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Parents for All

KA2 Strategic Partnership for Innovation in Adult Education

Training material for the development of intercultural skills by parents

Unit 2: Empowering migrant and refugee parents for social inclusion

For migrant and refugee parents in Lithuania – shortened version



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<http://parents4all.eu>

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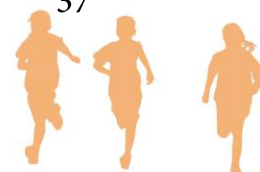


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Training material for the development of intercultural skills by parents

INTRODUCTION TO UNIT 2

Unit 2 of the Parents4All training material aims at the empowerment of migrant and refugee parents (MRP)¹ to integrate successfully in the host society. The four chapters of this unit provide parents with practical information that will help them to cultivate positive attitudes towards integration and obtain a better understanding on how to support the integration process of their children.

More specifically, Chapter 1, *Integration: What it means and what it does not mean*, helps parents understand the difference between integration and assimilation, enabling them to support in a positive way their cultural identity while pursuing integration. Parents will learn to discern between the concepts of multiculturalism and interculturalism, and to analyse their own attitudes and interactions with the host community. This chapter provides parents with resources that will help them to integrate smoothly and contribute to the exchange of cultural richness.

Chapter 2, *Benefits of children experiencing diversity*, introduces parents to the concept of social cohesion. The impact of segregation on the children's identity is explained, as well as the benefits when children grow up in multicultural environments. Parents will be equipped with the

¹ Part of this material may be also useful to parents belonging to ethnic and cultural minorities (ECM). Therefore, the abbreviations MRP and MR/ECMP will be used alternatively in this document.



necessary skills and resources to teach their children about diversity and facilitate their interactions within a diverse environment.

Chapter 3, *Understanding the educational system and the opportunities it offers*, presents the main characteristics of the local education system, as well as the opportunities and paths it offers. A rough outline of the education framework is provided, explaining the role of non-discrimination and education policies, of teachers and parents. This will enable parents to make informed decisions about the educational paths their children will follow, collaborate effectively with school staff, and resolve issues related to their children's education in constructive and culturally appropriate ways.

Chapter 4, *Support of school activities for the development of interculturalism*, introduces parents to the host country's intercultural agenda and the specific provisions available for MR/ECMP. Parents will understand the purpose of specific school activities promoting interculturalism and become more aware of the need for better intercultural understanding in the educational environment of their children. They will learn about practical ways how to collaborate effectively with school staff and other parents in order to promote an intercultural mind set among children.

The learning activities in Unit 2 are structured in the same way as in Unit 1.

After completing the study of the training material parents are given the opportunity to provide their feedback and comments on the training material to the developers of the course.

We sincerely hope that you enjoy this training and you find it useful for better supporting your children!



EXPLANATION OF SYMBOLS

You can distinguish between the different activities in this document looking at the icons next to them:



Theory – information



Think about it



Additional external sources of information



Related video/s



Reflection exercises



Apply what you have learned



CHAPTER 1: INTEGRATION: WHAT IT MEANS AND WHAT IT DOES NOT MEAN

What will I learn?

- In this section you are going to learn about integration – what is meant by it and what is not meant by it.
- You are also going to learn about the benefits of cross-cultural exchange and the ways in which it can enrich your and your family's life.
- You will gain tools that will help you understand your own attitudes and discover ways of actively involving yourself in the broader society.

Why is it important?

Living in a new country does not mean that you need to forget or let go of your own culture and heritage. However, in order to fully prosper in your new surroundings, it is important to think about the ways in which you can be actively involved – and become an active citizen. It is also crucial to be self-aware and to open-mindedly think about your own attitudes and values, and to consider these in comparison to others' (possibly very different!) attitudes and values.





Integration vs assimilation in a society

When a country welcomes new inhabitants – especially migrants – there are different official approaches the state and the government can take towards the new arrivals, and there are different approaches people can take towards migrants in everyday encounters. This section will focus on what is meant by integration and assimilation. Before you read any further, you may want to take a moment and think about what kind of thoughts these words provoke in you:

- Have you heard of assimilation and integration before?
- What do you understand by the terms, or are they completely new to you?
- If you have a sense of what they mean, how does the idea of assimilation and integration make you feel?

The two concepts are often misunderstood and seen as synonymous (meaning the same thing) even when they are not. By the end of this section you should understand the differences between the two.

Assimilation

Assimilation is usually seen as a one-way street: the emphasis is on migrants making changes while locals continue on as usual. Assimilation can be described as:

“...the process whereby outsiders, immigrants, or subordinate groups become indistinguishable within the dominant host society, eventually conforming to the existing cultural norms of society.”²

² Centre for the study of Islam in the UK. <http://sites.cardiff.ac.uk/islamukcentre/rera/online-teaching-resources/muslims-in-britain-online-course/module-4-contemporary-debates/assimilation-vs-integration/>



Therefore, as the picture on the right suggests, everyone is painted with the same brush: the differences between people – be they cultural, linguistic, or related to dress and traditions – are expected to disappear over time.

Assimilation can be felt and experienced by those expected to assimilate as a profound loss of cultural, religious and ethnic identity; that is, a loss of the different things that define us as individuals.



Integration

Integration literally means “joining parts (in) to an entity”. When considering migrants, “*integration involves adding to the existing culture which in turn transforms and enhances society*”.³

Thus, integration is about maintaining identity (and whatever aspects contribute to that identity) while being able to celebrate differences and work with others in the civic society. Integration is perhaps best seen as mutual compromise and a process that requires mutual respect from all parties.



³ Centre for the study of Islam in the UK. <http://sites.cardiff.ac.uk/islamukcentre/rera/online-teaching-resources/muslims-in-britain-online-course/module-4-contemporary-debates/assimilation-vs-integration/>



Integration is a two-way street – it involves efforts from both migrants and locals. Integration is seen to affect different areas of life, and thus you may hear people discussing issues such as social integration and economic integration, for example.

Different countries have different migration histories and different immigration policies. These histories and policies, in turn, often have an effect on what kind of integration strategies the different countries adopt.



Wikipedia article on the '[melting pot](#)' idea

Wikipedia article on [social integration](#)



Soup or salad?

Assimilation is rather like the process of making soup, where the ingredients lose their identity as they are blended together. Integration can be likened to a fruit salad where the individual fruits, with their varying colours and sizes contribute to the beauty of the dish.

- Reflecting on the food metaphor above, can you think of other ways to explain the differences between integration and assimilation?
- Think about your country of origin: what kind of approach does the government/broader society take to migrants in terms of assimilation or integration? Why do you think that is?





Main factors and processes of integration

Integration involves social, cultural and economic and political factors. Whether integration is happening and whether it is successful is measured through looking at different areas of life: here, language, social networks, employment and civic engagement will be considered each in turn.

Language

Having knowledge of the local language will – quite simply – enable easier communication. From visiting the shop to making friends and being employed, social situations will be easier to navigate with knowledge of the local language. Language skills will also enable a better understanding of the local culture (for example: watching news and TV series, reading books and magazines).

Social networks

Social network refers to the connection that migrants build with others in the host society. This may include the number of friends migrants have, or the frequency ('how often') of interaction with friends. It is often considered that having local friends is important in terms of integration to the society.



Employment

Full and fair access to employment is a key factor in integration. As the chief source of income, employment will help newcomers to participate in the society's life in new ways (such as having access to better housing). People are also likely to make new social connections in the workplace.





Civic engagement

Finally, political integration plays a key role in enabling migrants to feel like they have a stake in the society. By making their voices heard, taking an interest in how society works, and participating in the decisions that shape its future, migrants show that they are an integral part of their new country – the very objective of integration. You will learn about other ways of civic engagement later in this chapter.



[European Website on Integration](#)





Rate the integration factors

Using the table below, rate the four factors – language, social networks, employment, and civic engagement – from the most important to the least important to integration. Once you have done this, consider why you decided on this particular order.

Factors	Reasons for the order
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	





Multiculturalism vs interculturalism

Multiculturalism and interculturalism are central concepts within the context of diverse societies. Although closely related and often difficult to tell apart, these two approaches are seen to emphasise slightly different aspects of diverse societies. This section will therefore provide you with an overview of the two approaches.

Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism generally refers to the co-existence of diverse cultures within a given society. As a result of different patterns of migration – both historically and presently – societies have become more diverse in terms of different cultural, religious, racial and ethnic groups.

According to multicultural approaches, cultural practices, rights and well-being of non-dominant minority groups should be respected and accommodated. Multiculturalism, as a term, is often used to refer to the reality of diversity on the one hand, and to a moral stance that diversity is desirable on the other.

On an everyday level, multiculturalism can be seen in the existence of diverse shops, places of worship, language schools and cultural celebrations, for example. In a multicultural society you may see a Chinese restaurant, a Caribbean barbershop, a Middle Eastern shop and a Polish nursery existing side by side.



Interculturalism

Interculturalism, as an idea, places emphasis on communication. Thus, interculturalism aims to facilitate dialogue and reciprocal (two-way) understanding between people from different backgrounds. Although communication is also an important factor in multiculturalism as well, interculturalism is often viewed as involving a pronounced openness between people and different cultures.



Interculturalism also includes deep understanding and respect for all cultures. There is mutual exchange of ideas and the development of deep relationships: no one is left unchanged because everyone learns from one another and grows together. Intercultural dialogue takes place within the context of human dignity, human rights and the rule of law.



[What is interculturalism?](#)



What kind of **activities** involving people from different cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds can you think of that would **improve intercultural understanding**? Think about examples in relation to a) schools; b) workplaces; c) neighbourhoods.





Benefits of cross-cultural exchange

When people from different religious, cultural and ethnic backgrounds come together, a number of beneficial processes take place. So instead of being afraid of integration and cross-cultural exchange, you can look forward to it!

Increased self-awareness

When you come across different cultures, faiths or ways of life, you may end up looking at your own values, preconceptions and beliefs through a new lens. You gain a new level of self-awareness, and you may also begin to question some of your own ways of thinking or doing things.

Breaking down barriers

Coming to contact with people from various backgrounds will help break down barriers. Many of us have existing preconceptions, stereotypes and prejudices – and these are often based on false assumptions or misunderstandings. As we begin to learn about and gain a deeper understanding of other cultures, viewpoints and ways of life, barriers slowly get chipped away and we make room for dialogue and respect.



Building trust

Once the barriers between people are lowered, this results in greater mutual understanding. What happens then is that people begin to build



trust between one another. When people trust each other, it is easier to co-operate and work together.



Developing interpersonal skills

Cross-cultural exchange helps people to develop and improve their broader interpersonal skills. As you learn more about others and what is important to them, you will be able to interact with people in a more sensitive manner.

Developing listening skills



Cross-cultural exchange involves actively listening to others and taking in what they are saying. Don't be afraid to ask questions either! A key part of building relationships between people from different backgrounds is truly taking a step back and hearing out what they are sharing with you.

Enrichment

It can be immensely enriching to be involved in cross-cultural exchange. You might come across foods, music, literature or ideas that you would have not otherwise encountered but which add great value to your life.





Cultural competence in a multicultural world



Identify the benefits!

First, think about the following questions and note down your answers:

- Are there other benefits of cross-cultural exchange that you can think of?
- Which of the benefits seems the most important to you? Why?
- Which of the benefits seems the least important to you? Why?

Now, read the following examples from people who have moved abroad. Which benefits of cross-cultural exchange can you identify in the stories?

There is almost nothing you've learned that is incontestable — everything from table manners to hygiene is culturally relative. Every culture has its clear distinctions on what is acceptable and what's not. However, to the outsider coming in, who brings with him a set of different, but still clearly



marked, cultural “dos and don’ts”, it can cause quite the clash of viewpoints. From getting used to eating with my hands in India to trying to understand and respect why many men in the Maldives want their wives and daughters to wear a headscarf... Living surrounded by so many different cultures and making friends in all those countries has truly broadened my horizon and has made me question my beliefs.

Source: spendlifetraveling.com

When you live in the comfort of your home country, living around the people you’ve known all your life, you can sometimes be stuck and never really realize it. Moving away showed me just how stuck in life I was and opened my eyes to a bigger picture. Adapting to a new lifestyle showed me a different side to life. For example, Norwegian life revolves around the cold winters and it was nothing I had ever really experienced before. It took a while to get used to the -20 degree temperatures but experiencing extremes like that and making them part of my everyday life taught me to adapt to something outside of my comfort zone. I will never complain about the cold again – in fact I’ve learned to embrace and make the most of it!

Source: lifehack.org

Taking in a new culture adds a different dimension to you, it allows you to be more open and accepting of how other people do things and it lets you see a different side to life. I spent more time in nature than I ever had before, I ate food I’d never heard of and I took on their customs, their manners and their language. It’s not until you live in a new country that your ideas, ways of doing things and perspectives can really change.

Source: lifehack.org





Analysing your own attitudes and interactions with the host community

In order to be able to live, work, and study alongside people from different cultural, religious and ethnic backgrounds, it is important to remain self-aware: that is, it is important to think about and analyse our own attitudes and values, and how these may affect the ways in which we understand and make sense of the world and people around us.

Values

Value refers to the importance, usefulness or worth of something. Values are often standards or principles of behaviour that we set for ourselves and others. Values are the judgement about what is important in life. For example, some people may value empathy (the ability to share and understand the feelings of another person), others value respect, and someone might value honesty.

Our values may come from sources such as family, educational institutions, religion, media or significant life events (marriage, death, birth of a child, losing a job etc.).

Values vary from person to person and from place to place – others might hold values that are drastically different from the values you yourself hold. Some values may be affected by cultural or religious factors – though you should never make assumptions of others' values and thus we should avoid stereotypes.

Values can affect:

- What we notice, discourage or encourage
- How we prioritise different issues or information
- What information we choose to give to others
- Decision making – criteria for decisions is often value based
- Relationships



Assumptions

Assumption refers to something that one believes to be true, even if there is no evidence or proof of that thing being true. Assumptions therefore involve guesswork – we assume that something is true without actually knowing what the actual state of affairs is.

In our everyday interactions we frequently make assumptions about other people. The assumptions we make can be based on prejudices and stereotypes we hold. If we, for example, hold negative stereotypes of people doing particular jobs we may assume those people to hold values that are starkly different from ours.

Attitudes

Attitude refers to a settled way of thinking or feeling about something. Values and assumptions affect our attitudes. When we hold certain values and make



assumptions about other people, we may develop certain attitudes – both negative and positive – towards specific people or certain groups of people more generally.

Behaviour

Our perceptions, attitudes, values and beliefs – which are not always visible to others – have an impact on how we behave. Naturally, our behaviour is visible to others, but the things that cause us to act in certain ways may not be.



Self-awareness

Therefore, it is important to remain self-aware. Self-awareness means that you know what your personal motivations and preferences are. It also means that you are aware of the values you hold, why you hold them, and how they may affect your attitudes about other people. Self-awareness involves you considering the different factors that affect your worldview and your attitudes to different people and things, and how these different factors influence your judgement, decisions and interactions with other people.



Examples of religious values

Self-awareness – what it is and how to develop it

Values and beliefs



Analyse your attitudes!

Consider the following statements and your views on the issues: do you agree or disagree with the statements?

1. Same-sex couples should be able to get married.
2. Children should be smacked if they do something bad.
3. You should always say *please* and *thank you*.
4. Prisoners should be able to vote.
5. Women should be able to get an abortion.
6. Grandchildren should visit their grandparents as often as possible.
7. The death penalty should be illegal.
8. It is ok to have sex before marriage.
9. It is important to recycle waste and look after the environment.
10. You should make donations to charities.

Now reflect on your answers and consider the following points:



- What are the values guiding your views on these issues?
- How would you communicate and have a dialogue with someone with very different views from yours?
- How might your assumptions or attitudes towards other people affect the ways in which you interact with them?



Belonging and active citizenship

Belonging refers to a person's sense of being part of a particular group or a feeling of affinity to a specific place. When you move to a new place, either nationally or internationally, it may take a while (even a long time!) until you develop a sense of belonging to your new home. Belonging can take different forms and it can relate to different contexts: you may feel you belong to a specific nation, country, neighbourhood, or apartment building. Or, perhaps your sense of belonging stems from your workplace or educational institution, or the people – friends and family – around you. Most likely, it is a mixture of these different things.



Having a sense of belonging is often important to people due to the emotional need to be accepted as part of a group. Belonging makes us feel more connected to the people and places around us, and it may help us feel that we have a stake in the broader society.

Belonging also helps us become active citizens. At the heart of active citizenship is participation: it is about taking an active role in community life and making a positive contribution to society. Active citizenship



involves knowledge of both rights and responsibilities: knowing what we are entitled to but also what is expected of us.

Barriers to belonging and active citizenship

There may be various barriers to full participation as an active citizen. Some of these are:

- **Social isolation.** The lack of social networks and connections can lead to individuals retreating from social situations which would enable active citizenship.
- **Lack of knowledge** about rights and responsibilities.
- **Indifference.**
- **Time constraints** due to personal responsibilities within the family, at work, or at school can hinder people's ability to be active citizens.
- **Racism, prejudice and all forms of social exclusion** are likely to leave a person feeling like they do not or should not have a say in matters.



Ways of being an active citizen

There are a number of ways in which you can be an active citizen. Here are some examples:

- Associations and community groups
- Labour unions
- Voting
- Participation in politics
- Public consultations
- Volunteering





Example of an [active citizenship education project](#)

[What does it mean to be a citizen?](#)



[How to become an active citizen](#)

[What is citizenship](#)

[What is active citizenship](#)



How active am I as a citizen?

Think of the following questions:

- What are you already doing as an active citizen?
- Which rights and responsibilities are you exercising?
- What areas require further work, what more could you do to become an active citizen?
- What skills do you have that you could provide?
- What might act as a barrier to your active citizenship?
- How would you overcome it?



Review of Chapter 1

Assimilation

A one-way street whereby the migrant is expected to become like the majority culture.

Integration

A two-way street which involves efforts from both locals and migrants. Integration is about maintaining your cultural identity and being able to celebrate differences with others in the civic society.

Multiculturalism

Refers to the co-existence of cultures in a given society. Multicultural approaches seek to accommodate and respect the cultural practices, rights and well-being of non-dominant minority groups.

Interculturalism

Interculturalism places emphasis on communication – it aims to facilitate dialogue and two-way understanding between people from different backgrounds.

Values and attitudes

Values refer to things that are important to us, and the standards and principles we hold in high regard. Attitude refers to a settled way of thinking or feeling about something.

Active citizenship

Citizenship is about a person's relationship to the society in which they live. Active citizenship is about taking an active role in community life and making a positive contribution to society.



CHAPTER 2: BENEFITS OF CHILDREN EXPERIENCING DIVERSITY

What will I learn?

- Why it is good for your child and the society if you integrate successfully
- Benefits for your children if they grow up in a diverse environment
- How you can teach your children to cope with diversity in a positive way

Why is it important?

"United in diversity" is the motto of the European Union. It signifies how Europeans have come together, in the form of the EU, to work for peace and prosperity, while at the same time being enriched by the continent's many different cultures, traditions and languages. The concept of diversity encompasses acceptance and respect.

So in order for you and your children to thrive in a country of the EU, a key to success is to understand and embrace this attitude towards diversity. Children can thrive when they feel part of the society they live in, when they feel accepted and valued. Migrant children can feel that way only when their different characteristics are respected and appreciated. But at the same time they need to learn, too, how to respect diversity in others and how to be tolerant the earliest possible.





Importance of integration in social cohesion

Most people want to feel that they fit in their environment, that they can trust it and be trusted. This is about social cohesion. In simple words, social cohesion explains how the different parts of society work together. It creates a sense of belonging and promotes trust.

The more cohesive a society is, the better it is for the well-being of all its members. There will be less exclusion and marginalisation, a stronger sense of belonging and trustfulness among people and also more equal opportunities to grow up economically for everyone.

But how does integration relate to social cohesion? And what is your role in that?



To ‘integrate’ means ‘to become part of’. To become part of a new country, you need to become familiar with that country’s culture so that you are able to contribute and to benefit from its economic and social growth. Each individual plays a very important role in gaining trust and creating relationships with other people. When migrant communities segregate themselves from the host society and refuse to have cultural exchanges, this is bad for social cohesion: there will be mistrust, poor collaboration,



and weak social relationships. Especially migrants will suffer from that, as they will find themselves more marginalised and with less opportunities to prosper.

Integration is then very important to create and sustain a cohesive society. In fact, the host society is likely to make an important economic investment to support immigration, especially at the early phase. Therefore, local institutions and citizens somehow expect this initial investment to be re-paid along the time. This means that host society is interested in an improvement of migrants' living conditions that would level potentially existing differences between you and other citizens, and make social cohesion easier to achieve. But this will be only the case if migrants show themselves willing to belong to and contribute to their host country.



[What is social cohesion?](#)



[Integration and social cohesion: key elements for reaping the benefits of migration](#) from the International Organization for Migration (IOM)





Importance of parents' integration for educational achievement and balanced development of children

Although the number of migrant students in the host countries' schools has greatly increased recently (especially in North America and Europe), studies suggest that migrants could do better at school. It is clear that when they join school, your children are a bit disadvantaged if compared with native children, especially due to a weaker use of language.

However, a lot depends on the parents' degree of integration. You will increase the chances for your children to succeed at school and to feel happy in the host country if you make efforts to become part of your new environment. What could you do?



You could try to become more familiar with the host country's culture and to extend your social relationships beyond your family and people from your own country. Not by chance, scientists found out that students who speak a foreign language at home perform worse than those who speak the host country's language in familiar contexts. On the other hand, a good practice is to make social relations and networks the more stable as possible. If children are encouraged to interact with native peers, avoiding joining only community of co-nationals, it is more likely they



will overcome language difficulties in a shorter time and that this will push them forward in school achievements.

It is, nevertheless, very important that you, as parents, engage with you children's training to strengthen their competencies, skills, knowledge and values. A good strategy could be promoting contact with books, movies, TV shows and cultural activities (e.g. attending theatre) of the host society. Family is very important to build-up a child's cultural capital, especially when it comes to language and literacy.

This does not mean that children have to change their identity and lose contact with their culture of origin. They should, instead, be helped in finding a balance living with two cultures. For instance, it is important that they keep in touch with relatives who continue living in the home country and, to this aim, it is essential that they are able to speak the language of their home country and know their culture.



A good idea would be to help children find spaces and occasions where they can talk about their native cultures to children of the country they live in. This is a useful exercise to foster their familiarity with their parents' culture (your culture) but also an opportunity to stimulate comparison between different cultures.





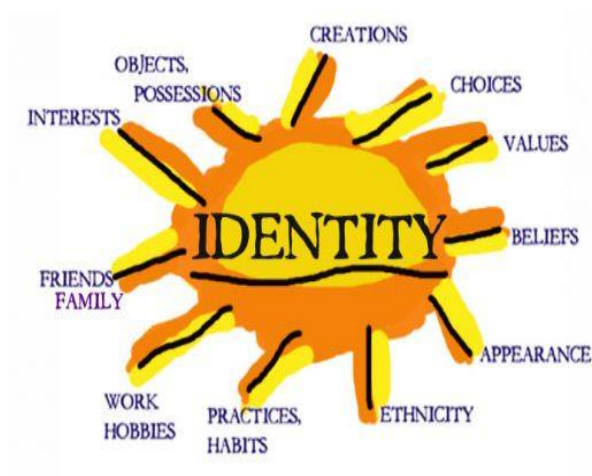
Migrants and educational achievement gaps



Impact of segregation on children's identity and self-concept

Child identity is not only a matter of psychological concern, but also a topic that caught the attention of social scientists. Identity formation is a complex process that never comes to an end and arises from questions such as 'Who we are', 'Do we choose our identity?', 'Is our identity given to us or we create our own?'

Children begin to answer identity questions at an early age. Such questions include 'Who am I?', 'Who is my family?', 'Where do I belong?', 'Why do my family celebrate some holidays and not others?' Hence, child identity is a complex socio-cultural phenomenon that concerns various representation of the world, it has to do with places and it is subject to change under the influence of the environment. Identity is one of the most important parts of a child's development since it contributes to creating their self-concept. In fact, self-concept is a theory about oneself, what someone thinks of oneself and even self-evaluation.



Racial-ethnic identities are part of the self-concept. They influence how individuals make sense of themselves and others. Membership in racial and ethnic groups is associated with beliefs about common experiences (such as shared history, language, and traditions) and also with beliefs about possible future outcomes.

But what happens when members of a special racial or ethnic group are segregated? Segregation is the opposite of integration as it means to keep one group of people apart from another and treat them differently. Segregation can take place either by choice (a groups sets themselves apart from the others) or because others marginalise them. In your case, segregation may be the result if you and your family socialise only with members of your own community and refuse to draw closer to the host community.

Segregation may have a long-lasting and very strong negative effect on a child's self-concept. Specifically, it may cause racial self-hatred, low sense of self-worth and preference for the dominant group. Segregation leads to worse achievements at school. Segregation will never empower your children; on the contrary it will put them in disadvantage – psychologically, academically and socially.

Growing up as a Third-Culture Child (a child who has grown up in a culture that is different from their parents') can be very positive. They may develop strong cross-cultural skills, increased adaptability and flexibility, and maintain confidence when changes take place. Don't deprive your children of these benefits by keeping them away from your host society!



[*Child Identity*](#)

[*About School Segregation in the U.S.*](#)

[*Building Identity for a Third-Culture Kid*](#)





Benefits of diversity for children

Babies and young children learn and develop through their early experiences and relationships. As children get older they begin to develop a sense of who they are and where they belong. This early learning about themselves and others lays the foundation for their future health and wellbeing.

Young children are curious by nature about differences and one of the ways they make sense of their world is to sort things into different categories and focus on one thing at a time (e.g., whether another child has the same or different skin colour to them). Children do this as a way to organise their experiences. Talking with children about differences makes them feel good about who they are and appreciate diversity in themselves and others.



So, is diversity good for your child? Definitely yes! Look at some benefits for your children when they experience cultural diversity:

- Raising multicultural children makes them **more tolerant and eager to socialize**;



- They learn to appreciate the differences and may want to **experiment new things**;
- It triggers children's **willingness to learn** about other countries, giving them an **open and inclusive world view**;
- They feel good when they interact with a diverse groups of friends and are more likely to continue fostering **diverse friendships** later on in life;
- They learn about **equality and equity**;
- It gives emotional benefits, because it helps children **develop empathy** and at the same time **feel more confident** about the world around them;
- Children develop stronger **critical thinking and problem-solving abilities**;
- Their **motivation, general knowledge and intellectual self-confidence** are positively influenced;
- Children are more likely to develop an **open, welcoming, prejudice-free attitude** and **strong communication skills**.

Of course, all these benefits are only possible when diversity is experienced in a welcoming, positive environment. Then benefits extend to all individuals involved. However, when diversity is met with suspicion, hostility, discrimination or even racism, this has a negative impact on the mental health and wellbeing of the victimized children or adults, it diminishes social cohesion, conflict is more likely to arise, and there are no benefits for anyone involved.



[*Does diversity make us more tolerant?*](#)

[*Different Types of Families: Learning Diversity for Children*](#)



[*7 benefits of raising multicultural children*](#)





Teaching children about diversity

The challenge for parents is to ensure that their children learn to accept and respect differences, thus making them more conscious adults. But, where do we start? Children don't come with instructions, but they do come with open minds. Much of what they learn about respecting differences comes from their parents. That being said, consider the following suggestions:

- **Children listen to what we say as well as watch what we do.** As parents, we must work on our own diversity deficits, so that we can better serve as examples to them.
- **Get out of our comfort zone!** Teaching our children to welcome differences may require that we make use of the internet to get a better understanding of diversity. We can then look for cultural activities that are present outside our community and explore their strength and value in diversity. We must make a deliberate effort to get out of the familiar and show our children we mean it. Accepting differences should be how we live our lives.
- **Listen and respond.** When children ask about differences, pay attention to their doubts and to the language they use. If they use hurtful or stereotypical language, explore with them why such language is hurtful. Explain in an age-appropriate manner why stereotypes don't tell the whole story and are divisive.
- **Don't be blind to differences.** Parents often tell that they want their children to be 'difference blind'. Children will notice that Jouain has a different sounding name or that Yasmeen always wears a head scarf. These things will raise a natural curiosity about this. As parents, we must help them appreciate and learn about those differences, not pretend that they do not exist. The question is not whether differences exist; it is what message we are sending by teaching children to be "blind" to differences. Unless we as



parents are willing to help explain to children what seems strange or different to them, we will never be successful in teaching children to understand and appreciate differences.

- Parents teach children how to brush their teeth, to comb their hair, to be responsible and to be successful. We do so by introducing and reinforcing behaviour that helps achieve these goals. We should do the same when it comes to appreciating diversity. It is only then that we can move from tolerance to acceptance.



[*Same Difference*](#) (A Children's Book Story by Calida Rawles)



[*Diversity lesson for kids*](#)

[*3 simple ways to teach children about diversity*](#)

[*8 ways to show children diversity is a strength*](#)

[*10 books to help teach children about diversity*](#)





Techniques and activities to help children interact positively within a diverse environment

As a parent, there are several steps to take if you want to raise your child's awareness and acceptance of cultural difference as we have seen. But, what could you do in practice to help them achieve this goal? A very useful practice is to lead them explore other cultures. Here are some suggestions:

- **Get your children to watch documentaries on history of different cultures.**
- **Make them watch also movies that portray cultural integration,** making sure they are age-appropriate.
- **Don't laugh at racist jokes or engage in chats that put forward stereotypes.** If your neighbour makes a joke about any kids being the smartest because of their cultural background, other groups of people being illegal immigrants, or again people being criminals, be prepared to say something. You can keep it simple but be direct. "Wow! That's not a very nice thing to say!" or "Stereotyping people isn't something I'm comfortable with."
- **Cook with them!** This might be a very fun way to learn about culture and diversity as well as a great learning activity. You can decide to cook a new food each week and discover what kids in other countries eat for different meals.



- **Stimulate their interest in learning a new language.** See online resources for suggestions.
- **Create games in which children have to engage with learning about other countries and cultures.**
- **Visit cultural places of other communities in your city,** if you can, and try to get opportunities to learn about their history, art, music, etc. A good way to enter their circles may be talking to people from other communities who stay in your neighbourhood.
- **Take part in other cultural groups' festivals and other cultural celebrations along with your children** and invite people from other backgrounds to your own celebrations.



[4 Ways to Help your Child Learn about Cultural Diversity:](#)

[5 Fun Activities to Teach Your Kids About Culture and Diversity](#)

[6 ways white parents can teach their kids about race and diversity](#)

[7 ways to help kids learn a foreign language](#)



[Printable country flags to make a memory card game](#)



[THE EYES OF A CHILD](#) // Noémi Association





Coping constructively with rejection

Imagine your son comes back from school and tells you that his classmates did not want to play with him because he is a foreigner. Reflect about what you would have told him:

- before studying this topic
- after having studied this topic

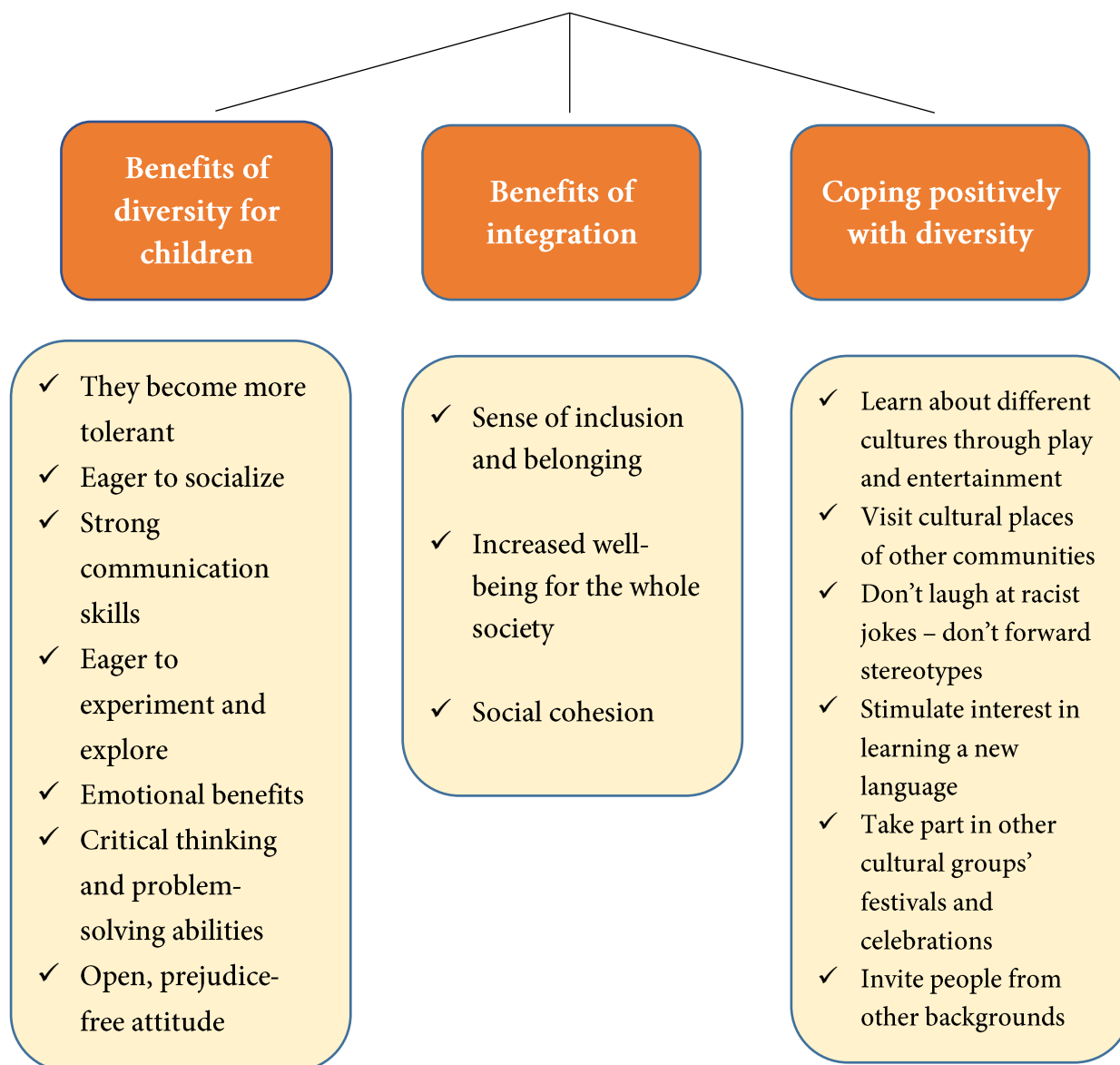
You can summarize your reactions in the table below:

Before...	After...



Review of Chapter 2

Integration in a multicultural environment



CHAPTER 3: UNDERSTANDING THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM AND THE OPPORTUNITIES IT OFFERS

What will I learn?

- You are going to learn about the educational system in Lithuania
- You are going to learn about the training opportunities in the host society
- You are going to understand the role of the teacher in the Lithuanian educational system

Why is it important?

When we talk about integration, we talk about people. Education is a fundamental point for the development of a civil society. Migrant parents have to know the host society educational system in order to guide their children in their chosen training paths.

However, the world of education is very different in every country. Being aware of the educational choices of their children is a starting point for the effective integration of foreign parents. Those who actively participate in school activities have the opportunity to integrate with other parents and build contracts and social networks to fully integrate into the host society.





Educational opportunities and paths within the educational system of Lithuania

In Lithuania, schools are mainly State schools, that is education is mostly public (funded by taxpayers). Very few schools are private or religious.

In general, the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport (ŠMSM – Švietimo, mokslo ir sporto ministerija) is responsible for implementing the national system of formal and non-formal education which secures social attitudes in favour of education and creating conditions for lifelong learning in a changing democratic society; implementing the state policy of science and studies in accordance with the Law on Science and Studies and other legal acts; coordinating the activity of Lithuanian institutions of science and studies, etc.

Primary education (*pradinis ugdymas*)

Primary education is compulsory, it has an overall length of 4 years and is attended by pupils aged 6/7 to 10/11. The aim of primary education programme is the development of a healthy, creative, and active child who has acquired elementary skills of literacy, social and cognitive skills that are necessary in order to proceed to basic (lower secondary) education.

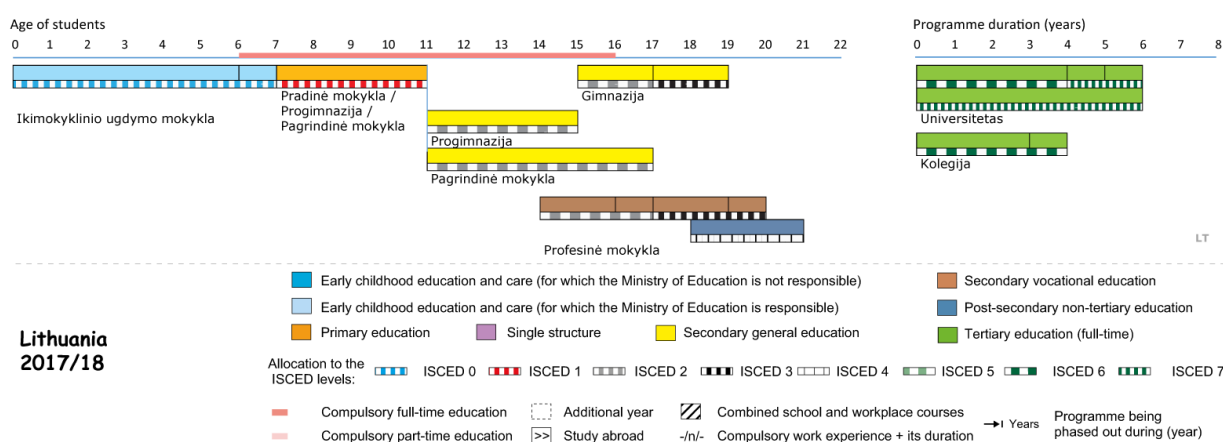
Primary education consists of the following subjects: moral education (religion or ethics), languages (mother tongue and first foreign language), mathematics, perception of the world, arts (drawing, music, dance, and theatre), and physical education. Schools may also choose to offer non-traditional curricula based on Montessori, Waldorf, Suzuki.

Pupils are not given grades at this stage – their assessment may vary, depending on the teacher (notes, reviews, descriptions).



After successful completion of the primary education programme, pupils are awarded *Pradinio išsilavinimo pažymėjimas* (Primary Education Certificate).

In primary schools, children are organised into groups called ‘classes’. Pupils are enrolled into class according to their age. A class has a minimum of 12 and a maximum of 28-29 pupils. The school year starts on the 1 September and ends at the beginning of June. There are about 170 teaching days in a year, but the number changes according to



changing laws and the holiday calendar.

Basic (lower secondary) education (*pagrindinis ugdymas*)

Basic (lower secondary) education is compulsory and lasts for 6 years (from ages 10/11 to 16/17). The aim of basic education program is to provide a pupil with the basics of moral, socio-cultural, and civic maturity, general literacy and the basics of technological literacy, to foster an intent and ability to make decisions and choices, to cultivate national consciousness and to continue learning.

The program consists of the following subjects: moral education (religion or ethics), languages (mother tongue, first and second foreign languages),



mathematics, natural sciences, social education (history, geography, civil education, economics and enterprise, psychology), arts (drawing, music, dance, theatre, and modern arts), information technologies, technologies, physical education. Some subjects could be studied at a higher level.

At this stage, pupil assessment is based on criteria. A marking system of 1 to 10 is used with 10 being the highest mark and 4 – the lowest passing mark.

Pupils who complete basic (lower secondary) education are awarded *Pagrindinio išsilavinimo pažymėjimas* (Basic Education Certificate).

Secondary education (*vidurinis ugdymas*)

Secondary education is available to everyone who has successfully completed basic (lower secondary) education. It lasts for 2 years (from ages 17/18 to 18/19). The purpose of this stage of education is to assist a pupil in the acquisition of general academic, socio-cultural and technological literacy, moral, national and civic maturity.

The basis of the secondary program consists of the following subjects: moral education (religion or ethics), languages (mother tongue and foreign languages), mathematics, social education (history, geography, or an integrated social sciences course), natural sciences (biology, physics, chemistry, or an integrated natural sciences course), arts (drawing, music, dance, theatre, or modern arts), information technologies, technologies, and physical education. Pupils may choose subjects based on their individuality and differentiation.

Upon completing secondary education curriculum, pupils are required to take leaving examinations, which are of two types: state-level and school-level. School-level examinations are held at school, and state-level examinations are held and assessed at National Examination Centres. Up until 2010, all state-level examinations had an equivalent examination at school-level. From 2010, only the following examinations are offered:





State level	School level
Lithuanian	Lithuanian
Biology, Chemistry, Physics, History, Information Technology, Mathematics, Foreign languages (English, French, Russian, German), Geography	Native language (Belorussian, Polish, Russian, German), Arts, Music, Musicology, Technologies.

All pupils must take an obligatory Lithuanian Language examination, which consists of two parts, and 1 elective examination.

Same as in basic (lower secondary) education, assessment at school as well as in the school-level examinations is based on criteria, a 10 point scale is used.

Until 2013, the state-level examinations results were norm-referenced and rated on a 1–100 point scale. Since 2013, a criterion-referenced grading has been gradually introduced for state-level examinations with 100 being the highest mark and 16 being the lowest passing mark.



Pupils who successfully complete the secondary education curriculum and pass the required examinations are awarded *Brandos atestatas* (Maturity Certificate), which enables them to go on to higher education in Lithuania.

Basic (lower secondary) and/or secondary education can also be acquired at vocational education schools (*profesinės mokyklos*). The programmes offered by vocational education schools combine basic (lower secondary) or secondary curriculum and vocational training. The duration of such programs is 2 or 3 years. After successful completion of such studies, pupils obtain *Pagrindinio išsilavinimo pažymėjimas* (Basic Education Certificate) or *Brandos atestatas* (Maturity Certificate) and *Profesinio mokymo diplomas* (Vocational Education Diploma).

Vocational training (*profesinis ugdymas*)

Vocational education is provided by vocational schools (*profesinė mokykla*), vocational education centres (*profesinio mokymo centras*), labour market training centre (*darbo rinkos mokymo centras*), agricultural school (*žemės ūkio mokykla*), trade school (*prekybos mokykla*) or other institutions.

The qualifications awarded after the completion of vocational schools may vary depending on the study programme curriculum. For example, Environmental protection worker, Bread products baker, The painter, Builder, Plumber, Construction finisher, Interior decorator, Food preparation employee and others. Below you will find a table with possible certificates that can be issued upon completion of vocational training.



Statement	Years	Professional qualification
Kvalifikacijos pažymėjimas (Vocational qualifying certificate)	14-16 years of age	depending on the study programme curriculum
Profesinio mokymo diplomas (Vocational education and training diploma) and Pagrindinės Mokyklos Baigimo Pažymėjimas (basic school-leaving certificate) or Brandos Atestatas (Maturity certificate)	16/17-18/19 years of age	depending on the study programme curriculum
Kvalifikacijos pažymėjimas (vocational qualifying certificate)	Adult training	depending on the study programme curriculum

University

There two types of higher education institutions:

- universities (called *universitetas* (university), *akademija* (academy), or *seminarija* (seminary)) representing university sector of higher education;
- colleges of higher education (called *kolegija* (higher education college) or *aukštoji mokykla* (higher education institution)) representing non-university higher education sector.

Universities offer university level degree granting studies and award Bachelor's, Master's, Doctoral degrees. Colleges offer college level degree granting studies and award Professional Bachelor's degrees. Both universities and colleges can also offer non-degree granting studies.





[*Study in Lithuania*](#)



[*Lithuanian education system*](#)

[*The list of vocational study programmes and institutions*](#)

[*Qualifications and vocational education and training development centre*](#)

[*More information about National Qualifications Framework*](#)

[*The list of recognized higher education institutions and accredited study programmes*](#)





Structure of the local educational system and main curriculum contents

Structure

Lithuania's education system is mostly decentralized. The quality of the education provided is shared among national institutions, municipalities, and educational institutions. Education policy is formed at the national level by *Seimas* (Parliament), adopting laws and declarations on policy changes. The Government in corpore and the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport (and other related ministries) also propose and implement education policy and other legal acts.

The main legal acts and laws, such as the Law on Education or the Description of the Primary, Lower Secondary and Upper Secondary Curriculum are adopted at the national level. The municipalities set and implement their own strategic education plans that are in accordance with the national documents. The municipalities' responsibilities are to ensure formal education up until the age of 16, organize non-formal education, transportation to educational institutions, and other details. The schools arrange the education process – for example, teachers are able to adapt the core curriculum to individual children's needs. Formal education is normally provided by public institutions. Private sector education providers, however, are recognised and regulated by national legal acts.

Curriculum

Schools prepare their curriculum in accordance with education programmes. A school's curriculum outlines the contents of education, organisation of the education process, evaluation of pupil achievements, etc. The curriculum is developed by a work group appointed by the head of school.



The lower secondary education programme consists of the following areas of learning:

- moral education (religion or ethics);
- languages (Lithuanian language and literature, other native languages (Belorussian, Polish, Russian, German), foreign languages);
- mathematics;
- natural sciences (biology, chemistry, physics);
- social sciences (history, geography, citizenship, social and public activity, economics and entrepreneurship, psychology);
- the arts (art, music, dance, theatre, contemporary arts);
- information and communication technology (ICT);
- technologies;
- physical education;
- general competencies and life skills education (human safety, health education, ethnic culture, etc.).

Cognitive, cultural, artistic, creative activity is a compulsory, inclusive part of the educational process. Schools decide how many lessons per school year will be dedicated to cognitive cultural activity taking into account the contents of general programmes, achievements and pupil age and. At least 10 hours (lessons) per school year are dedicated to compulsory social and public activity.



[*Lithuanian education overview*](#)





Making sense of different educational policies

Lithuanian education policy priorities, long-term goals, directions for education content changes, and funding priorities are set forth in the National Education Strategy, according to the Law on Education. The Strategy is prepared by the Government and presented to the *Seimas* (Parliament) for confirmation. The Strategy contains a plan for ten years and has to be reviewed at least every four years. This is the main strategic document in the area of education, and it presents the foundation for current reforms and initiatives in education.

The National Education Strategy for 2013–2022 was approved by Seimas on December 23, 2013, following the expiry of the National Education Strategy for 2003–2012 and after extensive discussions with stakeholders and the general public. The Strategy aims to make Lithuanian education provide a sustainable basis for independent and energetic individuals, who are able to create a future for themselves, the country, and the world in a responsible and concrete way. The National Education Strategy for 2013–2022 has the following four main objectives:

- To achieve an educational community level at which teachers and lecturers work to their most effectiveness and are committed to continuous learning;
- To develop an education culture that is driven by data analysis and self-evaluation and that ensures effective interaction among institutions of self-governance, social partners, and the management of educational institutions. The Strategy aims at strengthening the power of educational institutions to make decisions;
- To strengthen and develop non-formal education for children and youth to ensure that pupils, students and young people have the best opportunities to fulfil their true potential;



- To respond promptly to changes in the labour market and help people grasp the situation, recognise these advantages and make use of them when looking for a job, and to encourage self-management of one's career, smart career choices, and self-employment.



[National Reforms in Early Childhood Education and Care](#)

[National Reforms in School Education](#)

[National Reforms in Vocational Education and Training and Adult Learning](#)

[National Reforms in Higher Education](#)



Expectations and ways of parental engagement in education in the host country

The provisions of the National Education Strategy 2003-2012 emphasize that in order to ensure access to education, continuity and social justice as well as education development, personal parental responsibility is crucial in education of their children. Such aims of Lithuanian education policy allow to involve parents in school education. However, parental engagement in children's education process at school is a problematic phenomenon.

There are many advantages to parental engagement in their children's education:

Affected area	Impact
Children's academic achievement	Better reading, writing, math test results. Fewer learning problems, fewer number of children repeating the same school year. Fewer behavioural problems associated with poor learning.
Children's prospects	At the individual level: at the age of adulthood, better learning outcomes provide better opportunities in



	<p>higher education, professional career, better life quality.</p> <p>At the public level: good learning skills, learning competences in various fields (technology, science and education) ensure successful functioning of society.</p>
Children's psychological health	<p>Children feel better emotionally: they learn to respond positively to their achievements, become more resistant to the negative effects of academic failure, and communicate more freely with peers. Parental involvement in child education forms a positive and safe feeling at school, improves children's self-esteem, skills for managing feelings, inhibits the negative emotional experience, reduces the symptoms of depression and anxiety.</p>
Children's social relationships	<p>Parental involvement in children's education creates safe mutual relationships. Positive relationships between children and their parents become a model they focus on when communicating with their peers. Improving learning achievements lead to peer group leadership, foster positive relationships with peers in the classroom. Better behavior, fewer behavioral problems in school.</p>



Research is increasingly emphasizing the need for cooperation with parents based on the model of *community*, but Lithuania still has an



individualistic model of cooperation, implementing one-way communication from top to bottom.



Role of the teacher in Lithuania's educational system

In Lithuania, similarly as in the most parts of the Western World, the role of the teacher is going through a profound redefinition due to the changing social, economic and cultural conditions. The teacher has been generally viewed as the depositary of knowledge and the representative of culture of a society and this role has been often associated with authority and toughness.

In the last almost 30 years or independence, a new vision, that of the teacher as a professional within a project, has emerged. Hence, teachers have to acquire competences that go beyond their traditional role of 'knowledge deliverers' and develop the ability to use their knowledge of the subject to promote a cultural training on the different levels of schooling. Such competence comprises: mastery of the subject, including its core and 'borders', as well as the discipline's formative value; ability to operate on the definition and implementation of the curriculum (project planning, research and experimentation); ability to manage interpersonal relations that feature teaching/learning processes within the collectivity; ability to build up a personal working path within a team (departments and programming organs).



There are the following categories of teachers trained for the education system in Lithuania: teachers for pre-school education, teachers for primary, basic and secondary education, teachers for non-formal children education, vocational teachers, social teachers, special education teachers, pedagogues for the blind and the deaf, adult trainers and education management specialists.



The aim of teacher training is to provide such conditions for individuals so that they could acquire professional competences that are necessary for successful work at school and develop personalities that will be guided by the values of democracy, humanism, contemporary national identity and renewal, and who will help their pupils achieve the competence necessary for members of modern society.

Teachers in Lithuania are recognized as a highly-qualified workforce compared to many OECD countries. Moreover, Lithuania considers professional development for teachers as an obligatory part of their ongoing service, comparable with other European Union countries that invest in professional development.



Funny video of a [Head Teacher announcing the school is closed due to snowfall](#)



[Some advice to foreign teachers considering working in Lithuanian schools](#)





Official support provisions for ECM parents and students

In Lithuania, the right to education is guaranteed by a policy of school inclusion that primarily aims at developing the potentials of people with learning disabilities, communication, relationships and socialisation disabilities. Within the area of special education needs are included those people who are disadvantaged from socio-economic, linguistic and cultural factors, which includes immigrant pupils. Specific support measures are foreseen also for pupils with proven specific disadvantages.

Regarding the linguistic integration of foreign alumni, children with no proficiency in Lithuanian, before attending school, have an opportunity to learn the Lithuanian language in a special leveling class in order to



bridge the language gap. Additionally, there are possibilities to study in English. At www.renkuosilietuva.lt (an information website for foreigners in Lithuania), you can find a list of schools which provide these services.

Upon arriving to Lithuania from a foreign country, school-age children are admitted to schools according to the general education curriculum and following the general procedure that is applied to any other child of school age living in Lithuania. Migrant children are entitled to receive an extra 30 percent funding that is added to the student's basket they are entitled to. A student's basket is the portion of funds per student set aside by the state and distributed by municipalities. This additional funding for migrant children, given for no longer than one school year (or for a longer period if student achievement is worse than expected), should cover the



costs of professionals to help the student to faster integrate into the class of peers.

The curriculum that the pupil completed abroad is evaluated by the school of your choice. When the student's documents certifying his/her attendance of foreign schools are submitted, the school commission decides which level of the Lithuanian schooling programme it is equal to. If necessary, the school may test the student's learning achievements and make recommendations for further learning.



[Integration of refugees in Lithuania Participation and Empowerment](#)

[Immigration policies in Lithuania: institutional and legislative developments, challenges and opportunities](#)



Suggestions for effective collaboration with school staff and other parents

Parental involvement means the participation of parents in regular, two-way and meaningful communication with their children, school staff and other parents.

Parents are encouraged to be actively involved in their child's education at school and they play an integral role in assisting their child's learning. Parents are full partners in their child's education and are included, as appropriate, in decision-making.

In Lithuania, on class level, parents don't actively participate in school life, they don't visit the school when they are invited to class parent meetings, and seldom come on their own initiative. The first and very important step in cooperating with your children's school staff and teachers is participating in parent meetings.



All parents (fathers and mothers) have the right to vote to elect their representatives in the **school council**, which consists of school teachers, parents, and students. It's a right of every parent to propose to be elected. The school council makes proposals to the Headmaster for the improvement of school activities, presents proposals for an effective school-family relationship and fund allocation.



[Parent engagement in schools](#)

[Parent engagement in children's education](#)



Culturally appropriate ways of communicating complaints or disagreements in educational settings

"I do not agree." This short and simple sentence has the effect of stiffening and making anyone uncomfortable. In fact, most people feel annoyance when they hear it.

When you disagree with someone, remember that it is crucial to address the issue and not the person. So you need a bit of strategy and a bit more diplomacy:

1. Express the disagreement only partially

"I agree with you up to a certain point, but ..."

"I understand what you say, but ..."

"I see what you say, however ..."

2. Use words or phrases to soften your disagreement

"I'm sorry, but I do not agree ..."

"Yes, but don't you think ...?"

3. Avoid negative expressions such as...

"It's a bad idea!"



"I do not think it's a good idea."

"I do not agree with you!"

"I do not share your proposal."

"This is the worst idea!"

"I'm not sure it's the best idea."

4. Pay attention to your non-verbal language

Our bodies have their own "language". Body language is just as important as the words you use. So when you express disagreement, pay attention to your non-verbal signs:

- Avoid facial expressions of amazement or disagreement, do not shake your head, or roll your eyes, and do not fidget restlessly or nervously when someone is speaking.
- Avoid whispering (like a conspirator) with another person.
- Do not intimidate the person who is speaking.

When you disagree with someone, remember that it is crucial to address the issue and not the person.



[5 Ways to Respectfully Disagree - How to Disagree politely](#)



[Parents: not happy about something at school? Here's how to complain](#)





What do you think of the Lithuanian school system?

Each educational system has its strengths and weaknesses. Although education in Lithuania differs from that provided in your country, your children are certainly provided with some unique opportunities. So try to view the facts in a critical, realistic and balanced way. The table below can help you in that.

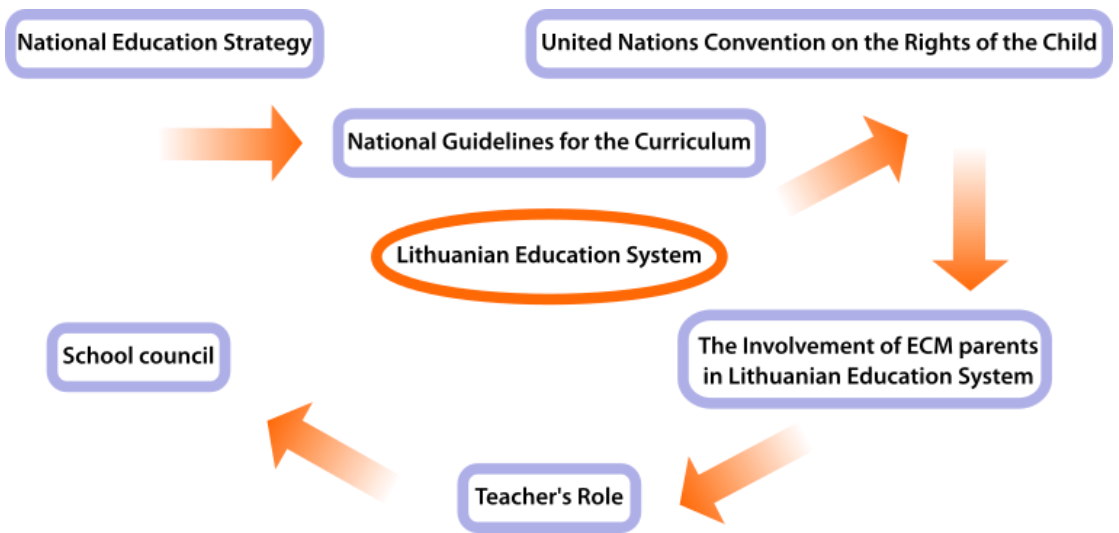
Strengths	Weaknesses
Opportunities	Threats

Did the results surprise you? In any case, try to make the most out of the strengths and opportunities! Think of ways to counteract, if possible, the weaknesses of the Italian education system and the “threats” it may pose to your children.



Review of Chapter 3

Lithuanian educational system



CHAPTER 4: SUPPORT OF SCHOOL ACTIVITIES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF INTERCULTURALISM

What will I learn?

- How the educational system promotes interculturalism
- How to better collaborate with your children's school for the promotion of interculturalism
- How to recognise acute needs of better intercultural understanding in the educational environment of your children

Why is it important?

The educational systems of European countries have adopted agendas for intercultural education. This means that the school system, activities and curriculum are organised in such a way as to promote intercultural understanding. Diversity is accepted and valued.

As a parent you can do a lot to collaborate with your children's school in order to develop their intercultural skills. By better understanding the purpose of certain school activities you can engage in more meaningful communication with your children, school staff and other parents. Your active engagement can lead to more satisfaction for the whole school community.





Key points in intercultural education in Lithuania

Children of Lithuanian citizens and foreigners who have arrived or returned to live in Lithuania after completing part of a foreign primary or secondary education, are accepted to study under general education programs in the same way as all residents of Lithuania according to the common procedure, following the Description of the Procedure for Consecutive Learning in General Education Programs approved by the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania April 5 by Order no. ISAK-556.

There are also compensatory education programs that take place segregated from the standard curriculum and are performed by specialized teachers, in order to compensate students' differences in language, culture and ability levels.

Because immigration is relatively new in Lithuania, the authorities are struggling how to manage this migration diversity and look at different approaches followed in Europe. Policy-makers are aware of different models of integration existing in older European host countries and are trying to follow the best examples. However, according to the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX 2015), analysing the educational opportunities of foreign children, it is stated that Lithuanian schools are poorly prepared for receiving immigrant children and do not have the appropriate basic infrastructure. The authors of the study conclude that, in addition to specific targeted integration policies that would apply to all children of immigrant backgrounds at different levels of learning, potential learners cannot take full advantage of the opportunities offered by compulsory learning. The study also highlights the importance of educating the country's students about cultural diversity as a result of growing immigration.





- *How do you see cultural diversity being addressed in your children's school?*
- *How does this approach differ from the educational approach you experienced as a child when you attended school?*



[UNESCO Guidelines on Intercultural Education](#)



School activities promoting interculturalism

Intercultural learning cannot be separated from the rest of the curriculum or from school-life. So intercultural education needs to help children to learn to live together (Delors 1996).

This would:

- stimulate students' interest in the lives of others based on shared experience, interaction, reciprocity and respect between different cultural groups;
- help students not shy away from controversy or conflict, recognising that working with cultural diversity is likely to be “difficult and challenging” as well as “exciting and fascinating” (Byram 2006, p. 5); and
- support students to develop the skills, knowledge, dispositions and capabilities to get to know and get along with people they see as different from themselves in learning to live together in a culturally diverse and interconnected world.

Some methods frequently used at schools to promote interculturalism are:



Role plays and simulations: these help students to experience at first-hand what it is like to be different, to be criticized, or to be marginalized or excluded.



Analysing texts, films, and plays: depending on the choice of text, film, or play, and the teacher's framing of the exercise, which could involve asking students to explain their own judgments or to take the perspective of characters that have been depicted, this type of activity can be used to build knowledge and understanding of people from diverse cultural backgrounds, to stimulate critical reflection on cultural issues, and to enhance openness, empathy, respect, critical thinking skills, and the valuing of human dignity, human rights, and cultural diversity.



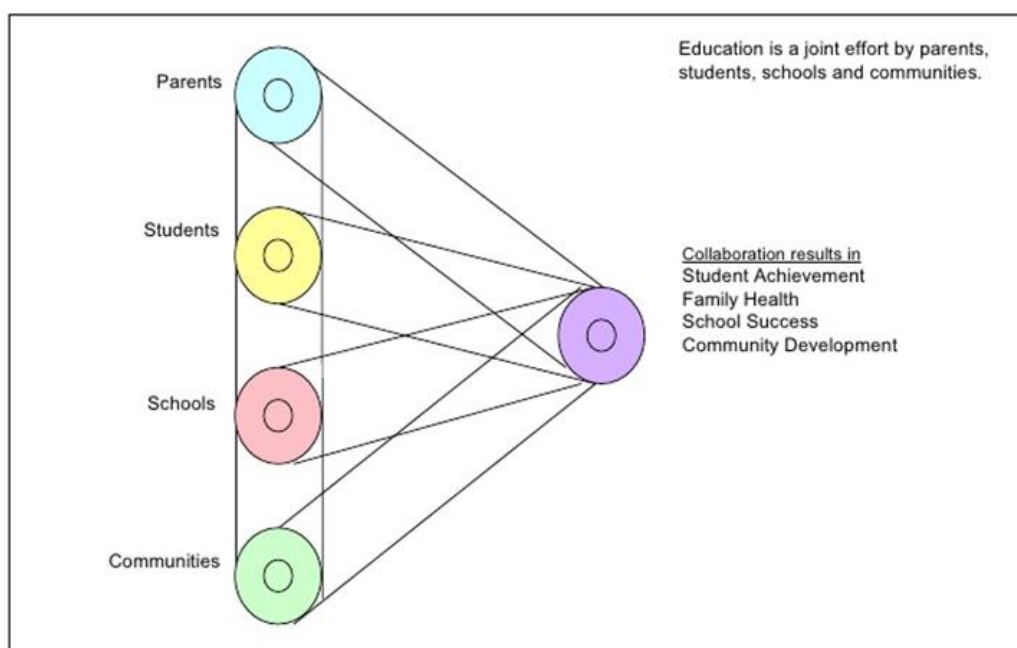
Short film: [Gobblynnne](#). Can you discern how this film is related to interculturalism?





Collaboration of parents with school staff and other parents

It is important that all the members of the school community, that is children, parents, teachers, support staff, and management, are included in the process of creating a school that values cultural diversity.



According to the Australian Government, there are a number of **key elements** for the development of effective family-school partnership:

- Communication, which includes: being clear, honest, and listening actively.
- Commitment: being flexible, encouraging the child and family, being accessible, including empathy.
- For an equal family-school relationship: willingness to explore options and valuing others; positive action, being willing to learn and meeting individual needs.
- Trust and respect, which includes: being discreet, non-judgemental, valuing the child.



Schools also have a role in building relationships with parents to get them involved in school life and in their children's learning and development. Letting families know that they are welcome in the school building, greeting them when they arrive, and posting signs in their native language are just a few ways to communicate to parents that they are valued members of the school community.



- *Describe any challenges your child faces at school.*
- *How do parents and community members participate in school activities? How can the school build parental engagement in activities that are focused on student learning?*
- *Does the school celebrate events that matter to the school community, such as significant cultural days?*



What does parent involvement mean to you?

What do you wish you had known before about your child's education?

What ideas do you have to share with other parents?

Parent involvement matters!



Strengthening Collaboration Between Schools and Families

Family - School Partnerships Framework: A guide for schools and families

Working with Culturally Diverse Families





The role of parents in recognising the need for better intercultural understanding at school

Think of the following scenarios:

- *Your son had a fight with a classmate of migrant origin. He returns home infuriated and makes some derogatory comments about the ethnicity of his classmate.*
- *Your daughter cannot understand why a classmate from a different religion doesn't celebrate her birthday.*

What will you do to help your children develop an open-minded, tolerant and respectful attitude? How will you discuss about your own values, without ridiculing the values of others?

Such incidents are very common in today's schools. Sometimes teachers do something to cope with such issues. But what if they don't?

Be quick to discern the need for better intercultural understanding between your children and their classmates. Be attentive to their feelings about school – if they want to go to school, if they feel good with their classmates. Discuss with them everything that concerns them about diversity. Take the initiative to help your children to develop skills, behaviours and attitudes that enable them to appreciate and respect others from different communities and cultures at school. Help them appreciate and value their own and others' cultural perspectives and practices, and find out about the similar and different ways people communicate in family and cultural groups.

Parents can help their child develop intercultural understanding by:

- understanding the influence of your own cultural values, attitudes and beliefs
- showing interest in and learning about other cultures
- interacting positively with people from diverse backgrounds



- talking about the ways that different cultural groups are presented in the media.

Mutual understanding and accepting different cultures is a prerequisite for successful parental involvement in schools. Your attentiveness to your children's needs in this issue can be of great importance not only for their personal development, but also for helping them to enjoy more school. You could even speak with the teachers about the needs you have noticed and exchange ideas how these needs could be met through school activities.



Potential for initiatives by parent organisations to promote interculturalism in school

Some good practices and actions from parent organizations can be:

- courses and classes for parents
- parents celebrating diversity
- parent-to-parent support, including interpretation or translation
- intercultural days/weeks/events
- provision of language classes for parents
- newsletters in a variety of languages
- promoting good attendance

Actions to promote engagement:

- Create a multicultural welcoming committee at school made up of parents, staff and community members.
- Prepare material about the education system, the school area, educational resources and the possibility of parent involvement or asking questions in the school.



- Celebrate informal recreational, leisure and cultural events where you can improve relationships with parents and teachers.



[Thinking about cultural diversity](#)

[Building community connections](#)

[Intercultural responsiveness](#)



Establishing parent-school communication

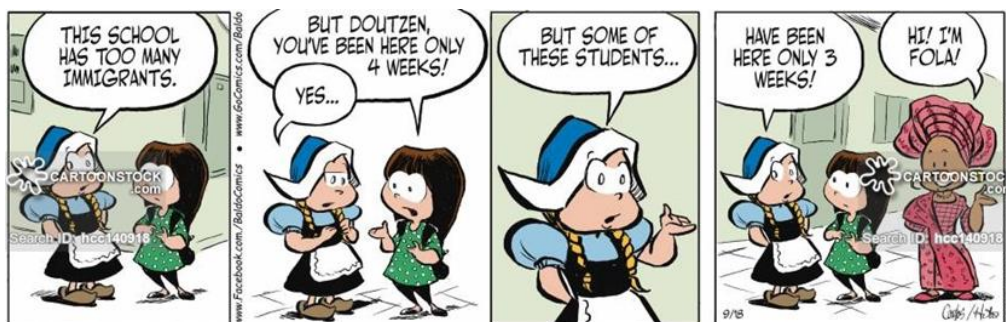
Read the following experience:

“We decided to arrange an informal meeting one Saturday at twelve in the morning. We informed parents that this was not a “formal talk or meeting” but rather an informal event where we could enjoy the opportunity of talking to everyone over an aperitif. We also arranged child care facilities for anyone who required it. However we did not harbour great expectations with regard to the number of parents who would attend and at the outset we were quite disillusioned. On the Saturday in question, teachers and the SMT were waiting hopefully in the library the arrival of parents (we had ordered a catering service which we thought might go to waste.) Slowly but surely the parents began to arrive and within 30 minutes the library had filled up and the meeting spilled out into other rooms. Conversations between parents and teachers sprung up spontaneously as did conversations between parents themselves... One mother who was completely alone asked us to introduce her to other mothers from her home country. We did this and the group of mothers suggested setting up a network where they could contact people from the same country as themselves. The newly arrived mother in question is now an active member of the school community and has fond memories of this first meeting” (INDIE Head Teacher, Madrid, Spain). (Rashid and Tickn y, 2010, p. 37).



Now think about the following questions:

- What can help in the establishment of such networks?
- What can help to bring about conversations between teachers and parents?
- What aspects are important in your experience to be able to discuss with your children's teachers?
- Do you have any experience about relationships with teachers when you first arrived in the host country? Was it positive or negative? How did it affect your collaboration with school afterwards?





Support of school activities for the development of interculturalism

Look at the following table and think about the following:

- In which of these activities do you actively take part?
- Are there any activities you do not want to take part in? Why is that?
- Do you feel that you could do more to support your children at school?

Table 1. Parental Practices According to Epstein's Framework of Six Types of Involvement (2001)

Dimensions	Practices of Parents
Obligations toward and support for the child	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Ensure the child's well-being: physical health, nutrition, clothing, hygiene •Talk with the child •Take part in education groups
Home-school communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Meet with the teacher •Attend information sessions •Obtain support for parents from the school
Family involvement in school life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Attend training sessions •Attend school activities •Attend extracurricular activities •Visit the classroom •Volunteer
Parental involvement in the child's schoolwork at home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Supervise homework •Support the work of the teachers
Parental participation in decision-making, managing and defending the child's interests (advocacy)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Support school programs •Sit on decision-making committees, organizational boards, parents' committees at the school commission •Engage in advocacy for children's interests
Partnership with the school, businesses, or other local organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Meet with businesses, social clubs, community organizations

Source: Quinones & Kiyama (2014).



Review of Chapter 4



Try to find out what school activities are designed for the promotion of interculturalism



Be attentive to signs that your children resent classmates with a different religion, culture etc.



Talk about and explore diversity with your children



Collaborate with teachers and other parents to promote intercultural understanding



References and photo credits

For a full citation of references and photo credits please see the full version of this unit on <http://parents4all.eu>.

Link to Evaluation Questionnaire

Congratulations! You have just completed both training units of the *Parents for All* training course. If you would like to evaluate this training material and provide us with some feedback, then please complete the [Evaluation Questionnaire](#).

