

## NEW OSD PROJECT STARTED

# OSD Project supports the collaboration of schools and parents with a migrant background

**Teachers' and school managers' skills to collaborate with pupils' parents have been identified as one of the priorities of the European Member States**

### Schools as Learning Communities

Open School Doors project aims at reducing disparities in learning outcomes affecting learners from disadvantaged backgrounds such as migrants.

The project tries to inspire and motivate teachers and school managers for cooperating with parents with a migrant background and creating constructive and sustainable partnerships with them.

Its aim is to train teachers and school principals, so that they acquire positive mindsets and skills that will enable parents' motivation

to get also engaged in schooling. Open School Doors will in fact design a Training Framework after examining the skills, needs, local conditions and obstacles that teachers should be able to deal with in order to engage parents with a migrant background. This Framework aims at qualifying teachers to deal with foreign cultures and their specific features in a sensitive and goal-oriented way. Open School Doors does also launch an innovative approach (on

pedagogic and technical levels) to train teachers (using online tools apart from face-to-face sessions) as well as social networking applications to connect them with the parents of the participating schools' pupils.

The proposed project will also constitute a European wide initiative, targeting a final number of 50 schools from 5 EU countries.

Photo: Monika Skolimowska/Symbol.  
Source: dpa



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## PARTNERS



### TUD, TU Dresden, Germany

<https://tu-dresden.de>

The TU Dresden is one of eleven German universities that were identified by the German government as an 'excellence university'. TUD has about 35.000 students, 4.400 publicly funded staff members – among them over 500 professors – and approximately 3.500 externally funded staff members, and, thus, is the largest university in Saxony, today. TU Dresden is strong in research and provides first-rate programmes with an overwhelming diversity, with close ties to culture, industry and society. Having been committed to sciences and the engineering before the reunification of Germany, TU Dresden now is a multi-discipline university, also offering humanities and social sciences as well as medicine, organized in 14 faculties under the roof of 5 schools, making it one of a very few in Germany



### CTI, Computer Technology Institute and PRESS "Diophantus", Greece

<http://www.cti.gr/en>

The Computer Technology Institute and Press "Diophantus" is a research and technology organization focusing on research and development in Information and Communication Technologies (ICT).

Particular emphasis is placed on education, by developing and

deploying conventional and digital media in education and lifelong learning; publishing printed and electronic educational materials; administrating and managing the Greek School Network; and supporting the organization and operation of the electronic infrastructure of the Greek Ministry of Education, Lifelong Learning and Religious Affairs and all educational units. Since its establishment in 1985, and in the past decades of rapid technological development, CTI has actively contributed to many of the advances that today are taken for granted.



### BCU, Birmingham City University, United Kingdom

<http://www.bcu.ac.uk>

Birmingham City University is a large, diverse, modern University with around 22,000 students drawn from 80 countries. The University has an enviable reputation for providing quality, student-focused education in a professional and friendly environment. Our superb courses, state-of-the-art facilities, first-rate staff, and focus on practical skills and professional relevance is producing some of the country's most employable graduates, with the Sunday Times University Guide 2013 ranking us in the UK top 30 for the proportion of our students entering graduate-level jobs.

The University contributes around £270 million into the regional economy annually and support thousands of jobs in the area. We're investing £180 million in our estate, including a major expansion of our city centre campus at Eastside, providing students with an enviable range of facilities.



### EPA, European Parents' Association

<http://euparents.eu>

The European Parents' Association (EPA) gathers the parents associations in Europe and thus reaches out to more than 150 million parents through its network. EPA works in partnership both to represent and give to parents a powerful voice in the development of policies and decisions at European level affecting the lives of parents and their children. In the field of education, EPA promotes and works for the active participation of parents and the recognition of their central role as the primary educators and those responsible of the education of their children.



### B:O, Bildung Online, Austria

<http://www.bildungonline.at>

BildungOnline (B:O) is a non-profit association, which aims to develop, to promote and to spread a holistic use of IT in schools (educational concept – training concept – equipment- or implementation plan) since about 15 years by organising events, meetings of experts and by taking care of various projects. BildungOnline regards itself as a communicator between different educational institutions, companies and initiatives that deal with the use of IT in schools. This is done at national and international level by good contacts that could be built up in recent years (eg Ministry of Education, school boards, universities and colleges, etc.).

An annual conference and exhibition event “BildungsOnline-international” (education online internationally) to exchange experiences and to present proven solutions in IT in schools in Austria and internationally.



**ELLINOGERMANIKI  
AGOGI**

**EA, Ellinogermaniki Agogi,  
Greece**

<http://www.ea.gr>

Ellinogermaniki Agogi (EA) is an educational organization of private law, officially recognized by the state. Established in 1995, the Research and Development Department of EA provides the test bed for research applications for the design, development and implementation of the research activities in education.

The R&D Department acts therefore as an interface between the pedagogical research, the technological innovation and the school community. It focuses on the design, implementation and support of pedagogical and technological innovations in educational practice, both through internal research, as well as through collaborations with numerous educational, research and commercial institutions in Europe and the world.

## MEETINGS

### OSD kick-off Meeting

The kick-off meeting of OSD (Open School Doors), an Erasmus+ KA2 funded project, took place on November 1st and 2nd, 2017 in Dresden, Germany. It was hosted by the Partner Coordinator TU Dresden (TUD), Germany and counted with the presence of representatives from all the partner organisations: Computer Technology Institute and Press “Diophantus” (CTI), Greece, Birmingham City University (BCU), UK, Ellinogermaniki Agogi School (EA), Greece, European Parents Association (EPA), Belgium and BildungsOnline (B:O), Austria. The attendees convened in Dresden to discuss with the WP leaders both practical details of the project activities and objectives, overview and strategies.

### 2nd project meeting: 6-7 March 2018, Birmingham



## OSD NEWS

### BCU

**Birmingham City University (BCU)** was pleased to welcome *#openschooldoors* school partners to the university on 10th January 2018. BCU has teamed up with Birmingham City of Sanctuary to recruit Schools of Sanctuary to the project. City of Sanctuary is a national movement to build a culture of hospitality for people seeking sanctuary in the UK. Its goal is to create a network of towns and cities throughout the UK which are proud to be places of safety, and which include people seeking sanctuary fully in the life of their communities.

Schools of Sanctuary recognise the contribution of asylum-seekers and refugees to the City of Birmingham, and are committed to welcoming and including asylum-seekers and refugees in our activities. They support Birmingham becoming a recognized City of Sanctuary for refugees and asylum-seekers. More information about City of Sanctuary and Schools of Sanctuary is available on the website

<https://birmingham.cityofsanctuary.org/what-is-a-city-of-sanctuary>.



During the meeting the project aims, objectives and outcomes and the ways in which we hope schools can collaborate on the project were

discussed. BCU hopes to collaborate with the participating school partners on each stage of the project, including the design and development of the teacher education framework.

We look forward to welcoming the #openschooldoors international team to BCU in March and will be working with Flavours, a local School of Sanctuary based social enterprise to find out more about their approach to sharing stories and building relationships through cooking.

Meanwhile are making good use twitter to share updates on our work at #openschooldoors with our wider communities and stakeholders.



## ABOUT US

*Winson Green is a highly multicultural neighbourhood in the heart of Birmingham. Flavours Of Winson Green started when neighbours decided a great way to interact with each other in a fun and friendly environment, was through community meals, sharing stories and recipes with each other. The more we taught and learned from each other, both in cuisine and culture, the more others wanted to join in and learn too!*

*Over years we have developed a team of cooks who represent global cuisine. We have representatives from Senegal, Yemen, Somalia, Gambia, Pakistan, Mauritius, Ghana, India... and the list is growing. So are our appetites!*



## EA

Ellinogermaniki Agogi has added Open School Doors to the Department' webpage on EU projects, which is regularly visited by parents, teachers and European collaborators. At the same time, it has been initiated an intensive search on stakeholders, policy makers, teachers', parents' associations and NGOs on parental engagement/ involvement, with the view to setting the basis for the establishment of a community of interest. Under this perspective it has been created a pool of potential leads, that will be updated, as the project evolves and further activities are organized.

Additionally, EA is looking for synergies with other, currently running, national and EU projects in similar and/or close subject areas, aiming at combining at the most efficient manner both human resources and outreach actions.

Open Schools Doors focus group took place on the 21th of February 2018, from 11.00 - 14.30 in the city center of Athens. It was joint event between the Greek partners (EA and CTI) with a twofold aim of (a) presenting the project rational and outputs, setting thus the basis for the development of a community of interest, and (b) attracting teachers, stakeholders and NGO professional (psychologists, educators, social workers, project coordinators, etc.), that would share their experience from parental engagement/ involvement projects and at the same time express their interest participating in the pilot and implementation phases that will follow.

Almost 20 people attended OSD focus group, among them teachers, school headmasters, phycologists, social workers, sociologists, project

coordinators from NGOs and migrant parents; all attendants had a professional experience handling migrant/ refugee populations in their daily practice; working with migrant pupils at school, trying to establish a relation of trust with their parents, by inviting/ encouraging them to participate in school activities, interacting with refugees' families in camps and/ or other type of infrastructure, they might be hosted, especially in the case of NGO participants: all of them shared their experiences from their interaction with parents or the lack of, identifying the reasons behind this relationship; it was really great that we had three Albanian parents and at the same time teachers of the Albanian language in our meeting. We had the chance to listen their views on integration policies as they shared with us their experiences with their children at school.

Teachers and educators participating in the discussion tables admitted that cooperation with parents might be difficult sometimes, due to various reasons, like work schedules of the parents which often coincides with that of the school, teachers have no particular training, how to handle students with a different ethnic and cultural background, parents do not realize how important they are for their children school career and integration of both to be part of the school community, and language barrier.

All agreed that the potential usage of social networking tools and/or digital tools might be the optimal solution, since parents' workload frequently does not allow them to visit school regularly; however, they stressed that electronic communication could only be complementary to that of F2F, underlining that there should be some physical meeting with parents

first, to get to know each other, and then move to any type of electronic communication/ collaboration. Participants also emphasized the importance of a certain framework for electronic communication; in terms of the tools used, the repertoire of topics that could be handled through them, the issues of privacy, the timeline for receiving and accepting responses, i.e. a set of rules that would be commonly agreed and would guarantee smooth and efficient communication.

As for the tools suggested, emails, SMS, and blogs were initially proposed along with a certain platform, where both parents and teachers could communicate in a safe electronic environment. All agreed that whichever tool was to be suggested, it should be user friendly, i.e. easy to implement, easy to install.

### CTI

CTI “Diophantus” has added Open School Doors to the Directorate of Telematics and Applications for Regional Development webpage under [Erasmus+ projects](#). Moreover, at the beginning of the project lifetime CTI team contacted several bodies and individuals (e.g. NGOs, teachers) who are involved in activities with migrants, with the view to setting the basis for the establishment of a community of interest. Non-governmental organizations such as [CIVIS PLUS](#), [REFUGEEClassAssistance4Teachers](#), [Elix- Volunteering programs](#), [METAdrasi – Action for Migration and Development](#), [EADAP](#), and [School of Mesopotamia](#), have been informed for the Open Doors project its aims and the next steps of the project. Furthermore, representatives from the [Open Schools of Athens](#) and the [Greek](#)

[Forum of Migrants \(GFM\)](#) have been informed for the project. During these communications CTI had the chance to collect some good practices (4) in national level regarding the parental engagement in case of parents with a migrant background. At the same time CTI with EA organizes the national focus group in Athens and the event has been announced through [Greek School Net](#) which is the most popular portal for teachers and parents in Greece and via social media <https://www.scoop.it/t/gredu>.

### B:O

For the focus groups in Austria B:O has organized phone interviews. Some of the interviews were taken in groups and some individual. The project Open School Doors and its aims has been presented to all participants first, and questions about the ways to reach the goals of the project have than been discussed.

The teachers stressed that there are two types of parents: the ones that are deeply involved in schooling activities, like organizing support for their children in form of private lessons when needed, and the parents that just send the children to the school and wanting the children to be educated by schools without involving themselves in schooling.

During the last few years, transitional classes have been established in the schools, classes, which include refugee children, some of them unattended minors. The communication with them and parents is very difficult without a translator. Nevertheless, the parents are eager to contact the school if needed, with just few exceptions.

The children with migration background are integrated in regular classes. There are just few exceptions, where parents are not speaking German fluently.

School inspectors and social workers help the principals, teachers and parents as official representatives, translators, mediators (for example for adolescents coming from opposite war zones), and psychological help in case of deportation.

The parent’s associations are very active in the contacted schools, trying to integrate parents with migrations background or refugees. They organize many parents evening events with help of translators, which are well attended by the parents.

Digital media are used for the communication between school and parents. WhatsApp groups are very common for this kind of communication. In addition, some tools have been developed in Austria, in order to communicate with parents, tools that are supporting many languages. Also, platforms like WebUntis and Intranet supports a better information transfer between school, parents and pupils.

All participants stressed that the language barrier is the main problem for the communication between parents and schools. In most cases of refugees, a translator is needed, which is time and resources consuming. Also, some of the parents with migration background have just a basic knowledge of the language of the hosting country.

The time management seems to be a big problem, since the most of the migrant parents are working and the work schedule coincide with that of

the school. Also, the sense of time seems to be different for the many nationalities, the punctuality is not that important for some of them.

In order to take action for a better communication between schools and parents, trainings would be helpful for teachers as well as for the parents. The training for the parents should be organised with the help of a translator, giving them an insight in the fundamental terms in schooling and social issues in Austria, but also legal information. The teachers should be informed about interpersonal and international issues, for a better and effective communication in both directions.

### EPA

On the occasion of the European Parents' Association's annual conference and general assembly (24/25 November 2017 in Tallinn) there was a focus group discussion feeding into Open School Doors to provide the perspective of organised parents on teacher training needs for better inclusion of parents from disadvantaged backgrounds, especially migrant parents. Participants of the focus group, parent leaders from Austria, Hungary, Italy, Portugal, Norway, Serbia, Slovenia and Sweden, are all active in projects aiming at the inclusion of migrant parents in school and community as well as working with other disadvantaged groups. The goal was to include the experiences from countries that do not participate in the project to support the development of intellectual outputs that are applicable as widely as possible.

The focus group analysed the current status of parental involvement/engagement that greatly differ from country to

country, but still tried to find the common elements, listed barriers and challenges for migrant parents in that can have an effect on their engagement in their children's school, discussed their view on teachers' role in making parents more engaged with their children's school and the desirable relationship between organised parents and teachers in general as it should form the basis of the involvement of those not currently engaged to avoid alienating those already active. There was a strong emphasis on utilising the relationship between school (teachers and parent leaders) and parents in general for supporting the lifelong learning of parents – both for better parenting and their own personal development. There is an agreement that parental engagement should be considered and promoted as an active educator's role and active citizenship.

The parental involvement/engagement is highly dependent on legislative framework and traditions and school culture plays an important role. There is a need to focus on engagement in the learning of children, engagement in the learning of parents and engagement in school as a form of active citizenship. Teachers usually see interaction with parents a burden, especially from lower secondary school up. Teachers' working hours often prevent parents from meeting them and teachers are often reluctant to connect with parents using digital tools. The involvement of newly arrived migrant parents is usually only a reality if organised parents prioritize it.

Barriers and challenges for migrant parents are language barriers as parents often don't speak the

majority language, teachers often only speak that. Also, there is a clash of home and school culture and refugees and migrants are tackled as one block, but they are a hugely diverse group and refugees' traumas are often not taken into consideration. Settling in a new country offers them less flexibility to take time off, school doesn't offer engagement opportunities after working hours. In the case of refugees, parents are often prevented from working by official processes, they are bored, depressed, difficult for them to offer a role model of hard workers to children.

Teachers' role in making parents more engaged with their children's school is building trust, showing respect, being open and curious, introducing the school, their methods, goals, culture and the system to migrant parents, be informed and be a source of information on daily life issues other than school. Open school doors should mean that it is open for teachers to go out of school and meet parents outside, be ready to adjust parental involvement opportunities to family schedules, not pushing for integration, but aim at inclusion also by changing practices, and offer support in mother tongue and mother culture education. Furthermore, to be open to directly engage parents in the teaching practice as a form of lifelong learning for the parents, too. Teachers should manage challenges together with other parents and teachers and pay equal attention to majority parents, special focus on other difficult-to-involve groups and offer opportunities for children and parents to experience the joy of learning together.