countries, where also the oral knowledge of, for example, Russian or Ukrainian, can be lower than others. Even though, speaking about professional future of their children, parents generally bet for those languages internationally used, as Spanish, English and French, than for their native languages (obviously when they are not the same), of which don't see a real possible professional capital.

*It is better them to learn and to be integrated in Spanish, than to learn and to make efforts in English. Speaking our language just to communicate with the family, it is enough... but English and French are better for job [Parent from Ghana].*

Nevertheless, some parents regret that, even if they speak at home the mother tongue, children will lose it or, in any case, will not develop the same proficiency in it the as they would being in the origin country.

Students, even if they valorise the knowledge of English or French as an important cultural capital, express interest in other less used European languages, and most of them are strongly interested in improving their Parents' mother tongue, both in written and in oral competences. Especially young Moroccan people, that grow up in Spain, regret to feel 'like strangers' when they visit Morocco in Summer holidays and show linguistic gaps in Arab. But this demand is not only related with their social or



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cultural integration in the family's society of origin. Most of the students are conscious of the instrumentality of their linguistic capital in their future inclusion in the job market, as it is the case of the need of bilingual Arab-Spanish speakers in Spanish public administrations that are leading with migrant contexts:

*I want to be national police officer... [for it] you have to have Spanish nationality, firearm permit, driving licence, secondary education title and you can access to a public call. I decided it because now the Police Corp needs people with knowledge of foreign languages. [17 years old second generation informant, from Moroccan family, born in Spain]*

French, English or Portuguese are often second languages spoken in the countries of origin of the families and students feel the lack of opportunities to improve them in Spain, both in school (where they generally perceive weakness in the foreign language didactics) and in informal no-school contexts, as well as the lack of resources in school to obtain a certificate of language – at least oral – proficiency.

*Here languages from other countries are not valorised as occurs in other countries. They are really racist with their own language. They always have been, because they are really arrogant [Student from Ghana, women, 17 y.o.]*

*I came here when I was a little child, I still speak and understand Portuguese, but I can't write it. I don't have any certificate, so I cannot demonstrate it. [Student from Guinea Bissau, 21 y.o.]*



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## 4.2 Expectation of progression, recognition of gaps and monitoring of progression

When parents from Morocco and Eastern Europe compare their experiences regarding school system they knew with actual Spanish one, they express similar differences: in Spain school system is less authoritarian and, generally, perceived as offering less educational level. Students who attended school in Morocco and Eastern Europe agree on it. One of the main differences identified by students who studied for some time in their country of origin is the way of assessment they met in Spanish school. Too much written and test based examination result in the impression that the outputs of educative process are evaluated only on the basis on quantitative evaluation processes, and the development of the person as a whole, his/her efforts to improve, participation and interest in the school activities are left in a secondary level of importance.

At the same time, in a context perceived as less authoritarian, monitoring of learning progression and outcome is perceived as too much cumulative and quite 'bureaucratic', more centred on performance numbers that on the individual as a person:

*Here the teacher has a book and we have to finish the book, and explain all the lessons there. In my country teachers use to pay more attention to explain things in a clear way, and he/she is not so worried to finish the book. If somebody disturb the teacher and the teacher gets angry, sometimes he/she ask for homework without having explained the lesson, and he/she mark a 'negative' score if you do not understand.*

*In my country teachers are not so worried by "exams". They use to focus more in daily activities and exercises, in learning, than in assessing the*



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*learning in final exams. Here they are very worried about grades, more than in learnings.*

*Everything is decided in an unique exam. And what happen if you have a bad day? In my country if you do good things everyday (in the blackboard, when they ask you, etc.) it also counts and you learn more.*

The moral value of monitoring and marks it is also important when students compare what happens, or what they suppose that happen, in their country of origin:

*In my country if you get '4' it is something embarrassing, but not here. There everybody study and are more clever than here. You have to demonstrate your effort everyday, and the teacher use to ask you. But exams are not so important.*

*In this sense, the suggestion to not use a wide range of negative marks should be taken in to account, in order to avoid the reinforcement a drastic sense of failure in the students that can generate attitudes of resignation. Grades and marks are very important here, because lot of students repeat courses, but not in my country where repetition is not so common. We do not have so many students that repeat course.*

It is important, here, to take into account that comparison with the country of origin made by students sometimes are borne out by experience, other times they are imagined or supposed. On the other hand, what we describe in this text is the discourse of the students and parents we spoke with, not contrasted in all its facets with the one of the teachers and other professional in charge.



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About needed support when gaps appear, in the discourse of students emerge a kind of conflict between the treatment they receive as 'normal' students and their specificity as 'foreign' students. In evaluation and support activities students demand a more personalized attention and expect that the tutor actively search for a dialogue with them, and not that the initiative to search for his/her help must to be theirs. This has also the consequence that shy or introverted students receive less support by the tutor.

Primary education is better valorised than secondary one on this. Family support in subjects' gaps is irregularly mentioned, depending on educational level of parents.

The communication with school centres is perceived by parents often as irregular and not satisfactory, basically because they feel to be called to speak with the tutor (each class group has a tutor, who is a teacher that manage the relations with families) only when their children 'have a problem' and only when the same problem is too advanced, so 'they are surprised' by a bad note, or by a written communication about the intention of the school to expulse the student for several days. The SMS supported way<sup>17</sup> of communications from the school is well valorised: schools use it to advise families every time the student does not attend at school, and it can be used also to advise families about bad results, behaviour punishment, calls for parents meetings at school or so on. Even though, deficits in detecting timely gaps and to communicate them are also expressed by parents, as well as general lack of communication about the progress and good outputs of children, something that must be improved, from their point of view. This perception is

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<sup>17</sup> One of the tool digitally based for the management of the educational System promoted by the Andalusian Regional Ministry of Education (Consejería de Educación de la Junta de Andalucía).



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sometimes associated also with the feeling that their children are ‘good students’ just ‘when they don’t bother’. Students also observe that in the parents’ meetings organized by the school, both for orientation and assessment, those parents who don’t have a satisfactory level of Spanish language are not supported by any linguistic mediation resource and their participation is perceived as almost useless. Regarding this topic, while parents demand an improve of family-school communication processes, the majority of the interviewed students – both with good results or not – propose a discourse according to which good or bad notes and outputs depend only on themselves, and parents have not much to do.

#### ***4.2.1 Success rate achieved and previous educational aspirations and expectations***

We found diversity regarding the relations between educational aspirations and expectations, and their actual school achievements.

Some students thought they were going to be successful, and others no; some of their results are now as they hoped, and in other cases are worse. Experiences were not unique, as it was shown in other similar but quantitative studies in Spain and in the Andalusian region<sup>18</sup>.

Lot of students used to think that they were not going to be so successful at school, and even one student said that she thought that she was going to “repeat

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<sup>18</sup> Portes, A., Aparicio, R., Haller, W. and Vickstrom, E. (2010): *Moving Ahead in Madrid: Aspirations and Expectations in the Spanish Second Generation*. International Migration Review, Volume 44, Issue 4, pp. 767–801; Gualda, E. (2010): “Aspiraciones y expectativas educativas y laborales de adolescentes y jóvenes inmigrantes e hijos de inmigrantes escolarizados”. En Gualda, E. (Ed.): *La Segunda Generación de Inmigrantes en Huelva. Estudio HIJAI*. Ed. Diálogos-Red, Valencia, pp.81-92.



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and repeat”. Other said that with work, or even “faith”, they could achieve anything. Some thought that it was going to be more difficult.

*In my country I was a ‘swot’, but not here, where I have problems of language and comprehension, and my parents cannot even help me, because the learnings are somehow different (European Student, outside EU27 TCN ).*

As we detail in the next section, the reasons of success or failure were also diverse: language, differences of the education systems, educational contexts, and others. Different elements of success or not in school were reported, some of them have been suggested in previous pages.

For some students success at school is very easy:

*You only have to study (Romanian).*

But for others it is not so easy and they use to diminish or adapt their educational and professional aspirations in consequence.

### 4.3 Different Educational Systems, Focuses and Learning

Students also referred differences between the Spanish educational system and the one of their country of origin. Some topics were usually reported:

- a. **The order and level of taught subjects:** Some contents are studied in different courses in Spain than in other countries, and sometimes if a student is assigned to a course, teachers suppose that he/she knows all the contents that were taught in Spain in previous levels.



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**Different taught subjects:** Some students report that they've never studied certain subjects, as it happens in the case of Music. In this case, at the beginning of the course, when they were asked to play the flute, they did not know how to do it.

*I have never played the flute in my country in previous courses as here in Spain. We were taught Computers (Ecuadorian pupil).*

Difficulties are sometimes associated with the focus on testing knowledge more than in everyday learning everyday, as well as with the methodology of learning.

This was specially reported by youth from European countries outside EU15/ EU27:

*The method of studying here is the memory, not the comprehension. Some teachers ask the things in a very memoristic way. So you cannot express ideas with your own words, and everything is difficult, and if you have to study that way you forget everything at the following day.*

*Here is more difficult, and you have more to study at home (more exams).*

#### **4.3.1 Differences in the contents and didactic methodologies at different educational levels**

Differences in the taught contents suppose some type of intercultural crashes, specially because of the way in which they are taught. For example, once more, in Maths. students that attended many years of schooling in foreign educational systems, learned different calculations processes and strategies. Maths is explained in a different way in Romania and in Spain or, for instance, some students learnt to make divisions with the use of “:” or “|\_\_\_”, depending on the country. Sometimes



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they do not understand the Spanish way to make divisions, and use the Romanian one (because their parents explained it to them that way when they have doubts).

*I cannot understand how Spanish people make divisions (Romanian immigrant).*

Teachers often require pupils to show step by step how they get to a result of a calculation and they expect to see the 'national' process of a division or whatever is asked. When students develop the exams, for instance, in the 'Romanian way', teachers may not understand it... and previous learning can get in low marks. Consequently, more awareness on cultural differences in Mathematics could avoid misunderstandings in the assessment process.

#### **4.3.2 Discipline, Violence and Respect at school**

Some students explained that the school is easier in Spain than in their countries of origin because in their countries the educational system was more repressive. Pupils and students from different geographical origin reported this type of discourse.

*In my country it was more difficult and the teachers are more repressive. They used to hitting me with the ruler if I have not brought the homework (Moroccan pupil).*

*For instance, you have to know very well the national hymn. If not, they use to hit you (Ecuadorian student).*



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Curiously this type of behaviour at school was also very common some time ago in Spain, in dictatorial times<sup>19</sup>.

For some students, the “advantage” of this teachers’ behaviour is that it makes them get more “respect” , more control and less conflict inside classes. For others, this type of control could cause a better level of learning outputs in the class. Nevertheless, other students say that if you are ready and motivated to study, you do not need that somebody hit you. Violence in class is not necessary, they argue.

One student explained that she preferred the trust which is given by Spanish teachers to her, than a very rigid and strict discipline of the school system of her country of origin She thought that classes were more funny without so much discipline, and she preferred talk to teachers that being frightened by them. Even one mother told that she was frightened by her son’s teachers when she was going to speak to them, because in her country of origin they were even strick STRICT WITH? for parents.

Some participants also said that in former communist/ soviet countries discipline is very strong at schools when children are minors. For some parents from European Third Countries , discipline is necessary but not at university, where everything is different because students are considered adults, they pay and know clearly that they want to study.

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<sup>19</sup> Guichot Reina, V. (2010): La cultura escolar del franquismo a través de la historia oral, *Cuestiones Pedagógicas*, 20, 2009/2010, pp 215-245. Also in: [http://institucional.us.es/revistas/cuestiones/20/art\\_11.pdf](http://institucional.us.es/revistas/cuestiones/20/art_11.pdf)



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Parents, as one mother from Ukraine said, try to inculcate their children the importance of studying, as nailing nails in their minds, as she metaphorically explained remembering Christ to underline that she uses to speak to her son about the importance of following with their studies until the university. So, some parents encourage their children to study as if they were *nailing nails* in their conscience, and they socialise their children not for dishing, cleaning or similar jobs, but for higher ones.

In this context of discussion, parents argued that too much free time leaved to children “for doing nonsenses”, as navigating in the web was not good and parents suffered from it. As one African parent said “A child needs control and discipline and supervision. If not, they got distracted. They are very young”

#### **4.3.3 Discipline and number of hours at school**

Parents agreed on the importance of increasing the number of hours that students spent at school or high schools. They gave several reasons. It is necessary to have more control on students, that are perceived by parents as having too much free time, with no homeworks in the afternoon sometimes. Secondly, the importance of the school context as a socialization opportunity is underlined by parents, who would like their children staying more at the school for better knowing their mates. Finally, parents suggest that staying more at the school gives their children the chance to be more advised by their counsellors, mentors, teachers.



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This measure (more hours at the educational centre) was considered very important in the case of children with problems at schools – high schools. In the case of African parents that reported that some students here had some problems (even 2.0), they explained the following arguments with some bitterness and impotence:

*Me and my wife are all the day working. We do not have any economic help to support them to continue their formation. We arrive from working at 22-23 everyday, so our children are all the evening alone, and we do not know if they study or not. Extra curricular classes on evening could been of great help here.*

*If they had more hours at school and more supervision and discipline, they could prevent failure. We do not know what to do.*

The other argument just for reinforce their proposal of more hours at school, is avoiding that children spend so many hours playing, chatting in internet, or similar things regarding ICTs.

Little time spent by student at educational centres was reported as a big problem for immigrant working parents. The lack of support of family neither social networks in their proximity for caring children when they are working is understood a drama, for the bad results of some students. And if they as parents want to survive (work), they cannot control education of children if they are working at evenings, as usually.

Job time of parents makes them absent at home and school doesn’t provide the enough extra-schooling time activity for their children, who are perceived as ‘abandoned at home’.



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*Children attend few class hours and much time is spent at home... In Madrid or Barcelona, they have more hours to spend at school, during the afternoon, when they can receive support in many subjects, here, they don’t. Just since 9 a.m. to 14 p.m., and after that ‘Adiós!’. Many times they don’t either receive homework to do, and we some times we have to demand to the school staff to give them. [Parent from Morocco]*

This discourse is highly associated with the necessity of support in no-linguistic competences and subjects, in which often TCN children present difficulties. In some few cases, support in subjects and structuring of extra-school time are offered by third sector and private professional (private paid classes). Students affirm that sometime teachers ‘abandon’ students who have not good outcomes, and support those who excel, sometimes the first ones are foreigners, but they argue that ‘it is not for racism’.

#### **4.3.4 Personal Support of parents and friends**

For some parents it is not possible to help their children with their homework. Sometimes children of immigrants use to know more than their parents in language and other subjects, because their parents had not the opportunity to study. This is why sometimes children are the teachers of parents, and older children use to support younger ones. But other times are friends who help other co-ethnic to learn a bit faster. This help of “significant others” is assessed of great importance, as



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bibliography has addressed in other contexts<sup>20</sup>. In other cases, without having any help, they learn to do things alone, and they are very proud of it.

*My sister helped me with the language and I could stay in my course.*  
[Student from Romania]

#### **4.3.5 Level of the course, immigrants, and conflicts in class**

Interviewed students are usually happy with their integration in the schools - high schools and society, and after some initial problems with language, they are used to feel themselves as other Spanish and non Spanish students at the educational centre. Language problems are not lived in the same way by 2.0 and other 1.5 generation that arrived at early age.

Some students in secondary courses reported some isolated cases or conflict with mates in which ethnic categories’ representations appeared, even though, we did not get reports on repeated or violent behaviour related with discrimination based on migratory categories.

Generally speaking, the discourse of our interviewees towards conflictive behaviour focused on the delay that it can provoke on the development of the course. They are also surprised about the violence that some students can use against teachers:

*Some students are very disturbing and when the teacher gets angry, he does not explain the lesson and you have to learn it by yourself.*

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<sup>20</sup> Portes, A. y Fernández-Kelly, P. (2008) “No Margin for Error: Educational and Occupational Achievement among Disadvantaged Children of Immigrants”, *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, nº 620, pp.12-36.



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*Some students even practice some kind of violence or threats in class with teachers and this is bad for everybody, it delays the learning.*

For some informants this bad or disturbing behaviour is due to the lack of motivation of certain students, but sometimes they prefer to stay in class than working with their parents, or, in case they are migrants, returning to their country of origin.

#### **4.3.6 Personal Support from teachers, and differences between Schools and High Schools**

There is a consensus when students explain the type of support they receive from teachers. They use to say that the support and orientation is better in Schools than in High Schools. Something like:

*In school, teachers used to care more of us, maybe due to our early age.*

In Secondary Education teachers are stricter. For some students it could be of great help if all the teachers could be so supportive as used to be in the school, or use to be the teacher of the ATAL (Temporary Linguistic Adaptation Classrooms), or the mentors. They claim for more tailored attention when they have problems to follow the class by language reasons, etc. They even told some bad experiences with some particular teachers that, in their opinion, are bad ones (it was told as an exception).

*Sometimes some teachers do not support you as others, but offend you, and you are not looking forward to learn anymore. [...]*

If that happen, some pupils also exclude themselves from the class, and it is very difficult to recover them. Some students say 'I do not understand, I cannot follow



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the class’, and some teachers answer ‘It is not my fault if you do not understand; I am not paid for solving that if you cannot understand Spanish’. But others try to explain several times the lesson, answer all the questions...

Some parents reported that communication of tutors with parents use to be when it is very late. As they are interested in the daily develop of their children, what they observe is that they are always required for the school if something bad happen, or the student have problems or bad results. So they ask for a continuous communication between teachers and parents.



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## 5 LEAVING THE SCHOOL, ENTERING THE JOB MARKET

### ***5.1.1 Economic problems: Pessimism about future***

If the student is failing and parents do not know what to do due to economic problems (as they are working all day), they see this as a drama, because they are doing a great effort to survive in Andalusia as immigrants, but the student is failing at school and they see problems for their future. In other cases, the student is good but they also know the difficulties for finding a job in Spain being of foreign origin. This also happens for 2.0 generation students.

So the discourse we found is somehow that children do not have lot of problems for integration, as they are well integrated in schools and with friends and natives, and that their experience is not so different from other children's at their age. Even though, what they think is that it will be different in the job market.

### ***5.1.2 Further educational and occupational aspirations and expectations***

There was a diversity of educational and occupational aspirations and expectations in our sample. Summarizing, some young people have very clear what they want to do in the future and even they have very precise information on how to achieve it (police, stewardess...). But not everybody is sure about his/her future. Some students do not like to study or does not see academic itineraries as guarantee for good future job and choose professions as singer, hairdresser, gardening, mechanics or some other easier vocational trainings, while others prefer the University (Doctor, Law, etc.).



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In global terms, the majority of them use to have higher aspirations and expectations than their parents. And their parents encourage them in the way of upward mobility.

Aspirations had to be with previous achievements at schools and high schools, and also with the efforts the students wanted to do for following their studies and the evaluation that they do on their capacity for studying at the university and also their willpower.

Expectations, as a realistic way of filtering aspirations, are influenced by evaluation on the current state of the labour market in Spain. Economic background of family and the possibility of getting grants are also here taken into account. African parents were more pessimistic about this, and seem to encounter more difficulties due to the problems for finding employment in these circumstances. Many of them agree that being migrants will be a stigma that will need more than one generation to be cancelled and to not being a limitation for equal inclusion in the job market. The evaluation of the economic crisis is also considered. Some students say that they do not want to continue studying because they are not going to find a good job in such a weak economic context. They think that natives themselves are having more opportunities to find qualified jobs than non-natives,.

Younger students do not have so clear than older ones what they want to do in the future, as it is common among also non-migrants students. The influence of parents is very important when they advise their children to continue with the study, especially if they have good academic results. This is somehow different for parents with less income whose children will have to work at the same time that studying, or leaving academic projects if families have not enough to pay the university.



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Migratory project is an important frame in this field: for parents, even in a crisis time, the effort for continuing studying is worth, because if they do not find job in Spain, they could go to other country or to the country of origin. Some parents could not study and they would like their children to have the opportunity to do it. Nevertheless, knowing the current economic situation in Spain, some of them see the future with bitterness, as they now anticipate lot of problems to find jobs in Spain in next years. On the other side, there are important differences between Africans and others, especially those from East Europe that use to encourage their children to study even in crisis time.

Nevertheless parents use to tell about good students without the possibilities of following with their studies neither receiving grants or support, and their parents even sometimes need support for a living. Parents alert to good careers and vocations are at risk of being interrupted.

### ***5.1.3 The role of counsellors, mentors or similar people***

For students it is very important the role of counsellors and mentors in secondary centres. They use to receive talks, advise, information about universities, about vocational training possibilities, etc. Nevertheless, there are different opinions and for some students some counsellors are better than others. They prefer counsellors that give them individual support. As they use to know that the counsellor is there, for some shy students, it would be better to have regular appointments with him / her. If not, they are so shy that they do not look for them due to shyness. Other students directly prefer not receiving counselling.

For some parents this figure is sometimes unknown. Some time if parents cannot speak Spanish, they do not attend to the Secondary school at meetings where



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counsellors explain things about future opportunities for studying, etc. (as said their children).

## 5.2 Preparation for the future

### 5.2.1 For a job/ next schooling level

Normally, students use to be confident regarding their future, and they are sure that they will work. They trust in their possibilities for finding also a job due to their knowledge of language. They also consider working in countries different to Spain if necessary, but for some of them, it would be better to stay in Spain, close to their own family.

Students use to have hopes for the future, unless they have not decided what to do for the moment (younger, newcomers, etc.). They use to evaluate as good the education received, and the formation for working. The main problem that they perceive is the labour market.

Some parents even do not know that the school and high schools use to provide information about future possibilities and so on. As some immigrants children explain, their parents do not attend to some meetings at school because they are working, or because lack of Spanish language.

On expectation about success, students with more than two years of schooling in the host country show a general satisfaction, if they compare with the fear of failure, both in the general adaptation at and in reach of results in each subject, that remember living in the entrance period.

Orientation about the offer for post secondary no-university itineraries chances is also perceived as weak and confused, and its quality depend too much on personal



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competences of the person in charge (tutor) than on an established role and activities assigned by the school. Students are awareness about the importance of a person of reference at the moment of choosing their futures itineraries, knowing that their parents not always are prepared to solve all their doubts. Students seem not to agree on the lack of information about school and VT system that parents express. What both groups mention is the lack of economical support and other resources for people who want to continue studying – especially in university and Medium of High VT grade – and whose family can’t afford the expenses that it would require. There is a generalized perception that compulsory educational level is not enough for entering in a job market ruined by the current economic crisis, that an European title will be always more valued in no European countries of origin, but also that for Spain is still too early for offering the equal treatment for non-national in the job market that exist ‘in France or Great Britain, countries built by old wages of migrants.

### ***5.2.2 Gaps between education and professional carrier***

One of the main critics that could be found is the gap between education and work, that are not always coordinated.

*I finish ESO and even for working in McDonalds frying chips they asked me to have at least the Post Secondary education. They are hiring even university students for frying chips! For what then have I studied the ESO? (18 y.o. student from Ghana)*

*Sometimes, for some jobs they asked you for some things, titles or knowledges that are stupid.*



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Regarding the expectations about the entrance in the job market, many parents affirm their wish their children to enter in high educational levels, but children are worried about the incoherence of the educational system and the requirements of the job market:

*What is completely absurd is that for working in a McDonalds a bachelor title is required [Student from Ghana, 21 y.o.]*

Moreover, students express the demand of stage period that permit them to receive the needed experience to afford the labour market.

So sometimes, they have the feeling of having studied a lot but they cannot reach their aims. Unless they want to study to know more about live. Some students are very discouraged by the labor market, where lots of immigrants have to do very low and unskilled jobs. So, “for what so many efforts for studying? Just for cleaning old people’s ass!?”

## 6 SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND PROPOSALS

Children of 2.0 or 1.5 generation that arrived at short age (childhood) clearly affirm having experimented fewer difficulties than 1.0 or 1.5 generation that entered in the adolescence or youth. Those who entered in primary levels (6-12 years) also say they met a friendlier context than the Secondary’s one. Personalized attention by teachers is taken as the element that makes the difference, and language is the most important competence needed in adaptation process.

Especially in Secondary education, the attention received by school staff could be improved through a more active role of tutors and counsellors in searching the communication with students, especially with new arrivals. Better and continuous



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communication between parents and tutors is also suggested, not only when the student have a bad behaviour or fail.

The role of the classmates in the integration of schooling life is considered a key element, and the different support that autochthonous and co-ethnics can offer must be taken into account at the moment of creating class groups, activities, and so no.

Foreign students agree on the importance of multilingual competences, as they parents do. But if parents seem to give value only to languages internationally spoken and that offer resources for the job market, as English, French, Spanish or Portuguese, students feel interest in their families' mother tongues, considering them both as a future professional competences as well as a wider cultural and social capital. They demand, consequently, resources to improve and certify previously and/or informally acquired linguist competences.

About linguistic support in Spanish, ATAL classes and other resources offered by schools are highly valorised and considered **useful** for linguistic adaptation. Students recognize that informal languages learning can imply the maintenance of defects, proceeding from native language interferences and other phenomena. This does not mean that spaces and times of informal socialization mustn't be reinforced in view of a linguistic appraisal, but simply that it is important to follow the learning process with formal and professional guide. What has emerged for the improvement of linguistic support is the need of 1) assessment and help processes more focused in modules of sub-competences, and a general more incidence on written production and on the use of the languages in Mathematics, 2) better knowledge among the staff on languages interferences. Common problems and failures are perceived as easy to solve if a good knowledge of language of destination country is achieved,



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and this could be reinforced in the education system through extraordinary support, when necessary.

Racism or Discrimination issues does not appear in discourses of our informants when they speak about problems, gaps, necessities in their schools, high schools, etc., but they use to report some kind of rejection or having been the butt of everyone's jokes due to their weak knowledge of language in some moment.

Sometime the dialectic between no discrimination versus support for foreign students emerges. Normalization is well considered and really appreciated by students, even if in some cases they express that those gaps caused by their condition of foreigners can pass unperceived. Generally no difference seems to exist between the treatment received by EU nationals and TCN, neither among different nationalities. They do not observe big differences of treatment at educational centres between natives, European no-European students and parents. This seems not being the big issue in school and high schools, but they see and tell particular problems outside educational centres.

Problems described by children and parents for achieving success at school are similar to those of Spanish children that have failures or dropouts. Differences between natives and non natives is not specifically underlined in discourses of parents and children, but diversity was observed regarding:

- Problems with language overall at the entering (and for parents)
- Differences in the cultures of work and study at schools and high schools (discipline, learning, etc.)
- Anticipation of future problems for working as a factor of big concern (that provokes no motivation for studying)



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More conciliation between labour and work is another proposal, but it is seems as somehow impossible for that parents that suffer from exploitation in the job market. Finally, educational centres should offer more help in the passage from school to the first job.

## ARCKA

"Assessing, recognizing competences and certifying knowledge acquisition valuing human capital  
of children of foreign origin in education and training in Europe"

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HANNOVER

REPORT WP 5

STUDENTS' INTERVIEWS





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## 1. Introduction

We took interviews with

5 Newcomers from European Countries (European Union):

4 students from Poland

1 student from Lithuania

18 Newcomers from Third Nations

4 students from Turkey

3 students from Iran

2 students from Ukraine

1 student from Iraqi

1 student from Afghanistan

1 student from Kazakhstan

1 student from Russia

1 student from Georgia

1 student from Tunisia

1 student from Morocco

1 student from Moldavia

1 student declared to be Kurdish (no answer about out of which political country)

The students could decide if they tell us their name or not. We hoped to get true answers if we allow them to answer anonymous. Furthermore it is a concession to the data privacy protection



A big problem in the interviews was the lack of German language in the newcomers' group. It was really difficult to explain the questions and to get understandable answers. Thus some of the interviews remain incomplete, in some cases the students did not like to answer, especially in case they have allowed us to insert their names in the interview scheme.

The Nationalities of interviewees represent the important groups of newcomers:

- Poland and Baltic countries (in Hannover only a few immigrants from Western-Europe arrive, those ones prefer Berlin, Hamburg and Munich)
- People from Turkey, the Middle East (Iran, Iraqi, and Afghanistan), countries from former USSR and from Maghreb countries are important groups of newcomers out of the third nations.

The interviewed newcomers are students out of the project "German for the Job" and of "School of the Second Chance". In the "School of the Second Chance" we did not find any immigrant out of an European Country, but a mixture of third Nationals.

Other problems have hindered us to conduct interviews with students of the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> generation. These students are not target group of the training in which we interviewed the newcomer. We try to run interviews in the "school of the second chance", where many students with migration background (2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> generation) participate in courses for preparing the exam for the basic or advanced school-leaving certificate. We asked teachers and the department head to support us for conducting the interviews. The students from 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> generation did not agree to be interviewed. They would not like to be identified as a special group which is different from the German students.

Thus we conducted more than the requested number of interviews with the newcomers, which is our origin target group.



## 2. Interviews with Newcomers from European Countries

### 2.1. Education in the home-country

The students stay in Germany since 7 – 9 years, but however they are not integrated in the job-market and understand and speak insufficiently German. That's why they participate in the course.

Some students got a good education in their home-countries, 2 of them finished only the basic school (one of them continued with vocational training), 1 got the university entrance diploma and 2 have studied. 2 students are able to speak other (East-European) languages. Assuming that studying in Poland do not mean the same as studying in Germany at an university, we can establish, that they have gotten training and education, have been lived in Germany since several years, but do not speak sufficiently German and are unemployed however.

### 2.2. Training and education in Germany

All students have participated in integration courses and basic German training up to a level of B1. That means they should be able to speak German in situations of the daily life but not on an advanced level or in a specialized way as it usually is needed in a profession or an apprenticeship

#### 2.2.1. Welcoming and tracking

The idea to start the training “German for the Job” was agreed with the officer of the job-center. All of them had to pass one day of testing and profiling for starting the right training depending on knowledge of German language and professional experience or target. None of them thinks that his/her pre-learning out of the home-countries is been asked in the right way and taken into account. They missed information about assessment and recognition of acquired certificates out of the home-country. Most of them indicated that they have been misunderstood in the Job-center but not in the school. As consequence they propose a better training for the employers of the Job-centers as a necessary precondition for better guidance to a successful integration in the Job-market.



### 2.2.2. At school

The lessons are given in German and the students are mostly talking in German with each other. They enjoy this arrangement because they can improve their language in daily communication and talking in the same language hinders closed ethnic groups, which exclude single immigrants who do not share their home-language with other students. Furthermore, the training offers lessons in German of course. The students feel good in school but if they need to regulate something with the Job-Center they indicate to feel uncomfortable. In case of needed support because of schooling-gaps the students feel free to ask for further help and explanations and they do get it usually. Tests are conducted periodically and the students get feedback about the results in the whole group or individual in case of special problems. They agreed that this helps them to evaluate their own learning-success and provide them with inputs for self-reflection. For improving the learner's situation and organizing it more successfully the students would like to have more time for learning. That means more lessons and a longer duration of training (but unfortunately it is not our decision to offer only 6 months of training, it is the order of the Federal Office of Migration and Refugees).

### 2.2.3. Success rate and preparing the future

At first we must consider that we asked the students not at the end of the training, it is half-time. Thus the students have not been very definite in their answers. Most of them think that they do not have the expected success at that moment of training. They realize that learning German needs more time than expected and that speaking good German is an important precondition for getting an apprenticeship or a job. Therefore most of them would like to continue this kind of training. Furthermore they have not gotten enough information about apprenticeships and retraining. Most of them indicate that the Job-Center does not support in an adequate way. They feel dismissed by the advisers especially if they do not get any benefits. In this case the Job-center refuses to pay for any further training. That means for example that a married woman whose husband is earning enough money for the livelihood does not receive financial support for further training, but someone who does not have any income gets it! This practice of the Job-centers hinders especially women to get qualification and certification and should be changed by policy-makers. All the students have realized that certificated qualifications and good knowledge of German



language are the most important preconditions for getting a job. Thus they wish to continue learning but some of them fear to be not able to do because of the described circumstances.



### 3. Interviews with Newcomers from Third National Countries

#### 3.1. Education in the home-country

##### 3.1.1. Students with pre-learning experience

These students arrived in Germany in their youth/adolescent age. Thus they visited school in their home-country. The students of “German for the Job” have stayed in Germany since 3 – 13 years, but however they are not integrated in the job-market and understand and speak insufficiently German. That’s why they participate in the course.

Three students of “School for the Second Chance” have stayed in Germany since 1,5 – 12 years. They spent some years with learning German and training for getting the basic school-leaving certificate which is a precondition for their actual goal to get a higher one on a middle level hoping to start in a qualified apprenticeship afterwards.

Some students have gotten a good education in their home-countries, 5 of them finished only the basic school (two of them continued with vocational training), 6 got the university entrance diploma and 3 have studied. 4 students are able to speak other languages (students from East-Europe usually are able to speak Russian in addition to their mother tongue, two students from North-Africa know to speak French and/or English beside of Arab). Assuming that studying in Ukraine or Iran do not mean the same as studying in Germany at an university, we can establish, that they have gotten training and education, have been lived in Germany since several years, but in case of participants of “German for the Job” do not speak sufficiently German and are unemployed however.

##### 3.1.2. Students without pre-learning experience

Four of the students of “School for the Second Chance” are quiet different. They have never visited any school in their home-country because they had come to Germany really young. They went to school in Germany and got the basic school-leaving certificate. All of them are able to speak three languages, native tongue, English and German, because they learnt German and English from the beginning in the regular German school.



### 3.2. Training and education in Germany

All students who had immigrated as young/adolescent have participated in integration courses and basic German training up to a level of B1. That means they should be able to speak German in situations of the daily life but not on an advanced level or in a specialized way as it usually is needed in a profession or an apprenticeship. Only four participants took part in further education. One participated in a computing course before three attend courses for preparing the exams of basic school-leaving certificate and vocational orientation. These results are astonishing. In Hannover (as every where in Germany) a wide range of further education is offered by different providers (public and private ones, adapted to the churches and unions, and especially for this target-group those ones organized by migrant-organizations). For most of them (the welfare-recipients) the courses are very cheap because a lack of money should not hinder someone to learn. That in this situation the immigrants, who have been lived in Germany since several years, have not found any long-lasting job and although they have enough time for qualification do not participate in courses show the gap between the immigrants and the offered training and education.

The students who have been lived in Germany since the childhood have visited regular schools up to the 10<sup>th</sup> grade and the basic school-leaving certificate.



### 3.2.1. Welcoming and tracking

The idea to start the training “German for the Job” was agreed with the officer of the job-center. All of them had to pass one day of testing and profiling for starting the right training depending on knowledge of German language and professional experience or target. Most of them think that their pre-learning out of the home-countries is not been asked in the right way and taken into account, only two of them affirmed this question. 5 of the 11 interviewees have gotten information about assessment and recognition of acquired certificates out of the home-country, one by the Job-Center the others got these information from a social-education worker. 4 interviewees indicated that they have been misunderstood in the Job-center but not in the school, three students did not. These ones have compared to the others a good level in German speaking and understanding. Misunderstanding seems to be in these cases more a question of language than of cultural or general misapprehensions. 4 students did not answer because they could not understand the question.

To the question about proposals for improving the welcoming and tracking 5 interviewees did not have any ideas, one would like more German training before and 5 students want more qualified support by the Job-Center for finding the right training, internship or apprenticeship. Furthermore they would like to be treated in a more polite way.

The students of “School for the Second chance” indicate that friends or teachers informed them about this institution and recommend them to take part. They found the application very easy and comfortable, the used language has been German. They have gotten information about recognition but the result has been that their certificates are not equivalent to the German ones. Thus they declared that their pre-learning has not been taken into account.

For the 5 students who came to Germany as child these questions did not fit.

In the “School of the second Chance” more than a half of interviewees feel misunderstood in their former school-life. They indicate as reasons linguistic problems but also prejudices of teachers.



### 3.2.2. At school

The lessons are given in German and the students are mostly talking in German with each other in the project “German for the Job”. They enjoy this arrangement because they can improve their language in daily communication and talking in the same language hinders closed ethnic groups, which exclude single immigrants who do not share their home-language with other students. Furthermore the training offers lessons in German of course. The students feel good in school but if they need to regulate something with the Job-Center they indicate to feel uncomfortable. In case of needed support because of schooling-gaps the students feel free to ask for further help and explanations and they do get it usually. Tests are conducted periodically and the students get feedback about the results in the whole group or individual in case of special problems. For improving the learner’s situation and organizing it more successful some students would like to have more time for learning. That means more lessons and a longer duration of training (but unfortunately it is not our decision to offer only 6 months of training, it is the order of the Federal Office of Migration and Refugees).

In this part of the interviews some students have not been able to answer the questions because they did not understand them and it was impossible to explain the content of the question. In some cases the students affirm that everything in the course is very good, they feel very comfortable, the teachers are very helpful and therefore they do not have an idea what could be improved. Maybe that’s true. Maybe they would try to be polite and therefore not like to criticize anything. This behavior is an expected disadvantage of a non-anonymous interview. Especially students out of some foreign countries are educated in a way to be respectful, uncritical and polite against teachers and educational institutions.

The situation in “School for the Second Chance” is pretty different. The lessons are given in German, but the students talk in German but also in their mother-tongue to each other. The students feel mainly good at school but they criticize that too many lessons are cancelled and especially students with difficulties need all the time to learn the needed objectives. Furthermore nearly all of them miss individual support in case of problems in their family or peer-group or in learning difficult subjects. Sometimes the terminology is very complicated and they can not follow the lessons. Then there is no time to explain the items in a more extensive way.



Tests are conducted regularly but all the students miss an individual feed-back about their mistakes and how they can do it better in future.

Generally spoken the students wish to be supported in a more individual way. They expect that all the lessons will be given and have not to be cancelled because of a lack of teachers. The students feel good in class, but three of them would prefer a better social climate in the students' group. They indicated that they would propose not to accept "criminal" students and that there are many conflicts between students which the teachers do not want to face. These critics should not been seen as special problems of students with migrant background, because every student would suffer under those conditions. One student indicates that German students are better evaluated as foreigners. That is astonishing because the other foreigners in the same class do not refer about those problems. Maybe that it is a kind of justification of bad results which is reported by teachers often.



### 3.2.3. Success rate and preparing the future

Most students in “German for the Job” do not have the expected success at that moment of training. They realize that learning German needs more time than expected and that speaking good German is an important precondition for getting an apprenticeship or a job. Therefore most of them would like to continue this kind of training.

All the students have realized that certificated qualifications and good knowledge of German language are the most important preconditions for getting a job.

For their future they hope to start an apprenticeship or in one case to studying. They hope that the Job-center will support financially the important training. As difficulty one person described that her studies in her home-country not have been recognized in Germany and she therefore has to start again. Half of the interviewees feel well-prepared for the training and job-market, apart from their low level of German language. That’s why they proposed to start continuing courses in advanced German for the job. They highlight that they feel very comfortable in this course and enjoy the cooperation in the group, the open atmosphere and the helpful teachers

On the other hand 4 interviewees have not been able to answer these questions. They miss the right words in German and they have not gotten enough information about the educational system and job-market. It is unbelievable: these 4 students have been lived in Germany since several years, but they are not able to talk about their future in German and they do not have any orientation about their future live in Germany. These students came from 3 different countries: Turkey, Iran and Ukraine. That shows us that the described lack of language and orientation does not depend on the origin of country. This situation could happen to an immigrant of anywhere. An interesting question for a future survey should be to find out the reasons for this highly visible deficiency in the integration compared to immigrants out of the same countries who have a clear orientation for their future. In this course are other students out of the same countries with similar educational preconditions who have clear ideas about their future live and who are very busy to learn German for creating the needed precondition of apprenticeship or studying.



The students of “School for the Second Chance” are definitely in another biographical situation. They have less problems to answer these questions in German than the students of “German of the Job”. They feel mostly well-prepared for the future but fear the requirements of the final exam. They know the importance of a good school-leaving certificate for their future life. Interesting is that problems are reported about a bad atmosphere in the students’ group. Two of the interviewees feel uncomfortable in class and think that they are refused because of their nationality and miss support of teachers to settle the conflicts.

All students expect to pass the exam successful and hope to start an apprenticeship afterwards, some of them have clear and realistic ideas in which profession they will work later.



## 4. Conclusion

There are many similarities and only a few differences between the immigrants from European countries and those from Third Nations. The small number of interviewees does not allow generalization if these differences are typical or by pure chance.

The similarities in “German for the Job” are the lack of German language after having been lived in Germany several years. Furthermore most of the students criticize the Job-center because of lack of support and politeness. All of them wants to get a job in Germany but some of the TCNs do not have any information and orientation about how their future life in Germany can be organized, what they have to learn, where they have to ask for support and training, what will be needed for getting a job. That is one of the differences between the two groups. All of the Europeans have a clear orientation. They know that they have to learn German very well and that they will need certified qualifications. Therefore they state ideas for improving support and training.

Another difference seems to be the kind of reaction on the interview situation. Some of the TCNs answered remarkably positive to all the questions about our school and the course, but in a very short way. The interviewer had the impression that they would try to be polite and therefore not like to criticize anything, perhaps because they are educated in a way to be respectful, uncritical and polite against teachers and educational institutions. The European students gave longer answers, they talk about their experiences and ideas for increasing training and guidance. Their answers about our school have been very positive too but in a believable way. The European students seemed to be more open than the TCNs.

It is not the place for analyzing the reasons for this different behavior, may be that cultural preconditions play a role, may be that the individual history and the reasons for leaving the home-country are essential.

Nearly none of the interviewees participated in further education before this training. These results are astonishing. In Hannover (as every where in Germany) a wide range of further education is offered by different providers (public and private ones, adapted to the churches and unions, and especially for this target-group those ones organized by migrant-organizations). For most of them (the welfare-recipients) the



courses are very cheap because a lack of money should not hinder someone to learn. That in this situation the immigrants, who have been lived in Germany since several years, have not found any long-lasting job and although they have enough time for qualification do not participate in courses show the gap between the immigrants and the offered training and education. In this history the program “German for the Job”, which is supported by the employment agency is a chance because they get in contact with further education during learning German. And the satisfaction with the training shows that they like to learn and to be in a group of learners. Thus it is not astonishing that most of them wish to continue the training longer than the given 6 months, which is too short to learn German on a sufficient level.

Most of the students of “German for the Job” think that their pre-learning out of the home-countries is not been asked in the right way and taken into account, only two of them affirmed this question. 5 of the 11 interviewees have gotten information about assessment and recognition of acquired certificates out of the home-country.

These results show the importance of the recognition and consultation service which starts its work in April 2012 as consequence of a new law guaranteeing assessment but not recognition.

Most of the students indicated to feel misunderstood in the Job-Centers. A better training for the advisers of the Job-centers to enable them understanding people from other countries in a serious way and supporting them adequate could be a good precondition for better guidance to a successful integration in the Job-market.

For the students of “School of the Second Chance” recognition does not play any role, they have been very young when they immigrated to Germany. Thus they start their school-career in Germany but have not finished it yet with the expected certifications. The reasons for this failure are not asked and we should not speculate about it but more than a half of interviewees feel misunderstood in their former school-life because of linguistic problems and prejudices of teachers. This can be interpreted as an advice that better linguistic training in primary school before starting school should be offered and teachers should be better prepared for educating and giving lessons to students of other countries and cultures. We must refer that these students have been started their school career in average at the end of the nineties. The students’ linguistic deficiency and the teachers’ lack of intercultural competences as obstacles for successful school-careers have been reported very often. Thus



since 2004 linguistic tests are obligatory one year for entering the primary school. Language training is obligatory for those who fail. This measure improved the level of German in the primary schools but had not been offered at the time when the interviewed students entered school. Intercultural-training for teachers has been offered as part of their further education and optional in the studies since several years.



## PARADA Foundation – the WP5 research

### Methodology

The development of the WP5 research is based on the interaction with parents and students enrolled/ to be enrolled in the Romanian educational system and professionals involved in facilitating the school enrolment as well as those providing non-formal education.

There were organized 3 focus groups:

1. One with 8 *native students enrolled in the School no. 95, aged 13 to 18*: 3 in the regular program and 5 in the Second Chance, developed on April 23.
2. One with TCN students –*11 students enrolled or in the process of accessing the national educational system( but attending the preparatory language classes).*
3. One with parents of TCN pupils –*10 parents of the TCN students.*

In order to collect more information on the school opportunities and enrolment of TCN students, 4 professionals involved in providing preparation classes and contributing to the integration of the TCN were interviewed. They collaborate with the ARCA organization in developing the Romanian language classes and preparatory courses for refugees and asylum seekers that access to the citizenship status.

The guidelines used during the focus group were based on the questions prepared by the Tilburg University. Most of the respondents addressed the matter of entering the educational system, while only few of them had the knowledge and interest for entering the labour market.

*The participants at the research received incentives in funds (no more than EUR 7).*

The focus groups with the TCN parents and students were organized with support of the ARCA organization that also provided for free the space for the meetings.

Cristina 6/9/12 11:28

**Comment:** I don't know if that should be included in the research report.

### Difficulties and modalities to overcome them:

The participants expressed their willingness to participate and attend the focus groups, but language was one barrier difficult to overcome during the focus group with TCN parents and students. However, TCN students proved to speak and better understand Romanian than their parents.

For those speaking Persian language (coming from Iran and Afghanistan) there was one volunteer from the ARCA organization providing support with the translation. For those coming from other countries, one representative from ARCA Foundation provided support with translation from English to/ from Romanian. There was also one Muslim participant from Eritrea who spoke Arabic and Eritrean, therefore one TCN student translated for her from the first language to English.

For the Romanian students, the answers for some of the questions were obvious or not available; therefore, clarification questions needed to be addressed.

Interviews with professionals followed the same guidelines, but addressed in-depth the matter of no-formal education provided by them.

**PARADA Foundation**  
23, Bucur St.  
4th district, RO- 040292

**Phone.:** +4021 331 17 99  
**Fax:** +4021 330 76 85  
birou@paradaromania.ro - [www.paradaromania.ro](http://www.paradaromania.ro)

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Two focus groups were planned for May 4, but a small number of participants showed up, therefore the FG could not be validated. Later, with support from the ARCA organisation, the 2 focus groups with TCN participants were organised on the date of May 23.

Being foreigners and some of them recently arrived to Romania, discussion started with difficulties, since they are not that much used to speak in public, in the presence of strangers.

Among the TCN students the situation differed according to their status and age. Those in the primary and secondary school age were either in the preparatory phase to start their studies, either enrolled in school.

However, the participants attended with pleasure and enjoyed sharing their experience.

## Results:

### 1. Entering the school:

In general, entering the school is not a difficult process for the national or TCN students. The only requirements concern completing the request for attending the classes and submitting it in a specified period of time, together with the legal and required documents regarding the identity (birth certificate), a copy of parents' identity, the proof of being in a good health condition from the family physician.

The same conditions apply to the TCN students; additionally they have to prove the knowledge of Romanian language, which for most of them represents a delay of one year of studies, the period of time needed to learn the national language. Some students coming from the Republic of Moldova (where they had the refugee status) have the advantage of knowing the language which is very much the same with Romanian, therefore their language knowledge are evaluated and if available the other documents for enrolment, the same as for the Romanian students, they go to school once the school year starts.

For those coming for example in January, there is a delay of few months, since they cannot be enrolled in the school until September. However, there is the advantage of few non-governmental organisations providing non-formal classes of Romanian as well as other courses.

In the specific situation of the TCN students participating at the focus group and having the status of asylum seeker, they have classes with the one representative of the Save the Children at the Bucharest Regional Centre for Hosting and Procedures for the Asylum Seekers.

Some of them also attend classes organised by the ARCA organisation in order to better learn the Romanian language and update information on geography, history a.s.o. For those in the Centre for Hosting and Procedures for the Asylum Seekers, there is many times that re-integration officer from the Romanian Office for Immigration supports asylum seekers and, specifically, students in getting the necessary documents for enrolment. Having a school in the proximity of the centre, most of students are enrolled at that unit.

**PARADA Foundation**  
23, Bucur St.  
4th district, RO- 040292

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**Fax:** +4021 330 76 85  
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Many times, refugees and asylum seekers have problems with the identification and official papers (including those related to their educational background) which are not available since people leave conflict areas. Therefore, they get temporary identification papers based on the self-declared year of birth.

For those immigrants who do not leave in the Centre, it is many times they look for support, including school enrolment of their children, from the NGOs.

It is also PARADA providing support for different groups of students to enrol in school, even at higher age than the one corresponding to the grade, as a result of existence of the Second Chance program that supports enrolment in school of students at least 3 years more than the corresponding age for the school grade.

For those TCN students who needed to enrol in the Romanian language classes, one Commission from the Ministry of Education evaluated the level of knowledge and established that can be provided at the Centre for Hosting and Procedures for the Asylum Seekers (for those being hosted at the centre). It was also the re-integration officer in charge with ensuring the opportunity for these classes for the students.

Once enrolled in the classes, the TCN students follow the same pattern of studies and certification as the Romanian ones. And that applies for all the migrants that are under a form of protection in Romania. From the previous phase of research in the ARCKA project, it resulted that children of expats (those who legally work for foreign companies and institutions) might attend special schools, e.g. the Italian one, where the educational system, including the exams, is structured by the school based on the agreement with the Ministry of Education. However, final certification follows the pattern in Romania for the equivalence of studies. Concerning the knowledge evaluation, there are also some differences in terms of organising the school schedule and exams between the regular courses and the „Second chance” Program: the latter being more flexible, developing only few days a week, in the afternoon.

### At school

As previously emphasized, main language used in education and instruction classes is Romanian, with some exceptions when considering the schools offering international programs, such as the French, Italian, British, American schools, which in general are opened to the expats' children or to those Romanian nationals that can afford to pay the annual fees.

If it is to consider the situation of the participants at the focus groups, since most of them belong mostly to the populations from the Eastern Asia, they find difficult to learn and study in Romanian, which is a Latin language. However, in one year time, required to study in advance of taking formal classes, children perform better in this language than the adults. This people find difficult the fact there are not many translators knowing their languages but those mostly used as "international" languages: French, English, German, and Russian.

Parents would like their children continue to study the native language, but since it is not possible in the school, there is a "strong control" in the families to speak and preserve the

**PARADA Foundation**  
23, Bucur St.  
4th district, RO- 040292

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national language. As emphasized among the difficulties of developing the focus groups, the participants especially TCN adults felt a bit uncomfortable and hardly joined the discussion, and lack of knowledge regarding the language made them to behave like this. In contrast , two mothers, one coming from the Latin America, already a Romanian citizen, and one coming from Ukraine, living in Romania, perfectly speaking the national language , who freely spoke about their integration and studies of their children.

In general, TCN students already enrolled in school and their parents, did not comment on difficulties in taking classes in the national language, but in managing other courses such as mathematics. Therefore, they look for support provided by different organizations and if possible in school, considering the participation in supplementary classes organized by teachers. Comparing to the situation of nationals (resulting from discussions with professionals and FGs with Romanian students), parents of TCN students who manage speaking Romanian language, attend regular meetings with parents that are compulsory organized in schools by the coordinating teacher (main teacher for the primary educational level, and the master teacher for the secondary educational level). During discussions, educational situation of students is discussed as well as the administrative matters. According to the national students attending the FG, their parents usually do not show up at the school meetings. In the national educational system, there are schools where a school counsellor is available, but in the schools where the FG participants study.

The TCN parents whose children are enrolled/ to be enrolled in schools are mostly happy about participation of their kids because they see it as an opportunity for the family ("parents live through their children"), most of the time, sometime children act as translators for their parents. In this way, children are kind of "anchor in the land" for the family, while having the opportunity of getting a certain status in the society when graduating the national schools.

For the Second Chance students in the primary school, there are teachers supporting children integration and different NGOs.

Despite some complaints about homework and a busy schedule, Romanian students will not change the school system.

One of the TCN students who want to enrol in the graduate system have more difficulties due to the lower language of Romanian, therefore, he takes language classes at ARCKA, hoping this year he will be admitted at the Medicine University.

Other TCN student participating at the FG wants to find a job in order to have a better living standard and afford continuing his Master studies. He is a graduate of foreign languages (English), but the labour market is almost saturated with professionals having this specialisation, and translation from the Persian language (the native language) is not much required.

After taking the Romanian language classes, the participants go through an evaluation performed by an evaluation commission established by the Ministry of Education establishes the level of knowledge of the Romanian language as well as the year of study in which the student will be enrolled. It is sometimes that in the opinion of some of the attending parents their children are evaluated and enrolled in a lower level of studies, due to the fact they are not that

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23, Bucur St.  
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skilful at speaking Romanian or they think and express in a different way ("for example for some topics it is difficult to freely express your view point" –said one student coming from an educational system where students do not express their opinion, it is only the teacher providing with the talk in class).

Some of the TCN parents would like to continue their studies, at least to improve their knowledge of Romanian and others, in order to take the citizenship exam. However, those having the refugee and asylum seeker status are less preoccupied by this aspects due to the low income, problems with the identity and other official papers – most of them lacking them and insecurity of their status and opportunities of integration.

In general, they would like to find a job and increase the social and economic status of the family.

Concerning the professional counselling in school, this is not provided in the units of primary and secondary educational level. It is more in highschoools that students learn about the labour market and start planning their professional path. As emphasized, in the "Second Chance" Program are enrolled more "mature" participants that have a job or look for a job by themselves. The TCN students taking the regular classes in the primary and secondary educational levels follow the regular path and do not have any professional counselling.

If it is to consider the experience of the two TCN students (the one wanting to enrol at medicine and the one willing to take master classes), they have problems with finding a job as the regular professionals, but due to their educational background.

### **Study cases (based on the experience of Ioana, a professional teaching immigrants at the ARCA association)**

One of the two TCN students attend the tutoring lessons provided by one professional volunteering at ARCKA. He is a refugee he is 26 years old and came from Iraq with his family. He has university studies in foreign languages. He came into Romania due to religious persecution, being Christian.

Ioana mentioned a second attendee at her tutoring lessons that has no refugee status. He came on his own because he taught having a better chance in Romania. He is 32 years old, finished medicine in Iraq and now he is resident in Romania. His family is still in Iraq and he did not asked for the refugee status because he has 2 daughters in Iraq and he wants to be able to return and see them. Both of them speak quit well the Romanian language.

Both of the tutoring students do grammatical mistakes and they do not speak a lot but the comprehension is very good. In writing they have a lot of problems. They came into Romania because Baghdad is a conflict area.

It is difficult to tell if once they obtain the Romanian citizenship they will leave or not the country. Another reason that they wanted to come into Romania is that other European countries began to implement politics anti-migration.

For the resident doctor it was difficult at the beginning to integrate because not all the teachers know English and he has to learn very quick Romanian to pass the exams. In order to be registered as a resident doctor he did not need a lot of documents: just a certificate that he

**PARADA Foundation**  
23, Bucur St.  
4th district, RO- 040292

**Phone.:** +4021 331 17 99  
**Fax:** +4021 330 76 85  
birou@paradaromania.ro - [www.paradaromania.ro](http://www.paradaromania.ro)

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finished the medicine course in Iraq, identity papers and to pay a tax for foreign students of 360 euros per month. He considers that the tax is too expensive, but he does not want to give up. If he does not pay that tax, his studies won't be recognized and he would have to start university studies in Romania. "Economically speaking, life in Romania is harder than in Iraq, it is hard to earn some money and the prices are very high comparative with the salaries"

The integration in the Romanian society was easy for them because for example for the resident doctor, he was forced to interact a lot with Romanians, colleagues, professors, patients, and he was forced to integrate, although for the refugee, it was a little bit harder, because in his family they speak Arabic and he was not integrated into a group, especially since he lost his job in a call center where, as well he spoke Arabic. In Romania, the refugee benefit from residence in transit centers with his family and after that they found a very good place to rent. The resident, foreign student, from the beginning, he paid a rent for an apartment. They did not benefit from any services beside the Romanian course at ARCA, which are free.

At legislative level, they find that there is a too long legal period of staying before applying for the citizenship. Otherwise they never felt discriminated. The professionals find difficult, not to work with them, but to find out information on the structure of the citizenship exam, that are never public. They gather information from former refugees. The proposal is that the organizers of the exam to collaborate with NGOs and other institutions that are working with immigrants in order to create a transparent system.

### **Non-formal courses provided by the NGOs (information from the interviews with 3 professionals)**

In general, NGOs provide migrants, such as refugees and asylum seekers with non-formal courses emphasizing more on the studies of Romanian language and history, geography, Constitutionalism. Courses are provided for two main reasons: children and youngsters want to start their formal studies and / or access the labour market, while most of the adults study in order to pass the citizenship exam.

The immigrants that participate at the courses apply for the Romanian citizenship. tutors/lectors in The immigrants with who they work are mostly adults and social and (sometimes) economic active, over 30 years old who came from: Syria, Turkey, Lebanon, Cameroon, Congo or Somalia (some countries having a poor development and some of them where there is an open conflict etc.)

Most of participants at the course are men. There are 2 explications for this situation, one is that the origin countries have restrictive politics regarding women's rights, on the one hand, and on the other hand that the participants are immigrants but they have Romanian families. The majority of the participants manage to keep their cultural and religious beliefs and also to be integrated in the Romanian society. Some of them have developed businesses in Romania, but they also came for studies, and they are not preoccupied to validate their studies and to receive the recognition for the previous experience gained in their origin country.

Work sessions are established as time and duration according to the needs of beneficiaries and

**PARADA Foundation**  
23, Bucur St.  
4th district, RO- 040292

**Phone.:** +4021 331 17 99  
**Fax:** +4021 330 76 85  
birou@paradaromania.ro - [www.paradaromania.ro](http://www.paradaromania.ro)

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they also vary in function of the scheduling at the exam. Each session is adapted at the level and capacity of understanding and learning of the participant.

For the Romanian language course the maximum number of participants is 4 or 5. But it can be also individual training. For the Constitutional training there is a minimum of 2 participants because it is important for that the Constitution to be learned by debate and a maximum of 5, in order that every one speaks. The teaching is always in Romanian language. There is no diploma at the end of the course and the only recompense is that they obtain the citizenship. None of the volunteers did not know who is the organisation/institution that organizes the citizenship exam and who is participating in the evaluation commission. They knew that the exam starts with the anthem of Romania (entirely) and then there is Romanian language and literature writing and oral exam, and oral exam for the rest of the subjects. Some of the subjects are absurd because they refer to small and deep details, for example at Romanian language they asked to define and to find the etymology of some regional words. "Sometimes the citizenship exam is harder than the Bacalaureate. It is to be appreciated because most of Romanians do not appreciate what they have for free, and they are fighting to gain the citizenship even if they leave their businesses for a while and lose some money, They love this country more than we do and they choose every day to stay here and do something"

Regarding the issues they have, they do not understand the difference between de facto and de iure, because from the law text to the implementation, everything changes and the bigger problem for those that are applying for citizenship is the bureaucracy, and at the beginning, the first impediment is to access the free programs to learn Romanian.

Otherwise, there are beneficiaries that access the "Second Chance" Programme in order to obtain a diploma and to find a proper job.

Regarding the practices, the process of obtaining the citizenship is not that difficult, but its organisation is not at all transparent. There is no collaboration between the Commission and the tutors, and the immigrants' abilities and skills are not taken into consideration at this exam.

**PARADA Foundation**  
23, Bucur St.  
4th district, RO- 040292

**Phone.:** +4021 331 17 99  
**Fax:** +4021 330 76 85  
birou@paradaromania.ro - [www.paradaromania.ro](http://www.paradaromania.ro)

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*Promotion of the Well-being  
And Success  
Of Third Country National Newcomer Students  
In Education in  
The French Community of Belgium*

*And Involvement of Parents  
In their Children's Education*

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REPORT PHASE 5  
May 2012



**ARCKA**

"Assessing, recognizing competences and certifying knowledge acquisition valuing human capital of children of foreign origin in education and training in Europe"  
Project Number: HOME/2009/EIFX/CA/1880 - Project co-financed under the European Integration Fund



## ARCKA

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## WP5 – Elaboration of Guidelines



## ARCKA

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### WP5 – Elaboration of Guidelines

*Report written by Agathe Willaume and translated by Nadine Jeunehomme*

*We express our gratitude to Noémie Niest for her collaboration in leading the focus group, and all teachers, school coordinators and school referents that have enabled us to meet young students and parents. With their help, supportive and proactive spirit and the enthusiasm they put in their work, these interviews would not have happened.*



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WP5 – Elaboration of Guidelines

## List of Abbreviations

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DA :	Asylum seeker
CGRA :	Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons
MENA :	Unaccompanied Foreign Minor
OE :	Immigration
PA :	Newly-Arrived
UE :	European Union
RET :	Third Country National (Non EU)
2G :	Second Generation



## Introduction

---

Phase 5 of the ARCKA Project instructed us to carry out collective interviews with students and parents followed by recommendations to promote the well-being and success of third country national students and to involve parents in cooperative actions to support the education of their children.

This phase thus allowed giving a voice directly to the target group of the Arcka Project: migrant students and their families. These interviews were valuable lessons and it is based on them all that this report was written with the desire to recreate as accurately as possible the words of these young people and their parents.

## Context

---

Since the Arcka project began and in the various successive reports we have written, we have been increasingly focusing on young newly-arrived (PA) third country nationals (RET) rather than on the young Europeans or second generation students.

Proportionally to its area (20,528 km<sup>2</sup>) and its density of population (11,071,483 inhabitants and 365 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup>), Belgium hosts as many or more asylum seekers (25,479<sup>1</sup> in 2011) than its neighbors. In addition to this the reception crisis, we have deliberately targeted mostly young newcomers' third country nationals including asylum seekers (DA) for our study so that it best reflects the realities of our territory and the concerns of teachers. Certainly sociologically, the issue of academic success and well-being of students of immigrant origin and especially the second and third generation is a legitimate object of research and a very interesting one; but in our opinion, it is relatively separated from that of the educational integration of third country national young newcomers including asylum seekers who holds a special place in our federal context, in public policy on immigration, education, social affairs, e.g.

It is from this angle of approach, that of school integration of young newcomers' third country nationals including asylum seekers, that we conducted our study by attempting through interviews of some European and second generation students and parents to put into perspective the results obtained in a comparative approach.

It should, in a preliminary way, be recalled that asylum seekers are people who flee their country calling for an international protection. They are awaiting a decision recognizing them or not refugee status. Asylum seekers are legally resident in any case as long as they were not dismissed their application for recognition.

European Directive 2003/9/EC of January 27, 2003 laying down minimum standards for the reception of asylum seekers in Member States details the minimum conditions of reception that States are expected to provide to asylum seekers. Here are the main provisions. Applicants must receive:

- Certain conditions in the form of material or financial assistance, preventing applicants from falling into poverty : including housing, food and clothing ;
- Appropriate provisions preserving the family unit;
- Medical and psychological care;
- **For minors, access to education;**
- Right to work within six months after their arrival;
- Complete information on the benefits they enjoy and their obligations;
- Right to move freely within the territory.

For now, each Member State is free to set up the host system it considers most appropriate, provided that these conditions are met.

---

<sup>1</sup> Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons. Statistics on asylum. Report 2011.  
[http://www.cgra.be/fr/binaries/Statistiques\\_asile\\_decembre\\_2011\\_Extterne\\_tcm126-158730.pdf](http://www.cgra.be/fr/binaries/Statistiques_asile_decembre_2011_Extterne_tcm126-158730.pdf)



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## WP5 – Elaboration of Guidelines

Access to education is a minimum standard established by Europe for the reception of asylum seekers in member countries.

Enroll in school is still sometimes an obstacle course for some students or families who do not speak the language of the host country, who do not know the educational system in French-speaking Belgium or who have never attended school in their home country. However, as we saw during the various interviews, attendant measures are set up specifically for this audience to overcome the difficulties and to facilitate school integration of migrant youth.

These attendant measures represent an ingenious and supportive system (bridging classes; enrollment by the school referents of the reception centers for asylum seekers, tutoring, information meetings for parents, information booklets ...) whose non-French speaking European nationals, obviously not asylum seekers, are sometimes excluded even though they often need the same specific support that their young comrades, third country nationals like their parents need the same information (e.g. families from Portugal, Hungary).

## Methodology

---

To determine the difficulties encountered by pupils PA - RET - DA in terms of integrating wider school (reception, evaluation, recognition and certification of knowledge and skills, monitoring and direction) and the methods and practices that enable positive facilitate this integration and information for parents, we relied on a qualitative methodology as required by the project: focus groups. These focus groups were held with students and parents through the active contribution of referents school care centers, teachers and related professionals, the education coordinator / Mena Red Cross encountered in earlier phases of the project.

The focus group is a qualitative research method. It allows using an empirical approach to determine within a specific group cultural, societal or ideological, here students and parents PA - RET - DA - or European and second generation the response of this group and the attitude it adopts with regard to tools and working practices, and the context in which it operates.

We therefore conducted several group interviews (for details see table below) within secondary education schools in the French Community of Belgium and in reception centers for asylum seekers (Red Cross or Fedasil<sup>2</sup>).

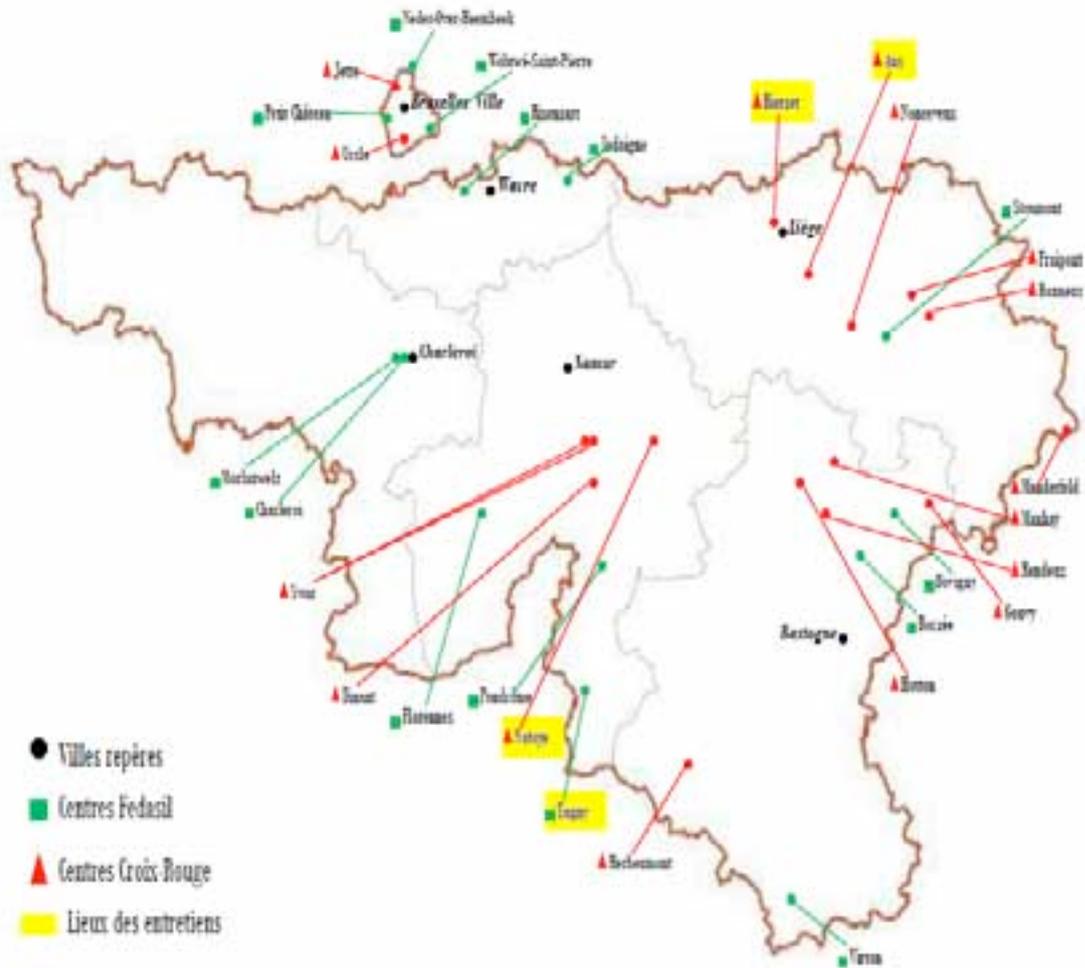
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<sup>2</sup> Fedasil = Federal Agency for the reception of asylum seekers.

Any foreigner arriving in Belgium may apply for asylum. The asylum seeker must first go through a procedure. During the investigation by the authorities responsible for asylum, the claimant is entitled to material assistance in the place of reception assigned to him. This designation is provided by the Dispatching Service of Fedasil. The host structures of Fedasil and its partners form a network of over 18.600 reception places in Belgium (distributed in 20 Fedasil centers and 22 the Red Cross centers).

**WP5 – Elaboration of Guidelines**

**Map of Red Cross and Fedasil reception centers in the French Community of Belgium**



A total of 19 students and 16 parents were interviewed throughout the Federation Wallonia Brussels (in school facilities or shelters) to try to understand the issues of education, the obstacles, the difficulties they face in different stages of the school career and the positive elements that need to be emphasized.

Certainly the qualitative surveys can be subject to reservations about the number of respondents and representativeness of the sample constituted by those persons. We do not claim that the 35 "respondents" are representative but they were chosen for their nationality and because of their personal path. Each course of life, every life story provided our field work with material for understanding and illustrating the complexities of school integration of newcomer foreign pupils' third country nationals in comparison with native students, European or second generation.



## WP5 – Elaboration of Guidelines

## Table of interviews conducted in Belgium

Location and duration of interviews	Contacts Organizations	Dates	Nationalities	Number and categories	Gender
Red Cross focus group, Ada department, Liège Duration: 4h 30	Red Cross Mr Emilien Clonan Mrs Gaelle	17/02/2012	5 parents: Cameroun 4 parents: Madagascar 3 parents: Irak 1 parent: Armenia	13 parents: RET	6 F 7 M
Lycée La Providence, Anderlecht, Brussels Duration: 3 h	Mr Yohann Fleury	13/03/2012	2 children: Belgian of Moroccan descent 1 child: Portugal 1 child: Belgian of Congolese origin 2 children: Romania	3 children: 2G 3 children: UE 1 parent : UE	6 F 1 F
Lycée François de Salles, Gilly, Charleroi Duration : 3 h	Mrs Aline Polet	28/03/2012	1 child : Greece 1 child : Italy 1 child : Algeria 2 children: Belgian of Turkish origin 1 child: Afghanistan	2 children: UE 2 children: RET 2 children: 2G	4 F 2 M
Red Cross Center Natoye Duration: 2 h	Mr Christian Strepstein Mr Emilien Clonan	11/04/2012	1 parent & 1 child: Chechnya 1 parent: Congo	2 parents: RET 1 child: RET	2 F 1F
Red Cross Center Ans Duration: 3 h	Mrs Séverine Wodon Mr Emilien Clonan	11/04/2012	2 parents: Congo 1 parent: Guinea 1 parent: Liberia	4 parents: RET	3 F 1 M
Red Cross Center Bierset Duration: 5 h	Mrs Nathalie Coric	12/04/2012	5 parents: Congo 1 parent: Mauricien Island 3 parents: Irak 3 parents : Guinea	12 parents : RET	7 F 5 M
Fedasil Center Sugny Duration : 3h	Mrs Olga Korolova	13/04/2012	1 parent & 2 children : Somalia 1 parent & 3 children : El Salvador 1 parent & 1 child: Armenia	3 parents: RET 6 children: RET	3 F 4 F & 2 M
Lycée ITN Namur Duration: 3 h	Mrs Sonia Limbort	16/04/2012	1 parent : Hungary 1 parent : Portugal 1 parent : Romania 1 parent : Syria	3 parents : UE 1 parent : RET	2 F 2 M
Total	8 focus groups		20 nationalities	Parents = 39 RET = 35 UE = 4	Parents F = 24 M = 15
25 h of interviews 3 schools 4 refugee centers 1 Red Cross Department	From mid February to Mid-April			Children = 19 RET = 9 UE = 5 2G = 5	



We have tried to do our epistemological break to allow us to take some distance and not to impose our survey our own presuppositions. This phase of distancing has enabled us to objectify the focus of our investigation to avoid receiving answers which would mirror the issues and expectations that the previous phases of the project had prepared us to receive.

Finally, it is with a deep trust in the survey instrument that is the group interview that we conducted our survey system and analyzed the consistency of statements, attitudes and social behavior observed. This approach allowed us to identify a number of conclusions in the operation of generalization that the study of some cases has allowed us to achieve.

## Methodological flaws and difficulties

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Despite the quality of data collected during the interviews we conducted and the help we received from the network of professionals we met over the Arcka project phases, it is important to note that we encountered several difficulties:

- **Deadlines:** within the given time frame, it was difficult for us to meet parents of the second generation and many students of that same category as requested. Indeed, the network that we preconstituted do not revolve around this audience and we didn't have time to investigate more fully the issue of "second generation" It is in our opinion, because of the specificity of the Belgian context, a thematic corollary, but nevertheless distinct.
- **Translation problems:** many children and parents interviewed were not familiar enough with French. Some interviews were conducted in English or a summary interpretation made by a brother or sister, a resident of the center, a classmate or a school referent. We consider that because of language problems we have certainly lost a lot of information along the way and that some of our questions have perhaps not been properly understood.
- **The grid questionnaire:** the questionnaire designed by the Dutch partners, coordinators of phase 5 of the project, was to allow a search as uniform as possible and promote a centralized comparative data collected in the six partner countries. However, it is clear that, in the field, at the time of the focus groups, the grid was not necessarily appropriate. We have therefore taken the liberty to depart from it when this seemed necessary or essential to the workshops.
- **The means of "social desirability":** another type of bias especially common among respondents DA is the social desirability bias that occurs when study participants do not answer the questions honestly because they perceive the truth as socially unacceptable or undesirable in the context of the asylum procedure in progress. Despite the precautions we have taken to explain that our study was not related to the proceedings before the CGRA, the data would be anonymised, we recognize that this bias is inevitable and needs to be considered in the analysis said data.

## Entering School: Reception and Registration

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During the focus groups, we were interested in the reception and enrollment of the new migrant student and the procedures in place so that he can benefit from enhanced support to overcome as quickly as possible the difficulties related to his exile. Let's recall that the only existing device in the French Community of Belgium in terms of reception of newly arrived pupils is the structure of teaching and welcome called: **bridging class**<sup>3</sup>.

For students and parents from reception centers for asylum seekers of the Red Cross or Fedasil, a set of measures are taken to facilitate the enrollment of children in school, the information to parents, and for each family to receive a warm welcome with the necessary information for a good understanding of the school system in French speaking Community of Belgium. It is not necessarily the case for parents who are either EU nationals or RET nationals who do not reside in a reception center for asylum seekers.

### 1. Importance of Written Information

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The school system in Belgium is far from simple (three communities: French, Dutch and German - two networks: official and confessional). It is therefore essential that information to families is done early enough to avoid guidance errors and to facilitate the integration of the child and parental involvement, whether the child has previously attended school in his country of origin or not.

We found some differences in the transmission of information to students and parents RET from reception centers and to students and parents who are EU nationals.

All families interviewed at the centers told us they received the booklet: information booklet for parents, presented as a "good practice" as part of Phase 4 of the project.

This booklet (31 pages) was produced by the Belgian Red Cross with funding from the European Refugee Fund and in partnership with the French Community.

This booklet has been translated into seven languages (Albanian, Arabic, English, Fa, French, Russian, and Serbo-Croatian). It informs in a didactic and illustrated way on:

- What can school bring to the child
- The need to learn speaking , reading and writing
- The value of obtaining diplomas particularly to find a job more easily
- The rights and duties of parents, students and school
- The organization of the school in Belgium
- The politico-administrative system with the three communities, schools and official and private schools
- The division of Belgium into three school levels (kindergarten, primary, secondary and special education also)
- The structure bridging classes and conditions of entry
- The education staff, school enrollment and conduct of the school year
- The Sanctions for failure to respect rules
- The conduct of PE classes
- The usefulness of the class agenda
- The usefulness of school mediators
- The Opportunities in case of the child' school difficulties or any other problem in school
- The lexicon and glossary of diplomas

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<sup>3</sup> For more information on bridging-classes, refer to reports of phases 3 and 4 of the Arcka project

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Some EU parents whose children are in the same school as children whose parents RET received the brochure at the reception center regret not having received the document too. The brochure could also be distributed in schools to promote the dissemination of written information to the greatest number.

### 2. Importance of Oral Information

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Parents also mentioned several times that they had received verbal information at meetings organized by the Red Cross centers, incorporating the various elements of the information leaflet but also more practical information on specific schooling sites for children, trips, teachers (who sometimes move and attend this meeting).

Interpreters are present at these meetings for parents to ask questions even if they do not master French.

One objective of these meetings is to emphasize the fact that school is compulsory, to note how important it is that parents get involved in the schooling of their children and also helps explain why some children are "downgraded" from the level of the class in which they are oriented here in Belgium when it does not match the level in which children were educated in their country of origin. Parents interviewed expressed gratitude for the centers' school referents that organize and host these meetings and stressed that the information disseminated had been very useful to them.

For parents and students met that are not in reception centers, particularly the Europeans (Hungarian, Portuguese, Romanian), all stressed the fact that in schools, information was given to them by the administrative staff or the lead teachers. Information generally involved a brief explanation of the school system, registration procedures, the documents required to start the complex administrative procedure of recognition of diplomas.

Sometimes a staff member acted as interpreter. The visit of the premises is also generally held to help young people discover the environment in which they will now evolve.

### 3. Importance of a Trusting Relationship

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In most interviews, we found that the parents or the kids got generally stressed or anxious, the importance of this solemn moment of the enrollment procedure being more or less important according to families, their path and generally the educational level of parents.

The interview with those responsible for bridging classes, which according to respondents, takes 30 minutes to 1 hour depending on the schools, in the presence or not of the centers' school referents depending on whether the family resides in the center or not, allowed to establish very quickly trust.

Interviewees repeatedly have noted the "kindness" of those who conducted the registration interview, the "understanding" that they have shown, the "welcome", the "perfect reception" that they received. Parents have used the terms "cool", "casual", "pleasant" to describe the class leaders who have received them and the words "happy", "relieved", "satisfied", "reassured" to describe their feelings during and after the first registration interview.

They explained that sometimes in the absence of a school referent, and with comprehension difficulties related to non-mastery of the language of the host country, the language of hands was used and was sufficient to understand approximately, demystify also the moment and promote laughter and closeness.

#### 4. What could have been improved at the time of school entry

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For all, whether European nationals or third country nationals, only 15% of the respondents have had a presentation of the entire educational team. 10% of parents did not seem particularly concerned about their child's schooling. The remaining 75% have meanwhile expressed they would like **to meet earlier during the year the teaching staff**.

Then 40% of respondents appeared not to have understood **the system of bridging classes** in which their child is found. An explanation is not always provided in the centers or to persons not residing in the center, an information session earlier in the year with the teaching staff (as it is held by some schools and centers) would be a useful approach to improve information for parents.

The information provided during the interview and registration may require the presence of **translators** to avoid as expressed by some parents "misunderstandings" or "incomprehension" and "doubts".

**Simplifying the procedure for equivalence of diplomas** for those who are not in the center is a question that came up repeatedly since the procedure, very expensive, is also very complex. It requires finding an interpreter, to go to trial court to legalize documents, contact the Department of equivalences. Some parents have told us that if they had been French speaking, this would have been easier, but not being French speaking, if they had not received the assistance of the institution, they would have encountered many difficulties.

**The problem of the distance between the place of accommodation and the school** for some children and parents whose school is located more than one hour and a half drive from the center where they are housed has been raised by several families interviewed in center east of Wallonia and in the center of southern Wallonia near the French border. This distance requires children to get up early (5am), it tires them and it is a source of anxiety for parents. Finally, the bus schedule is not appropriate despite repeated requests to the transport company. It forces young people sometimes to wait more than one hour and a half in front of the school before returning to the center, and similarly for parents who go fetch younger children in school. The reasons for such a distance in some cases can be explained by the fact that schools much closer to the centers have refused to open a transitional class for these young migrants forcing them to go where appropriate reception facilities are already in place. Some parents expressed a great misunderstanding about the reason that prevented their children from attending school in the nearby cities close to reception centers and some school referents were echoed in a latent claim to allow any young to study in Belgium in terms of acceptable distance that leaves the department heads compels institutions to open transitional classes in cities close to the reception centers.

Asylum seeker families waiting for the bus to go to school



## Early morning departure from the center



### 5. What has been positively identified by parents and children

90% of RET parents from centers have insisted that the entire registration and equivalence process is supported by the center and the school which eases the parents from administrative procedures sometimes laborious.

**The feeling of ease** was shared by many interviewees as yet it is important to say that the procedure is complex even tortuous. The specific support enjoyed by residents of the centers can therefore facilitate the registration process and entering school as much as it gives confidence to the family.

60% of parents also noted the importance of **free education** in Belgium allowing their children to benefit from an education they would have been excluded for economic reasons in their country of origin.

For DA students accommodated in centers, parents are deeply grateful that all school supplies for their children, lunch packs, field trips and school trips are free of charge and fully supported by the Red Cross and the school. This solidarity system established by the centers is commendable but we must note here that not all not DA migrant students such as the young Romanian or Portuguese whom we met were without financial resources and did not benefit from these advantages.

## Distribution of educational materials and lunch packs in a Red Cross center



**Education** is also considered **quality** education. A Syrian parent insisted that "Here, school gives the desire to learn. Outings and field trips make the school attractive. "To this he adds that teachers talk "nicely" to children.

Like other parents, a mother explains that her Guinean child here is less afraid to talk because he will not "be whipped". The **absence of physical abuse** on children at school in Belgium has been raised as positive by 5 parents from Africa. Although some people find the discipline can be a little "lax" in Belgium, they all agree, however, to say that their children are here in better conditions to study because they are not likely to receive corporal punishment.

In general, even if EU nationals do not benefit from specific support reserved for residents of the centers, it is noteworthy that 85% of respondents expressed being "**well received**" at school and they were able to meet the teachers whenever necessary or ask questions.

## At School

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## 1. Importance of learning the language of the home country

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Most students surveyed were in transitional classes. The transitional class is a training structure to ensure the reception, orientation and optimal integration of newly arrived students in basic or secondary education. As the newly arrived students need specific training, skills covered by the bridging class derogate from the bases of ordinary skill and priority is mainly focused on mastering the French language which remains the major obstacle to the conduct of a successful school career. The program centers on intensive learning of French and a refresher course tailored for the student to reach as quickly as possible in mainstream education.

The time range must include at least 15 periods a week devoted to humanities, including the intensive learning of French, and at least eight periods a week devoted to mathematical and scientific training but there is no specific program for bridging-classes.

Transitional classes, organized or subsidized by the French Community, are organized in a limited number of schools that, after submitting a request to create this type of structure, have obtained government authorization.

The problem of localization and distribution of bridging classes was raised by many teachers as part of the previous phase of the project and is also highlighted in interviews with parents and children. Indeed, in the Walloon Region as the opening of a transitional class is linked to a nearby refugee center, major cities like Liege, Charleroi and La Louviere have no or few bridging classes even though they have a large expatriate population and many children PA but not residing in reception centers for DA. The other reason of the failure to initiate bridging classes may also be linked, as we mentioned earlier, to the refusal of some principals to request the opening of a transitional class when a reception center opens nearby for fear of having to accept, as explained by the school referent, "too many foreigners at once."

All newly arrived children have not access to transitional classes. Thus, as pointed out by the coordinator in charge of education for the reception centers of the Red Cross in Belgium, children from third countries not recognized by the OECD as developing countries or those whose parents are not officially asylum seekers or refugees are denied registration regardless of their needs. The restrictive definition of criteria for access to transitional classes creates an inequity in terms of nationality. We also noted this inequity with students EU nationals (e.g. Portugal, Hungary ...). According to the school where the student registers, the teaching team with the support of the school principal will decide to allow the student to follow courses in the bridging class even if he does not meet the conditions of entry. His official registration will be made in the regular classroom. However, in other institutions, an EU national student with the same difficulties of understanding and command of the French language will be included in regular classroom.

It should be noted that 20% of the students interviewed on learning French and their progress believe that immersion in a regular class certainly should allow them to make more rapid progress in French than being in bridging class.

## 2. Importance of formative assessment

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By focusing on methods used in schools, we found a strong propensity for formative rather than summative assessment as part of pupils in bridging classes. Students and parents interviewed reported that indeed the annotations or marks awarded by teachers as a result of a test or work were part of a certain regulation of the training process rather than simply checking the achievement of a certain level of training.

Of course, enrolling in a school setting well-defined, the evaluation should be summative in that it still must determine whether the student has learned or not all knowledge, theoretical knowledge, methodological or practical, targeted by the school. But for students enrolled in bridging classes, from the testimony of students and parents gathered, teachers are very interested in the learning process of the child. They try to guide the student in his work. To this end they collect information about the difficulties of student learning (previous school career, family background, etc.). This information is interpreted to identify the probable causes of the difficulties and try to fit in better education and the various aids to facilitate student learning.

Formative assessment can thus be characterized by a cycle: finding difficulties, interpretation and remediation. We noticed that sometimes this cycle was longer in some schools than others.

Some teachers, in an educational sequence, will note a difficulty in the student, and analyze it immediately, in the process, do something about it. In other schools including those in close contact with the school referents of the centers, we found that the teaching staff conduct more systematic analysis of students' difficulties, placing them in situations specially developed for this effect, and derive from this analysis educational information that will be implemented later.

Summative assessments can, under certain conditions, fulfill a formative function; this is the case of language tests carried out at registration in bridging classes in secondary schools where we conducted focus groups. It may be noted that formative assessment, in a sense, rehabilitates the error, balances social inequality and overcomes the trauma of exile for some young people who appreciate that:

*"The teacher takes time to explain."*  
**Afghan Student**

*"When I could not succeed in doing the exercise, the teacher explained to me quietly why I did not succeed»."*  
**Chechen student**

*When we have made progress, everyone applauds in the classroom and it's a small victory»."*  
**Italian student of Moroccan descent**

*"As I did not speak French, we discussed my history if I had been to school before or not, where were my parents and they made me change group for me to better follow»."*  
**Algerian student**

*"At school in my home country, if children do not understand, well too bad for them. Here it is different; teachers try to teach things to our children and if they do not understand, they come next to them and they explain again the exercise. "*  
**Congolese Dad**

### 3. Importance of monitoring and after- school support

To fix the concepts learned in school, to give occupation to children after school (especially for those residing in reception centers), to address some gaps in students, some parents and pupils emphasized the importance to benefit from after school support and monitoring.

For some young people living in shelters, tutoring after school exists and is organized by the school referents through the contribution of adult residents, former teachers in their home countries for example, who provide support to school children through community service<sup>4</sup>.

Some young people residing in other centers or non-DA believe that additional French courses after school would be beneficial but they do not know where to go and they regret that no specific information on the subject is given by school.

A couple of Congolese parents also noted that after school monitoring also allows the child to develop independence, to learn the effort, to encourage personal research and to prepare for school activities.

Each interview revealed the need for support outside the school for these young people in exile, but it is clear that the existence of such support "after school" is still very poorly developed or when it exists in the locality of residence of the child, the information it is not necessarily given. However, parents, children and teachers recognize the need for monitoring and after school support.

### 4. Importance of parental involvement in schooling

The family appeared to us throughout the focus group as a key factor in the relationship between child and school and for the academic success of the student.

In 90% of parents interviewed, we found high hopes in the school for the future of their child which is sometimes the reason for their migration as we were told by a Salvadorian family.

The parents we interviewed are investing heavily in monitoring the education of their children and demonstrate a strong commitment to academic success, even though, in some cases, parents themselves never went to school and do not master the language of the host country.

In each of the three schools observed, briefings at the beginning of the school year and parent / teachers conferences which follow them in the first quarter, are quite busy even though their organizational arrangements are not always ideal (schools far from the centers, lack of interpreters, ...).

Some parents, as witnessed a Hungarian mother, in addition to a commitment to the academic success of her own children, there is also a commitment to the school and to its social mission.

We also noticed a slight under-investment of parents in the schooling of daughters compared to that of sons if we take into account, in addition to monitoring duties, the active control of school work or participation in the choice of options and orientation process. However this finding must be qualified by the degree of training of parents themselves, places of residence, socio-cultural capital of parents.

Educational practices of families (monitoring of homework, meeting with teachers, follow-up guidance, questions regarding the course of the school day), were particularly interesting and informative. To ask parents about their interest in their children's school and their educational practices has allowed us to outline a sociological approach of the involvement of parents according to their profiles (socio-cultural backgrounds of origin, family composition, parents married/separated, children female/male, and e.g.). The degree and especially the patterns of parental

<sup>4</sup> In reception centers, residents participate in the life of the center and perform multiple tasks (housekeeping, meals, gardening, repairs ...) in return for financial remuneration.

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investment vary as a function of social class of the families: parents whose social status was high in the country of origin are more likely to participate in the schooling and play an educational role (proofreading, explanations, and monitoring homework).

We also note that the socio-cultural inequalities can be emphasized, firstly, because of the distance between the culture of some families and that of the school (e.g. families of Chechnya or Somalia are less involved than Congolese families from a former Belgian colony whose school system is still nowadays rather similar ) and, secondly, the inequality of skills developed within families (some people were lawyers or journalists in their country of origin, others have never attended school and had to "stay home and wear the veil" as explained by one respondent mother).

We tried using the comments gathered during the focus group to distinguish parents according to their involvement in their children's education and we see that, just as for native parents, five categories can be highlighted according to the type of J. -P. Quail<sup>5</sup> with nevertheless a slight over-representation of the "attentive " parents because of difficulties due to language and vision strongly linked to the exile which consider that school and academic achievement represent the way out.

- The absent: they do not provide homework help and do not care about the education of their children.
- The self-effacing: they offer irregular assistance to children and are absent in other areas related to education.
- The attentive: they rarely intervene directly with their child with homework but show a strong interest in monitoring their schooling.
- The hard-working: whose support is relatively intense because monitoring of homework and discussions on schooling are daily.
- The motivated: they give time to help with school work, and for relations with teachers, they also seek to create a home environment conducive to education.

Contrary to the preconceived idea that wants that migrant parents are regarded as «resigned" with regards to the education of children due to multiple causes (apprehension related to their cultural level, to their own school past, the language barrier, feelings of worthlessness ...) we instead observed in the majority of respondents a general investment of parents in the education of their children.

However, this investment or willingness to invest is not easy in some cases because it assumes a shared knowledge of the rules governing education in Belgium. However, parents are faced with a real opacity of the education system whose organization is very complex, which has its language and its uses and bears too little attention to the quality of communication even though tremendous efforts are made by the centers and the educational teams, the fact remains that harmonization and political impetus are needed.

## Extracts from focus groups – parents' involvement

*"I help with homework at night, I attend parents/teachers conferences  
I know the teachers. "*  
**Syrian dad**

*"I'm involved but I'm having trouble myself to write in French so it's hard to help my son with homework,  
he would need support classes. "*  
**Romanian dad**

*"I help my kids after school but my son needs tutoring and psychological support  
because he doesn't live well the exile and the uprooting.  
I can meet with teachers if necessary, even if I finish work late;  
they find an arrangement with me. "*  
**Portuguese mom**

<sup>5</sup> Quail JP, "Forms of parental involvement and academic difficulties in school", Education and Training, n°. 36-1993, pp. 35-45.

*"I came with my father to enroll and he is very attentive.  
He monitors my homework and my progress. "*  
**Greek Student**

*"My parents read my report cards and check every day my class agenda.  
We discuss at home about what I am going to do next year;  
they encourage me and watch my progress".*  
**Italian student of Moroccan descent**

*"We fled El Salvador to come here so my children can attend school without fear and  
they can have a good job later.  
Because in Salvador, in their school, students and teachers were killed. Here it is more secure. "*  
**Salvadoran mom**

*"My son is very gifted. He wants to become a lawyer, that's fine.  
I read all his report cards and ask him questions. "*  
**Armenian mom**

*"My daughters never went to school in Somalia.  
Here I met the teachers with the school referent.  
I'm happy because the school is good and  
it will allow my daughters to get ahead in life, to evolve and have a good job. "*  
**Somali mom**

*"I am very attentive to my daughter's progress; I monitor her and  
I ask help from another resident when I cannot help her.  
I prefer school here because in Guinea there is no school mixity, and girls must wear the veil.  
Here I am happy to find out what my daughter has learned in school at the end of the day and  
I am happy to take her to school in the morning "*  
**Guinean mom**

## **After School: What prospects for the future?**

Overall, most parents agree that school in Belgium reserves a better future for their children. For some, it is even the first cause of exile.

*"I came to Belgium to offer my daughter a better future. I left everything there: my job, my house and even my oldest son, a psychologist ...unemployed "* a Romanian Mom told us sadly.

If they are a majority to place their hopes in our school system, it is clear that there is a large gap between the aspirations of parents about the academic and social success of their children (career as a lawyer, a doctor and others) and the reality with its share of institutional and administrative problems that have too often resulted in the containment and the relegation of these children in vocational programs (the famous third professional) or differentiated classrooms where children with low grades are grouped, students who failed to obtain their CEB (Basic education certificate).



**ARCKA**

“Assessing, recognizing competences and certifying knowledge acquisition valuing human capital of children of foreign origin in education and training in Europe”  
Project Number: HOME/2009/EIFX/CA/1880 - Project co-financed under the European Integration Fund



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The school as a vehicle for upward social mobility of the working classes in the last century for our parents and grandparents carries the same hopes in the eyes of migrant parents. They believe in its virtues. But does school in Belgium still permit it at a time when we denounce the divisions between schools for the rich and for the poor and the lack of social mix to achieve these aspirations?

Judging by the testimonies, it is feared that the gap between the objectives and the ability to realize them does not always reflect reality.

## Conclusion

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Trying to understand the difficulties on the intake, assessment, recognition of skills, knowledge acquisition, monitoring, support and guidance to foster human capital of children of foreign origin in the education and training in French speaking Belgium through the comments gathered during the focus group was an arduous task as the life courses are multiple.

We tried to focus our analysis on the testimonies taking into consideration:

- The heterogeneity of the target audience both in terms of nationalities, of residence status, levels of training, education, ages and languages spoken.
- The real needs for both the parents and the children: the need for host, for comprehensive and rigorous information on educational, legal or social matters, the need for confidence building from the first steps in the school, the need to benefit from intensive French lessons and after school tutoring, the need to be heard, understood, supported, advised, guided, and the need to engage in a training that matches their interests and skills, the need for future prospects despite exile.

In view of the various testimonies collected during this final empirical research with children and parents, it is clear that some "good" practices identified in the course of the previous phase of the project can be considered true qualitative paths of integration which place more value on the human capital of young people and promote parental involvement in their children's schooling. These practices are cumulative and transferable to other countries, whether it is the Red Cross information booklet for parents, the welcome notebook, the individual learning plan or the guidance counseling.

It is now possible to draw a number of points of views, and propose a set of recommendations.

It is essential to develop in schools **a culture of openness and hospitality towards migrant parents** (speaking spaces, "parents' room", meeting places, and interpreters). Indeed, if the handing of quarterly report cards is an opportunity for parents and teachers to meet that encourages a moment of mutual exchange, it also implies a reflection on the reception conditions of the parents.

It is also perfectly legitimate for parents of migrant students to have **the most complete information** including when it touches on issues of teaching methods and programs on the education of their children. We cannot expect from the parents a valuation of the school within the family, monitoring of school work and attention to the demands of school, if they are kept away from information that would precisely able them to insure it.

Particular attention will have to be paid to the **concerted choice of communication modalities**. Whatever the choices made (the traditional report cards with grades and the comments in the class agenda) the school principal must ensure that all parents can have in easily understandable way essential elements allowing them to support the education of their children.

**The practicalities of transport and distance** between places of residence and school locations also deserve consideration at the political level, locally and nationally to avoid situations reported (3h bus to go to and from school).

An **after- school support system** for migrant children, whether they are EU nationals or third country, should be promoted by public authorities as part of discussions between centers, schools and community networks .

## Annex 1

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The schooling operation of a center for asylum seekers:  
The case of the Red Cross Center in Bierset, Wallonia, Belgium  
(750 residents including 55 school children)

**School referents and their functions:**

- Jennifer: relationship with schools and management of school meals.
- Morgan: encoding, statistical and management of meals at the center.
- Julie: transport management.
- Nathalie: schooling stock management, display and planning of permanence

**Summary of school children and schools:**

- 17 children in three preschools (Saint Joseph, Saint - Etienne and the local school fields in Grace - Hollogne)
- 21 children in two different primary schools (Saint - Saint Joseph - Thanks to Etienne - Hollogne)
- 2 children in special education (Free Beavers in Liege).
- 10 children in bridging classes (school de Beauvoir in Liège)
- 5 children in secondary school in de Beauvoir in Liege.

**Summary record of the school - center relationship:**

- Good communication in general.
- Participation in school meetings with school faculty and referents.
- Discussion with the children, parents and teachers at birthday parties, carnivals, egg hunt, Saint-Nicolas ...

**Operation of the schooling at the Centre:**

- Distribution of snacks for the week every Sunday afternoon.
- Permanence school on Tuesdays and Fridays from 12h to 13h. Distribution of bus tickets for parents who accompany their children in primary and nursery.
- Replenishment of school supplies.
- Exchange of information supplied by the school for various activities.
- Documents to be completed for non-French speakers

**Meetings of school Referents:**

- The referents are trying to meet every 15 days with the assistant who supervises education for a follow-up.
- Communications between referents through Outlook.
- During village meetings, information to other staff members of the decisions taken