



# Action for Inclusion in Europe City Working Groups

Research Paper 5

Lessons Learned Report:  
Education City Working  
Group

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## Contents

1. Introduction .....	1
2. The selection of cities.....	2
3. What we learnt from the research.....	5
4. Lessons learnt about the topic through the process .....	7
5. Challenges of the projects:.....	9
7. Conclusion: What have we learned from the Action for Inclusion Project on migrant parental engagement?.....	11
8. References.....	12

## 1. Introduction

The education strand of the Action for Inclusion Initiative brought together COMPAS researchers with senior officials responsible for education in six different European cities to consider their responses around parental engagement in schools, particularly for groups at risk of exclusion. This is an important topic, since recent decades have seen unprecedented levels of migration and more population diversity within European cities, provoking new opportunities and challenges for educational institutions in receiving migrant pupils. However, while some immigrant children or children with parents of an immigrant background equal or exceed the performance of those born in the country, others (particularly those from less developed non-European countries) perform worse than those born in the receiving European country (Heath, Rothon and Kilpi 2008) and are overrepresented in figures on early school leaving (see Borgna and Contini 2014). Those lower attaining young people who leave school early are likely to experience poorer longer term integration outcomes and fewer opportunities for post-compulsory education or employment (see Eurostat 2016, evidence on education).

Overcoming these difficulties is particularly pressing in urban areas and particularly for large European cities, where some immigrant-origin children form the majority of students (e.g. see Crul and Doornik 2003). Within the wider educational research literature, it is recognised that home-school cooperation has an important role to play in improving attainment, with families recognized as having great influence on student attendance and engagement (Epstein and Sheldon 2002). As such, engaging migrant parents is a policy priority.

Within the Action for Inclusion group, we provided research evidence on the topic and asked officials in city or municipal level policy and practice to share their own experiences of encouraging parental involvement in young people's education. They were asked to identify barriers that inhibited positive home-community-school collaboration and plan some form of tangible reform in their cities. The focus of reform was envisaged as flexible; it could involve developing new programmes or mean adapting existing strategies or content of programmes, or it might involve planning strategic approaches within municipalities to win support and develop resourcing for these initiatives. Throughout meetings, we shared peer feedback on the plans, offering constructive criticism and shared resources among participants. As a result of the collaborative process, we are sharing the examples of the city plans to improve parental involvement with other European cities in order to seek better results for pupils at risk of educational exclusion. These plans, in their entirety can be seen here: [www.compas.ox.ac.uk/project/action-for-inclusion-in-europe/](http://www.compas.ox.ac.uk/project/action-for-inclusion-in-europe/).

The aim of this particular report is to summarise the collective experience of working with senior staff across the six cities involved in the education group as they developed their reforms in the area of migrant parental engagement. It aims to reflect on the experience of the process and summarise some issues that arose from the research scoping and practice in shaping city-level interventions. The report aims to consider the extent to which, within this process, the cities were successful and explain some of the future plans emerging from the initiative.

## 2. The selection of cities

The *Action for Inclusion* project sought to engage cities that were at various stages of development in their work in the field of parental engagement with migrant families and implement an action plan for change. A call for places was advertised through various networks (including Eurocities, Sirius etc.) and personal contacts. Cities were invited to submit applications explaining the city background and their interest and experience in the topic. Cities were selected in a competitive process, using criteria for selection based upon not only quality of application, but other factors, including the size of city, range of experience (from well-established practices to fledgling ones), a range of practices (to include different types of initiatives) and geographical spread, although quality was considered more important than spread. Based on these criteria, we selected a range of cities, from a small, rapidly growing city (250,000 inhabitants) to two medium sized (c.5-600,000) and two larger cities (1.1 and 1.8 million). All cities have some history of migrant settlement, but some are facing particular challenges from new migration streams, particularly from Eastern Europe. The cities chosen offered different practices, states of development, experience with migrant populations and offered strong applications with senior buy-in attached to the proposals.

On this basis, the following cities, representatives and practices were chosen:

### 1. Antwerp, Belgium

Participant: Pat Kussé, Head of Community Schooling, Dept. of Education Policy, City of Antwerp

**City background:** Antwerp is a harbour city with 516,000 inhabitants, of which 60% of the 61,000 school-aged children are non-native (Dutch) language speakers, speaking a combined 170 languages at home. Schools in the city face problematic rates of early school leaving (28% compared to Flemish national average of 14%) and many young people are leaving school with poor qualifications. Work around educational policy in the city considers parental engagement one of the key means to improve retention; since the early 1990s, the city funded NGO work on parental engagement and intercultural mediation, restructuring in 2003 to become *the Schoolbridge*, an organisation focused on school teams working with parents.

**Action plan:** Antwerp built upon its existing structure of a stakeholders meeting on parental involvement (called the Prevent group, aimed at using parental engagement to address early school leaving) to plan for a Parents' Day in October 2016 for secondary schools. This initiative grew out of a former initiative held in primary schools to the secondary level where there is lesser positive involvement (see Oliver 2016). Working in collaboration with the creative department and following a focusgroup with parents, schools will be equipped with promotional materials to run their own local initiatives based upon the theme, 'Involved parents: everybody wins'.

### 2. Birmingham, England

Participant: Emma Leaman, Head of Education and Skills Infrastructure, Birmingham City Council

**City background:** Birmingham is the second largest city in England, with an urban population of 1.1million. The population is super-diverse, with 42% non-white residents (e.g. 13% Asian, 9% black) with a mix of established minorities and newer migration streams, with almost 44% of the foreign-born population resident in the UK for less than 10 years and 42% of pupils (66,000 in total) having

English as an Additional Language. The population is 'young' with a rapidly increasing school-age population, with over 10,000 new school places provided since 2010. The city is developing an English as Additional Language toolkit, a new parental engagement module and the use of schools as community sites, to support its existing *Think Family* whole-family approach to supporting vulnerable young people. This work was anticipated to feed into a new school-led improvement model, the *Birmingham Education Partnership* as part of a redesign of city educational provision.

**Action plan:** Birmingham aimed to develop a more system-wide approach to be used across schools which would introduce a new programme of adult learning classes, with a focus on developing migrant parents' skills and understanding of the school system and processes, to enable them to support their children. They also aimed to develop a toolkit to help schools engage parents of newly arrived children. This activity was to be supported by a partnership board comprising multiple stakeholders (from various parts of the city council and including NGOs, such as *City of Sanctuary*) to develop this programme of work, from early years to post-16.

### **3. Ghent, Belgium**

Participant: Samira Wymeersch, Educational Policy Advisor

**City background:** Ghent is a medium-sized, rapidly-growing city in Flanders, Belgium with a population of 252,333 inhabitants and a younger population structure than the national population, with births increasing by 38% since 1999. Thirty percent of the city population is from a foreign origin, and this is growing due to recent arrivals of new Eastern European citizens, especially from Bulgaria and Slovakia, many of whom are from Roma backgrounds, joining the settled, sizeable population from Turkey. The city has an established track-record in working with parents, particularly through employing 45 school mediators to work within schools to assist vulnerable children.

**Action plan:** Impact measurement of school mediation. Ghent has a long history of supporting parental engagement through mediators which act as 'bridge figures' between home and school. However, there are too few mediators to have in each school, and while there is a good sense that the mediators work, there is little demonstrable evidence capturing the impacts of what they do, nor ways of distinguishing effectiveness. The new system aims to document and increase contact and information-sharing between parents and mediators/teachers. It will create a parental engagement test for schools to help allocate mediators, and develop 'stepping stones' (recommendations, support and guidelines) to assist progression towards better parental engagement.

### **4. Glasgow, Scotland**

Participant: Maria Walker, Head of English as Additional Language and International Education

**City background:** Glasgow is the biggest city in Scotland with nearly 600,000 inhabitants and a fast-growing proportion of minority ethnic residents (15% at 91,622). This proportion has almost doubled since 2001 because of recent EU migration (particularly from Poland, Romania and Slovakia) and its allocation as the only site of dispersal for asylum-seekers in Scotland. Twenty percent of the school population speak English as an Additional Language, again doubling since 2001, with 147 languages spoken in Glasgow's schools. However, the city demonstrates the highest levels of poverty and social deprivation in Scotland, with 33% of children living in poverty and 20% of households with an annual

income of less than £10,000 a year. In responding to some of these issues, the city is acknowledged as a leader of EAL practice, with a particular emphasis on parental engagement, underpinned by a broader early intervention approach aimed at reducing inequalities in childhood.

**Action plan:** the central aim of the action plan was to improve cohesion of existing strategies by a) running an event for practitioners, presenting research findings, examining how the Quality Indicator on parental involvement can be applied to this area, and sharing good practice; b) helping schools work with parents through tailored advice and support from the EAL team; c) encouraging some teachers to improve and develop skills working with parents and develop their own strategies in schools and d) include information on processes of engaging migrant parents on the website and in the literacy strategy.

## **5. Hamburg, Germany**

**Participant:** Angela Kling, the Agency for School Consulting,

**City background:** Hamburg is the second largest city in Germany, with a population of over 1.8 million inhabitants, of which 28% are from a migrant background, with 180 nationalities represented. Within school populations (aged 6-18) almost 50% have migrant origins. The city has an impressive and well-developed range of resources aimed at parental engagement and has achieved demonstrable success in improving school attendance and the numbers of children leaving with qualifications to gain entrance at University. Despite this, the impact of socio-economic disadvantage remains a challenge and improvement in parental engagement is seen as integral to addressing this, especially because many existing school practices, without modifications, reach only majority white and middle-class populations. Training for pre- and in-service teachers is provided by the *Landesinstitut*, an agency of the local board of Education and a service-provider for schools, teachers, school leaders and the board of education. Part of the *Landesinstitut* is the *Agency for School Consulting*, an organisation that oversees some of the teacher training in schools, including a number of parental involvement programmes.

**Action plan:** The *Landesinstitut* offers teacher training, but until recently did not offer qualifications aimed at improving communication and conversation competences of teachers with parents. The action plan involved developing a pilot project to develop a collective qualification on this subject. It secured support through the Joachim Herz Foundation and ran the pilot with five modules in 2 primary schools in 2015-2016, offering workshops on active listening, using case studies and communication in conflict situations. The topic has now become a new priority in the portfolio of the Agency for School Consulting and the new qualification will be offered in the programme and website of the *Landesinstitut* from November 2016,

## **6. Rotterdam, The Netherlands**

**Participant:** Eddie Meijer Senior policy advisor

**City background:** The city of Rotterdam has a population of 625,000 people and has the highest percentage of foreigners from non-industrialised nations in the Netherlands. 47.7% of the population are of non-Dutch origins or have at least one parent born outside the country. There are 80,000 Muslims, constituting 13% of the population, mainly from Morocco and Turkey, while the city is home to the largest Dutch Antillean community and has its own China Town at the (West-)

Kruiskade, close to the central railway station. Rotterdam is also the largest port in Europe, with the harbour particularly important for the city economy. In spite of this, average wages are lower than in the Netherlands as a whole, and unemployment is relatively high (15% Rotterdam, 7% Netherlands). In the city's Education Program "Leren loont!" (learning pays off!) parental involvement is promoted, especially in Rotterdam South, with all schools in disadvantaged areas having staff specially working on parent involvement. At Rotterdam South the city of Rotterdam, a form of parental involvement called '3.0' is promoted in schools where both school and parents work together as equal partners.

**Action plan:** Rotterdam's schools currently use professional mediators but it is often difficult to reach all different nationalities and not all schools are served by such staff. As such, the city aimed to develop, fund and implement a parent-mentor project, where parents are trained to reach out to different parents. They used an existing project in Hamburg as inspiration for the work.

### 3. What we learnt from the research

The review of academic research showed unequivocally the powerful role of parental engagement on student achievement (e.g. see Harriss and Goodall 2008) across all social classes and all ethnic groups (Desforges and Abouchaar 2003). Jeynes' (2003) meta-analysis of 21 studies exploring the impact of parental involvement on the academic achievement of minority children shows that parental involvement has a positive effect on all of the academic variables considered (see also Jeynes 2005, 2007). Recognising that 'parental engagement' is an umbrella term representing a broader cluster of practices, a helpful definition for the purposes of this project refers to: 'parents' work with schools and with their children to benefit the children's educational outcomes and future success' (Hill et al. 2004: 1491). These include roles for parents in taking part in consultations, volunteering in functions and activities, helping pupils with homework, setting academic expectations, enabling extra-curricular activities and offering assistance with school strategizing, as well as being involved in decision-making and community collaboration (Epstein 2001). Parental engagement needs to involve parents' proactive assistance in children's *learning*, not comprise simply (reactive) involvement such as attending meetings<sup>1</sup> (Harris and Goodall 2008). The quality and nature of how parents support learning is the most important factor. Desforges and Abouchaar (2003) explain the most important influence is good parenting practices which 'spontaneously' promote pro-learning attitudes, values and aspirations; parental expectations and style in creating an 'educational oriented ambience' are also shown as most important by Jeynes (2005: 262).

Recent years have seen a broadening of parental engagement to an endeavour that puts schools and parents in partnership and dialogue and which empower parents to participate. The importance of broader community involvement and the critical role of communities, community institutions peers and significant actors outside the formal educational sphere in assisting immigrant parents and helping to improve their children's educational performance is also important (Alba and Holdaway 2013: 261).

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<sup>1</sup> Hence the use of the term 'parental engagement' rather than 'involvement', reflecting this shift in understanding in the nature of home-school relations.

However, it is recognised that there are differing levels of parental engagement with some families identified as 'hard to reach', while the higher the social class of the family, the more likely there is to be positive parental involvement (Harriss and Goodall 2008). Some children of immigrants might be particularly disadvantaged by parents' limited or poor educational experiences in their home country, limited fluency in the dominant language, lower levels of literacy and numeracy and poorer understanding of the ways that schools work. Without access to informed networks they have lesser insider knowledge of which schools to choose and understanding of the longer-term consequences of decisions about schools and curriculum-choice (Alba and Holdaway 2013, Harriss and Goodall 2008). For example, while ability -grouping and tracking increase educational inequalities for all children, this might be more detrimental to migrants' children, since migrants' strategic knowledge about the importance of these early choices for future opportunities is less developed than other parents (ibid.)

In addition, migrant parents might have differing perceptions of invitations for involvement or beliefs about children's intelligence and ability as fixed and innate (Hornby and Lafaele 2011). There may also be tensions raised by disagreement about approaches, for example the use of physical punishment. There may be barriers around costs, lack of time and access to transport, particularly with working and lone parents, while some work in low-waged sectors that involve long and anti-social working hours (Alba and Holdaway 2013) particularly for fathers as public representatives of the family (see Crozier and Davies 2007). This is not helped by the school as a historically structured institution characterised by formality, inflexibility and timetabling that are counterproductive to parent-school relationships (ibid.) Other issues stem from broader problems facing families, including experiences of socio-economic and physical and mental health difficulties (ibid.)

However, focusing only on addressing issues arising from family backgrounds alone perpetuates a deficit model of immigrants whereas others point out the cultural assumptions implicit in the expectation for parental engagement (De Carvalho 2001). Crozier and Davies (2007) point out in their study, 'the parents were [...] set apart and 'othered' as inadequate, deficient or at best just not able to cope.' Research therefore highlights that challenges equally arise from the potentially different agendas, attitudes and language used in the interactions between *parents and teachers*, which academics suggest make the school system – rather than parents - 'hard to reach' which can make encounters adversarial (Reay 1998). Parental engagement is often structured in a way that favours middle-class families, who possess the same cultural knowledge that is valued by schools and possessed by teachers (Reay 1998). Often parental involvement is aimed at parents as a homogeneous, deracialised body, in a 'one-size fits all' approach (Crozier 2001) where expectations may inadvertently contribute to *widening*, rather than closing the gap between children achieving well and others who are faring less well (Crozier and Davies 2007).

Other issues arise from understandings of the 'appropriate role' of parents and teachers, where working class parents' experiences lead them to adopt a position of deference to the teachers as qualified 'experts' with superior knowledge (Crozier 1999, Harriss and Goodall 2008). Parents might feel unwelcome in school, which may even be felt as hostile places (Crozier and Davies 2007). Psychological and practical barriers also affect teachers, in particular a lack of confidence in feeling able to work with parents, fear of parental criticism or lack of knowledge of strategies, *time or support* (Walker and Hoover-Dempsey 2008). Finally, another important factor influencing parental engagement is the role of children and young people themselves, who may act as gatekeepers to

school (ibid.) and experience tension in working with parents (Lareau and Shumar 1996, Garcia-Reid et al 2015).

In the research review, we identified existing strategies that have been developed to support parental engagement, including strategies around communication, fostering a supportive climate and philosophy, overcoming problems of location and timing, and engaging with broader actors from the community and family. An important consideration to bear in mind is that while research on the impacts of parental engagement is strong, the research evidence on the impact of *interventions* to encourage parental engagement is rather mixed and not yet so strong. As Jaynes (2005: 240) notes, 'even if parental involvement effectively raises achievement, this does not necessarily mean parental involvement programs work as well'. However, this is rather down to difficulties in providing a strong evidence base of effectiveness rather than weaknesses of programs (Desforges and Abouchaar 2003). Case-studies of initiatives which stem from grassroots associations can be found on the SIRIUS webpage: <http://www.sirius-migrationeducation.org/the-immigrant-contribution-2/> and also see Sacramento (2015). The education strand for the *Action for Inclusion in Europe* initiative aimed to develop further European cities' practices using some of the strategies identified from surveying the topic to overcome the disadvantage and barriers identified in the research review.

#### 4. Lessons learnt about the topic through the process

The action plans within the Action for Inclusion project build on some of the key elements identified in the studies referred to in the previous section. In particular, the projects develop strategies that notably contribute to:

##### Improved communication and dismantling power imbalances between home and school

- **Rotterdam's** new approach to training parent-volunteers as school mentors recognises that using professionals as the sole school mediators can have limitations, particularly in terms of being able to reach out to a diverse school body. Existing professionals might not be able to reach the range of different migrant actors, or could be limited in terms of capacity since not all schools could have professional actors involved (this was also the case in **Ghent**). The aim of Rotterdam's strategy to use parent-volunteers has a dual function in improving communication but also empowering and skilling parents, overcoming some of the psychological barriers and distance between parents and teachers and adjusting some of the power imbalances between parents and teachers identified in the research.
- **Hamburg** introduced a novel training qualification aimed at improving communication and intercultural skills, aimed at both teachers *and* parents. This is essential in overcoming prejudices and power imbalances, enabling insight into the different perspectives of both parties, fostering skills of 'active listening' and improving communication between parents and teachers. The intervention aims to empower parents, enables them to engage with schools as dominant institutions on a more equal footing and encourages mutual respect rather than fear, distance and hostility, which can create negative and adversarial encounters.

- **Glasgow's** strategy provides a more advisory and consultancy service rather than a common 'one-sized all' programme used across the schools. One of their positive stories came from a school where they themselves created a more bespoke service to parents, providing information on things they wanted to know about. Initially this involved consulting with parents, then developing workshops supported by senior pupils and interpreters on topics e.g. the curriculum, subject choices and post-school options.
- Improving communication also underpinned **Birmingham's** strategy, with adult literacy and the skills of the whole family targeted, rather than just migrant pupils in schools, as a way of empowering and developing skills in the wider family.

### Creating a supportive environment

- **Antwerp's** initiative to develop 'Parents' day' in secondary school aims to send a positive message to parents that schools, teachers and their children need them and appreciate their work in supporting children. They faced some challenges in creating a positive message that would work for parents of secondary schools, but have overcome this by engaging creative input so the message could be well designed and appeal to pupils at this age. The project is less common in extending their work to secondary schools, since most initiatives on parental engagement are aimed at the primary level where there is more daily contact and opportunities for interactions (see Oliver 2016).

### Engaging young people themselves

- One of the less well researched areas is the extent to which young people affect the role of parental engagement. Since **Antwerp** is introducing their scheme of parents' day to secondary schools in a bid to improve engagement at this level (rather than having contact on the basis of behaviour management etc. which is more common) it will be very interesting to see how this is received at a level where young people are more consciously involved. The city has planned that students will participate in the promotion of parents' day, but this is something of an experiment.

### Assessing the success of interventions

- **Ghent** aimed to develop a clearer understanding of the impacts of school mediation, as well as to develop new methodologies and criteria for having school mediation figures in places where it really works and can benefit the most pupils. They developed a registration system for mediators, linked to an action plan, although there may be some challenges in refining this process to make it less 'heavy' for mediators.

None of our projects explicitly experimented with some of the issues identified in the research review around location and timing of school events, or on engaging other community members in home-school engagement.

While many of the initiatives connected well and confirmed some of the issues corresponding to the research, the working groups also grappled with other issues that are less considered in the research, but proved very important to the success of any of these approaches. In particular:

## Embedding, sharing and joining up practice

- **Glasgow** recognised that many individual schools might be making very good progress in their operational work with migrant families, but this was not being shared with the city schools as a whole. The aim of their strategy was not necessarily about developing new approaches, but rather developing a more cohesive approach across the city. This was also a key element in **Birmingham**, where individual schools might have well developed approaches, but this was not shared evenly in a system-wide approach. An interesting aspect to consider more broadly beyond the project is the extent to which different regulatory frameworks as a driver of change can be used to influence work in this area (e.g. see **Glasgow**) in schools (or not) with **Ghent** adopting assessment of existing school practice into its work.

## 5. Challenges of the projects:

The action plans are still at a relatively early stage of implementation, so it is difficult to assess 'success' as such. However, even in these early stages, there have been several challenges experienced by those managing the projects that have changed the course of the work, or influenced their outcomes in some way. These factors are explained as follows:

### Reception within existing structures

As **Rotterdam** noticed, the announcement of their project created some discomfort among existing professional mediators, since their role may have felt threatened. However, this was mitigated by involving the mediators in the planning of the pilot. This is something to be monitored however, since the implementation of a new system may have effects on existing and well-functioning relationships.

### Multiple actors

**Birmingham's** project has come under pressure because of the multiple actors involved in the project. The project was disappointed by the lack of engagement from the Birmingham Educational Partnership, which was unable to commit at that time because they were just starting up and developing their own line of work in setting up school partnerships for school improvement. Furthermore, staffing changes in Adult Education, which have meant a significant delay to progress and potential loss of confidence in the approach by schools who were expecting to be developing a new course with them. The schools are currently being followed up (as of April 2016) but there remains a challenge between those running this work at a strategic level and having different actors working consistently in the more operational work, making sure that the message gets down to the right people within schools. On a more positive note, the initiative has had positive spin-offs for some schools in having more engagement with multiple actors, including Adult Education and Libraries, although this has not, as yet translated into a more system-wide approach.

**Rotterdam** struggled with some conflicts between different NGOs who were contracted to deliver parts of their project. This was compounded by the disgruntled professional mediators who then also, in creating alliances with one of the NGOs might have created more disruption. It is important onus on them in the future as commissioners of the work to make clear who is in charge, as well as

to use the existing relationships and structures in the project implementation to help to minimise these tensions.

In **Ghent**, the challenge was the opposite in the sense that they had clear actors - the mediators - who could, in contrast become *the* 'go-to' figure, but this meant that parental engagement became only 'their' topic. This meant they, as bridging figures become *de facto* the persons responsible for anything involving parents and vulnerable pupils, rather than having the work structurally embedded in the school, with senior staff as co-owners.

### Timing

The development, planning and funding arrangements of new initiatives take time to organise before implementation can take place within a school year. This means that many of the projects are in mid-phase of the planning process, rather than in implementation at this stage, or might have been disrupted. For example, in **Glasgow**, the literacy strategy and accompanying website is still in the development stage. In **Birmingham**, the process has become delayed because of staffing changes and challenges in working together. In **Rotterdam**, the project was conceived in October 2015, consultation was arranged with NGOs and schools, funds needed to be secured, contracts arranged with main contractors, a pilot run in one secondary school, and parents chosen. If the project works well in this school in 2016-17, it is expected that the project will become live in 2017-18 to other Rotterdam schools, quite some time after it was initially conceived.

### Capacity, staffing, resources and school engagement

Some of the projects have faced difficulties in maintaining contact and interest with the schools, or where schools are interested, they have little time to commit to the initiative. This is the case in **Antwerp** for example, where schools are positive about the initiative but find it difficult to make stakeholder meetings. Likewise, in **Birmingham**, while there was initially much interest in the Adult Education initiative, the reality of schools having to dedicate resources and time to co-designing and delivering adult education courses has been a challenge. The reverse is true in other cases, where the problem is in city level services being able to respond to need at school level. **Glasgow** felt keenly the challenge of trying to build capacity in schools to have the confidence to develop services themselves, and reflected on the tensions between withdrawing support too soon and staying too long so that the support is taken for granted.

However, it is positive that the problem of too little capacity has been seized upon by **Ghent** and **Rotterdam** to deliver better services. In **Ghent**, there are not enough for mediators to have a 'bridge figure' at every school. Therefore Ghent is devising a 'parental engagement test' to work out how far a school is in developing parental engagement, with 'stepping stones' provided to schools, that gives support and tailored advice to schools without mediators. This also means that those who do have bridge figures have more formal recognition of where they are; have to develop a yearly action plan that involves the whole school – and if there is insufficient commitment within the school (as judged by progress on the plan at the end of the year) the mediator may be transferred elsewhere.

### Transferability

Some ideas were embraced to be used in different national contexts. **Rotterdam's** idea was inspired and built on **Hamburg's School Mentors Project** funded by the European Social Fund, which

developed mentors to work from parent to parent, student to student and adult volunteers to students. The Rotterdam adaptation of the project appears to be fitting in well, especially once the existing mediators were brought in as key actors. However, while **Glasgow** was inspired by **Antwerp's** idea of parents' day into Scottish schools, it was seen as non-transferable, with other members of the city council not keen that this would work and potentially counter-productive in the Scottish context.

### **Power and decision-making**

**Rotterdam** faced some challenges in starting up their project, in terms of who was in charge of the project. They noted some tendencies for other stakeholders involved (interestingly not parents or pupils) to sway the projects in ways that they wanted rather than how they envisaged. In **Glasgow**, there was rather a reflection that the EAL team were focusing on parents' role in helping children develop bilingual skills, without necessarily assessing to what extent parents wanted this also.

### **Policy turbulence**

Changes in policy or external circumstances have created both new opportunities and challenges that have arisen in the course of the project which have impacted on progress. In **Hamburg**, the Head of one of the Units in the Ministry of Education had to withdraw from taking forward work in Hamburg due to the pressures from the large numbers of refugees arriving, which could not have been seen at the outset. In **Birmingham**, the shift in the role of the Local Authority and the increased fragmentation of the educational landscape has limited possibilities to get a system-wide approach, especially since the Local authority no longer has the mandate to define and deliver priorities as it once did. In **Glasgow** and Scotland more broadly, rather more positively, there have been new opportunities to take forward and consolidate some of the work, since the Scottish Attainment Challenge directed funds into an Attainment Advisor post for every local authority, which enables new possibilities for embedding parental engagement.

## **6. Future**

Updating on the project will be provided within a year of the project's completion (by June 2017).

## **7. Conclusion: What have we learned from the Action for Inclusion Project on migrant parental engagement?**

The process of working with the city staff has been highly instructive. We applied several of the insights of existing work into development of city-level policy and offered a supportive but also challenging environment to assess and sharpen these ongoing practices. The degree of success of the initiatives has yet to be seen, while the scope and timing of the project has not allowed for any meaningfully deep evaluation of the interventions' successes, others than those operated within the cities themselves – see individual city reports. What has been instructive is the way in which existing capacity (staff, resources) within the educational departments shapes the possibility to drive forward strategic change. Research must consider how these wider educational decision-making and governance structures have a significant role to play - as well as home-school-community factors – in facilitating or impeding change in practice around parental engagement.

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