



C.1 Evaluation System

Case study Vienna
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Introduction

The project “FAB: Fast Track Action Boost” aims at improving the provision of services related to labour market integration for refugees and third-country nationals with a special focus on women. To this end, it initiates the cooperation of six European cities or regions: the cities of Milan, Berlin, Stockholm, Vienna and Madrid and the Republic of Serbia.

The objectives of the project as defined in the description of the action are

- Improve integration of the refugees, asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection populations in the target contexts, through mainstreaming of relevant and tested policies, measures and practices (Service Delivery);
- Improve the capacities and knowledge of key actors at the city-level to plan, implement and mainstream the measures, service delivery mechanisms and practices most relevant and effective as responses to the specific challenges emerging in the different contexts (Capacity Building);
- Develop innovative European models of policy approaches, practices, methods, and guidelines flowing from project results on fast track mechanisms for refugee integration and on women integration in the labour markets (Dissemination and Learning).

As part of the evaluation process, SÖSTRA is carrying out five case studies in order to find out to what extent these objectives have been reached. The case study in Vienna put a specific focus on service delivery. The central questions to be answered are

- What can we learn in an international and inter-municipal exchange?
- How do we design a project that fits the city’s needs?
- How do we reach the target group?

1 Background situation in Vienna

Austria belongs to one of the EU member states that is most affected by the influx of refugees. Between the years 2010 and 2019 most people applied for asylum in year 2015 (88,340 people)¹. Of the refugees already recognized in Austria, one third settle in Vienna. This led to a duplication of the city’s population growth in 2015. In 2019, 12,886 people applied for asylum in Austria². The majority of asylum applications were made by persons from Afghanistan followed by Syria. In total, 4,324 women applied for asylum, while the proportion of men was almost twice as high (8,562). Around 40% of asylum applications were decided positively in 2019.

¹ https://www.integrationsfonds.at/fileadmin/user_upload/FS-33_5JahreFluechtlingskrise_V6_SCREEN.pdf

² https://www.bmi.gv.at/301/Statistiken/files/Jahresstatistiken/Asyl-Jahresstatistik_2019.pdf

On January 1, 2020, about 701,700 persons with a foreign place of birth lived in Vienna, which corresponded to 36.7% of the city's total population³. In the 2018/19 school year, 52.5% of students in Vienna spoke a non-German language as their main language, by far the highest figure in the federal state comparison. People from migrant communities living in Vienna were disproportionately represented in the lowest educational category. Around 70% of people born outside of Austria but living in Vienna were between 25 and 64 years old. While the unemployment rate for Austrian nationals in Vienna was 9.5%, the rate for foreigners was 16.8%. Overall, the employment rate in Vienna was 67%. Persons with a migration background had a lower employment rate (62%) than persons without a migration background (72%).

Support systems for refugees in Vienna comprise:

- Free of charge Kindergarten, pre-school and school for children
- Language courses and courses in “basic education” (German, math, IT and orientation on the labour market)
- Counselling services regarding labour market
- Benefits to cover the basic needs (Primary care)
- Health insurance

For refugees the access to the Austrian labour market is regulated. After the asylum application is admitted to the regular procedure, 3 months have to pass until an employer can obtain an employment permit for an asylum seeker⁴. Moreover, in order to receive access to the labour market, a labour market test has to prove that the respective vacancy cannot be filled by an Austrian or EU citizen or a residing third-country national. Access to skilled jobs require a formal qualification, which needs to be proven through an officially recognized certificate⁵.

2. Designing the pilot

Initially, two project approaches were considered for transfer to Vienna: “Swedish for Professionals” (SFX) from Stockholm and the guidance services for parents and young people (Esagono) from Milan. Both projects were compatible with the project CORE which existed in Vienna since autumn 2016: Within CORE there was, on the one hand, a course in which refugee teachers were trained in pedagogy and teaching methodology in Austria. This is where SFX could have been applied. On the other hand, there was a parents' café with an advice service in different languages. This existing parental empowerment approach should be the starting point for the Esagono project. By the end of the year 2017, the political situation in Austria increasingly blocked

³ <https://www.integrationsfonds.at/mediathek/mediathek-publikationen/publikation/wien-l-zahlen-daten-und-fakten-1-1-7084>

⁴ <https://www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/austria/reception-conditions/employment-and-education/access-labour-market>

⁵ <https://www.wien.gv.at/arbeit-wirtschaft/beruf/nostrifizierung.html>

the integration of refugee teachers into the Austrian school system. Therefore, the idea to transfer SFX was rejected and Esagono was chosen as the practice to be transferred.

Within the framework of the project Esagono, which was implemented between the years 2011 and 2018, several orientation and guidance services were provided to young people and their parents. The focus was on young people between 12 and 18 years old who are in the transition phase deciding between further studies or entering the job market. The project aims at supporting young people to achieve the right educational choice and to reduce school dropout. Basic guidance skills, such as the know-how to read the opportunities and constraints that regulate the school system, universities and the job market and the implementation of an action plan of one's own career, are conveyed.

The methods of the comprehensive consultation included one-on-one conversations in order to identify the students' needs and attitudes, redefine their goals and to accompany their new choices made, with special focus on self-empowerment. From the information gained at the consultations, specific information about the available opportunities could be derived. Several events were organized on the campus of schools by different stakeholders and partners of the network. In workshops the topic of lifelong learning was introduced and the students were given a reorientation and information about diploma and job counselling. Besides, the project included guidance services for teachers as well as for the whole family and the building of a network consisting of the school, vocational training centres, companies or universities. There were six guidance front office points in the metropolitan area of Milan open to all people who were currently in a transition phase between different schools or school and job market. The service was free of charge and available without an appointment. In total, the actions of the Esagono project reached approximately 20% of the students from migrant communities.

2.1 Process of learning about Esagono

The process of learning about the project was based on intensive personal exchange between the project manager in Vienna and the project partners from Milan, both in informal conversations (e. g. during the Management Meeting in Berlin) and in formal Local Empowerment workshops (LEWs). These conversations were perceived as much more helpful than the project documents that were also available. This was especially true for the Local Empowerment Workshops (LEW):

"The actual boost was then the first meeting, the LEW."⁶ (Bildungsdirektion Wien)

This first workshop took place in February 2019. At this point of time, the Esagono project had already been terminated. Yet, all persons involved in the development of project Esagono were present at the workshops. Having the right participants was considered a key aspect for the LEW success.

⁶ Interview originally in German: „Der eigentliche Boost war dann das erste Treffen, der LEW.“

The workshop started with a presentation of the Esagono project, including its aims, target groups and methodology. Both the strengths and the weaknesses of the project were discussed. On the second day of the workshop there was a session exclusively for questions about Esagono. A special focus was put on the transfer of the strategic approach, which was discussed thoroughly during the LEW. Furthermore, differences in structures and processes in the Austrian and Italian context were debated. Through this close cooperation between the partners from Milan and Vienna, important steps for the implementation of the project were developed.

2.2 Adapting Esagono

Between the first and the second LEW, the Vienna project team developed a first project draft, which was reviewed and discussed during the second workshop in March 2019. It was discussed which parts of the concept still have gaps and where possible problems could arise in the implementation. At the end of the workshop a detailed project plan, including the cornerstones of the Vienna model, was finalized together with the partners from Milan.

The resulting pilot project differs substantially from the initial approach in terms of the “hard” parameters like the framework, the stakeholders, the target group and the contents. What was transferred were the method and strategic approach of how to address issues and people. ComPare (“Community Parents”), the Vienna pilot project, picks up the “soft” parameters of Esagono:

“We were able to transfer the substance. So, there has not been a model that is similar in structure or content, but we have pinned down the philosophy, so to speak.”⁷
(Bildungsdirektion Wien)

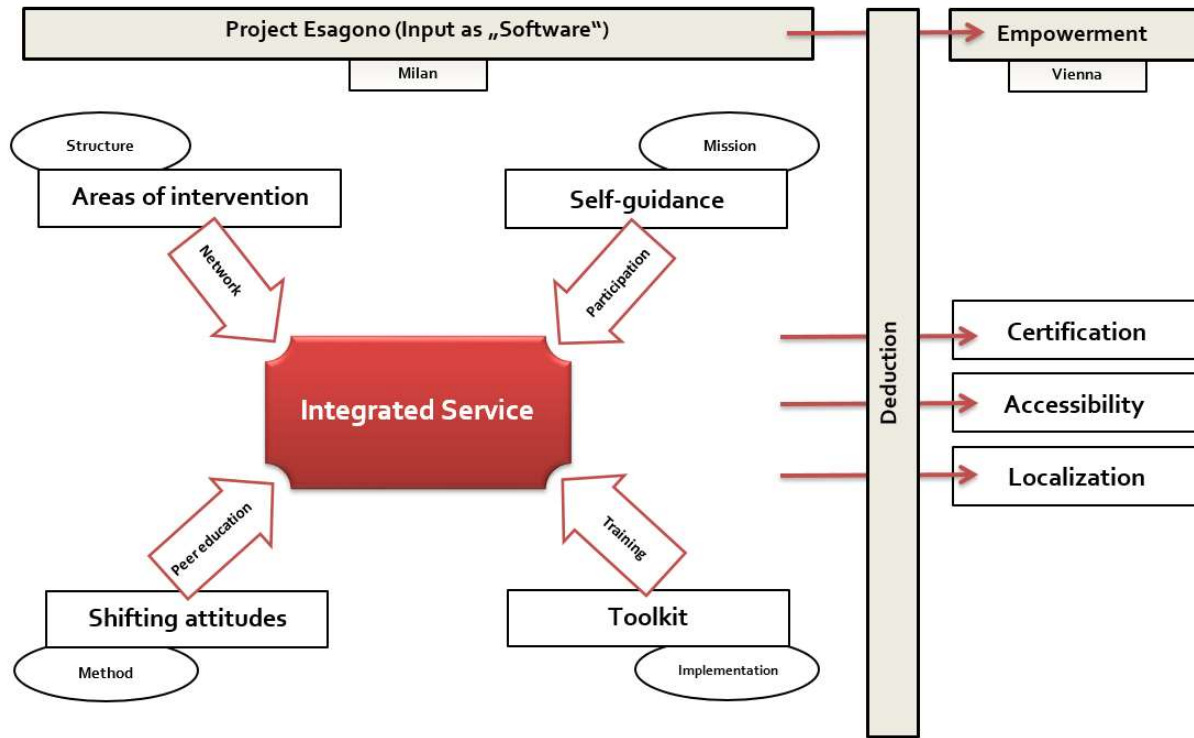
Based on the three-stage model by Jacques Limoges, the Milan model incorporates the parameters “ethical foundation” and “awareness”. Ethical foundation is essential especially in times of social change and the emergence of new challenges. Awareness is guaranteed through a peer education system that enables genuine questioning and open dialogue at eye level. This methodological approach is taken to Vienna and incorporated into a “peer to peer model” for parent empowerment. Its main characteristics are accessibility, localization and certification.

Four elements form the main part of the input (see figure 1 below):

- “Areas of intervention”: Identify and recruit potential partners, beneficiaries, institutions and other stakeholders to build a network
- “Self-guidance”: Increase awareness and ability to make own decisions
- “Shifting attitudes”: Identify skills to share knowledge through peer education
- “Toolkit”: Develop the action plan and implement activities

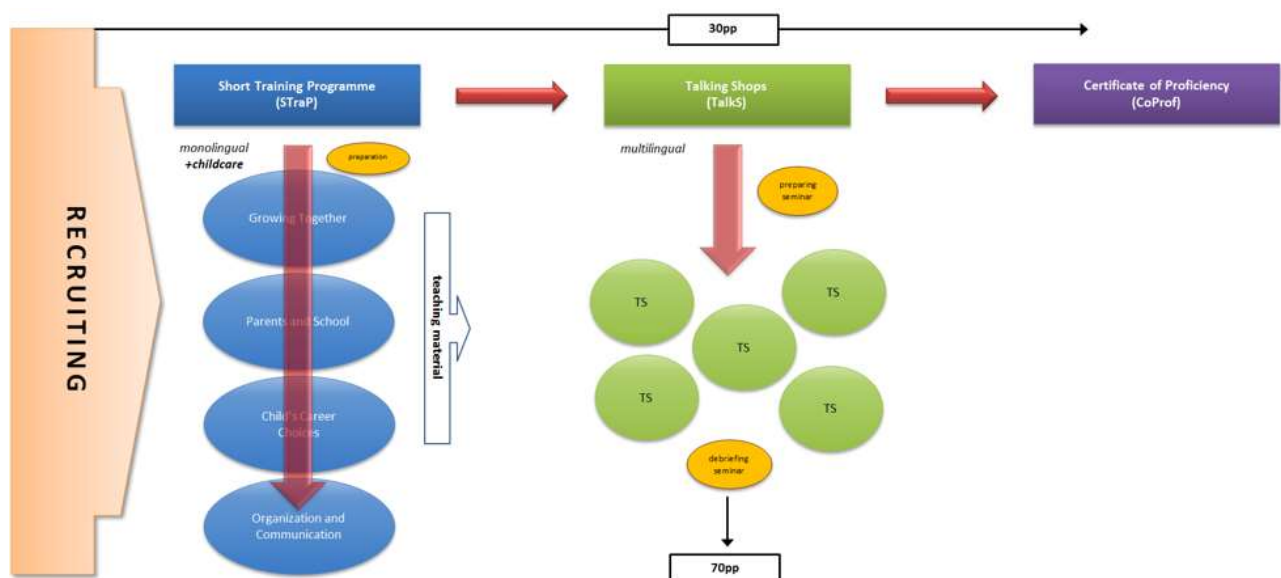
⁷ Interview originally in German: „Wir haben das Substrat nehmen können. Also, es hat kein Modell gegeben, das in der Struktur ähnlich ist oder die Inhalte, sondern wir haben sozusagen die Philosophie festgemacht.“

Figure 1: Model of transfer



The project ComPare tackles the problem that especially for parents from migrant communities (the project’s target group), the complex Austrian education system harbours ambiguities and uncertainties that often form the basis for misunderstandings in the schools. It consists of a three-stage process of “Recruiting”, “Short Training Program” (STraP) and “Talking Shops” (TalkS) (see figure 2 below). After successful completion of the three phases, the participants receive a certificate (CoProf) as evidence of their qualification (parameter “certification”).

Figure 2: Three-stage process of ComPare



At the first stage interested parents (60 people from migrant communities), instructors for the training program and advisors for the talking shops are selected. In the second stage (Short Training Programme – STraP), parents receive information and training on school-related topics. This stage also puts a focus on empowerment in order to enable them to later carry out stage three on their own.

During the trainings, parents from migrant communities learn about the Austrian legal system (democracy and the rule of law, fundamental rights) and the rights and duties at school. This is considered the theoretical level, consisting of 4 thematic focuses: "Growing Together", "Parents and School", "Vocational Training for the Child" and "Organization and Communication". Each topic is covered in three course sessions. Child care is provided during the entire course in order to enable every person to participate. Similar to the Milan model the training part covers the parameter “awareness” by teaching the “ethical basic attitude” as well as the necessary thematical contents and methods.

Once the trainings are completed the process of multiplication starts: The participants carry out information evening (Talking Shops – TalkS) for approximately 15 participants each (50 % female participants). The TalkS are organized and conducted by the project participants who invite their own friends and relatives to the information meeting. Yet, the TalkS are supported by a person from the operative management. Based on the Milan model, both, STraP and TalkS should have the character of openness to society and proximity to the relating community, which represent the parameters “accessibility” and “localization”. Therefore, the implementation of the training program takes place at a small local district, which is close to the target audience and integrated into the format of the "district-oriented educational landscape" ("Bildungsgrätzl"). The participants from the migrant communities who were empowered during the second phase of ComPare provide information to people from their own community. This way, barriers caused by language and unfamiliar surroundings are removed and an open dialogue is encouraged.

Table 1 compares the “soft” parameters of the initial project (Esagono) and the transfer (ComPare):

Table 1: Comparison of “soft” parameters (Esagono vs. ComPare)

	Esagono	ComPare
Openness and proximity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Events on campus • 6 guidance front office points in metropolitan area: Available without an appointment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation at small local district close to target community • Peer-to-peer approach by parents from the same migrant community
Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-on-one conversations and workshops (low-threshold): Raising awareness of lifelong-learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trainings (low-threshold): Raising awareness of Austrian legal system; rights and duties at school
Self-empowerment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of information about career options to enable students to make own choices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of information about their children’s career options to enable parents to make own choices • Certification of proficiency

To ensure openness and proximity to the students, events in Esagono were held directly on campus. Moreover, students and their parents could contact one of the six of the guidance front office points in the metropolitan area of Milan during office hours without an appointment. Similar to Esagono, the implementation of ComPare takes place at local districts with a high proportion of migrant population. Therefore, the target group can participate in trainings and talking shops in a setting which they are already familiar with. To ensure interactions and communication on eye-level and without language barriers, talking shops are held by parents from the same migrant community. In Esagono, awareness of lifelong-learning is raised through one-on-one conversations and workshops. Within the framework of ComPare, the focus of awareness is on the Austrian legal system as well as the rights and duties of students and their parents at school. In both projects, participants are empowered by providing information on career options that supports their individual decision making. Within ComPare, empowerment goes one step further in that participants are enabled to spread information themselves, thus turning them from passive recipients into and active distributors of information. The certificate of proficiency participants of ComPare receive after successful completion is an additional boost of empowerment.

3. Implementing ComPare

Project implementation and management was assigned to the Vienna Parents' Association (Landeselternverband Wien – LEVW). This had many advantages, especially for the implementation of the peer-to-peer approach, since the members of the association are parents themselves and already familiar with the topic “school and parents”. Also, LEVW had been in charge of the project CORE, which had already addressed parents from migrant communities. The LEVW organised the short training programme and the talking shops and coached the participants. The project was scientifically accompanied by the University of Vienna.

3.1 Addressing potential participants

Since the partners from Milan had already pointed out that it is difficult to gain access to the community, a special focus was put on the strategy of addressing potential participants. This task was assigned to the LEVW, which turned out beneficial for two reasons: First, the LEVW is a civil society organization and not a government agency. Second, the members are parents themselves. These two facts were essential to build trust in the migrant community. All participants surveyed on their experiences within the project⁸ stated that it was important for them that the project was carried out by parents (peer-to-peer approach).

Still, it remained difficult to recruit participants, either during parental assemblies at schools or via the CORE project. A major barrier were the German skills required (B2 level). In the cases of some of the former participants of the CORE project, the German language skills would have been sufficient, but there was a lack of self-confidence, as the workshops were held exclusively in

⁸ Retrospective survey on participants, carried out in Nov. 2020. Number of responses=13.

German. It became clear that it was necessary to find additional paths to gain access to the target group:

“Then, we learned that we need allies within the communities, to gain access to the people.”⁹ (LEVW)

Here, the project CORE paved the way for further steps. With the support of the project manager, access was established via the network still existing from the project CORE. Cultural associations involved in CORE, but also representatives of other projects working with refugees and migrants were contacted and asked for support in the promotion of ComPare. In some of these organizations the project manager herself got the opportunity to present ComPare. This way more participants were convinced to participate. The most important reason for participation was personal interest. Gaining knowledge that might be useful on the labour market was of much lower relevance.¹⁰ To prevent a separation of the migrant group, an inclusive approach was followed in which parents from Austria were also among the participants.

3.2 Service delivery

Due to an internal reorganization of the Bildungsdirektion Wien, which was subordinated to the Federal Ministry of Education, the first training courses (STraP) of 20 people started in February 2020, a bit later than planned. After one month the training, the second group of 20 people was supposed to start. However, from March 2020, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, it was no longer possible to have trainings in person. At this time, the first training group had completed half of the training sessions. Since postponing the project was not possible given its tight time schedule and the fact that many families from migrant communities travel to their home countries during summer holidays in July and August, the LEVW decided to digitize the project. The training courses were turned into online videos that were produced and uploaded on the project’s website. In the videos, the trainers try to maintain a communication on par with the participants. A special focus was put on accessibility in that the videos could be downloaded and watched on any type of device even without continuous internet access.

Communication with and between the participants was established in several ways: First, the participants could write comments and questions below the videos on the website, which could be helpful also for other users. Conference calls were held in order to improve the exchange of information. Thus, the participants could first watch the video and then discuss it with the speakers during the conference call. During the Covid lock down, the participants stayed in contact via WhatsApp groups. Moreover, there was a face-to-face meeting in the summer in which all trainers took part. However, one of the few points of criticism participants raised was

⁹ Interview originally in German: „Wir haben dann gelernt, wir brauchen Verbündete in den Communities um dort überhaupt reinzukommen“

¹⁰ Retrospective survey on participants, carried out in Nov. 2020. Number of responses=13.

that there was little personal exchange and little opportunity to contribute to the project with their own experiences.¹¹

A big advantage of digitizing the project was that it allowed new participants to join the project on an ongoing basis, so that no one had to wait until a group of 20 people had accumulated. Even more importantly, now also parents with little knowledge of German were able to participate in the program: The entrance barrier of necessary language skills was lowered since they could watch the videos several times until they understood everything. In addition, the presentations were designed in a way that a translation program could easily be used for better understanding. Finally, the participants had continuous access to the videos so that they could watch them at the time suitable for them and also watch them again at a later date to refresh their knowledge.

After completion of the trainings, the participants started with the dissemination of what they had learned. Due to the Covid pandemic, the on-site talking shops (TalkS) that had been planned in the project design had to be changed to one-on-one conversations on the phone. Therefore, each participant contacted 3 to 4 friends or family members and counselled on them. One major topic in these talks was the pandemic-induced situation in schools. If questions arose that could not be answered by the parents themselves, they received support from the LEVW. After the individual TalkS, the participants received their certificate of proficiency. The fact that the project ended with a certification was pointed out as an important feature by the majority of participants.¹²

3.3 Outcomes and Impact¹³

Altogether, 41 persons were trained within the STraPs of project ComPare, 35 of which were female (85 %). The project manager from the LEVW assumes that significantly more participants could have been attracted without the Covid 19-pandemic. As described above, not all participants were migrants. Rather, the project was intentionally opened up to native Austrians as well in order to prevent segregational effects. Therefore, 12 participants (29 %) were born in Austria and of German mother tongue. Also among non-native speakers, language proficiency was high: Half of them had excellent language skills; about the same share had been living in Austria for more than 10 years. The most important countries of origin were Syria and Afghanistan (5 participants each).

35 participants completed the project successfully and received the certificate of proficiency. Of the six participants leaving the project early, four entered employment. Another 11 participants entered employment after full completion of the project so that, in total, 15 former participants were employed right after leaving the project (37 %). Another seven were on job search. These numbers of integration into the labour market are astonishing given that the project was primarily oriented towards information on the education system in order to improve the children's

¹¹ Retrospective survey on participants, carried out in Nov. 2020. Number of responses=13.

¹² Retrospective survey on participants, carried out in Nov. 2020. Number of responses=13.

¹³ This chapter is based on data available as of October 2020.

educational and labour market options rather than the parents'. However, the approach of empowerment seems to have had significant positive effects on the parents and their self-confidence as well, thus motivating them to take the next step towards labour market integration.

It has to be noted that the impact of ComPare stretched further than the proper participants: Through the Talks, a much higher number of (migrant) parents benefitted from the project. So far, former participants of ComPare informed and counselled 72 persons on the Austrian education system, thus potentially improving their and their children's integration into Austrian society.

4. Lessons Learned

The project ComPare provides numerous valuable insights with regard to two objectives of the FAB, namely improving integration of the refugees, asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection populations in the target contexts, through mainstreaming of relevant and tested policies, measures and practices (Service Delivery) and improving the capacities and knowledge of key actors at the city-level to plan, implement and mainstream the measures, service delivery mechanisms and practices most relevant and effective as responses to the specific challenges emerging in the different contexts (Capacity Building).

4.1 Service delivery

Cultural differences, insufficient language skills, top-down approaches and unsuitable localization form barriers to gain access to and trust of migrants, thus impeding their integration into the receiving society as a whole and the labour market. The Milan project Esagono had developed and tested some promising approaches with regard to reducing these barriers: openness and proximity, awareness, and self-empowerment. These were transferred and adapted to Vienna.

Openness and proximity were realised through a peer-to-peer approach, where parents from the same community provide information and guidance for their peers. The successful implementation of ComPare showed that this approach can help to overcome these barriers in several ways. First, when knowledge is communicated by people with the same cultural background, misunderstandings are less likely to arise. Sharing information in one's own native language leads to a deeper understanding of the content and lowers the participants' threshold to get involved and ask questions. Thus, even people with little or no knowledge of the language of the host country can be reached. Second, trainers who have a similar social position, such as in the case of ComPare where they are themselves parents from migrant communities, usually have a better understanding of and more empathy towards the target group. Therefore, trust is built and collaboration encouraged.

Another way of establishing openness and proximity within ComPare was by implementing the project in small local entities and in areas where a large proportion of migrants live. Participants of the Talks did not need to travel long distances, which could hinder their participation, nor did they have to leave their familiar neighbourhood. Thus, the participants were already familiar with

the place, feel comfortable and can build trust more easily. This way, even those who are considered unreachable could be reached. Moreover, any kind of activity in a local surrounding can contribute to community building, as it supports networking among the participants.

Awareness was implemented in ComPare with regard to the Austrian education system, which is considered to be very complex and therefore poses major challenges, especially to parents from migrant communities, who are unfamiliar with it. ComPare addresses this issue by aiming at a better understanding of the Austrian school system among migrant parents. This cannot only prevent misunderstandings in schools, but also enable better informed decisions when choosing the right school for the child or planning the transition from school to work. Hence, this results in faster and more effective integration into the labor market of the child.

Orienting the project towards educational attainment of the children had another, more immediate effect: There is growing evidence that parents from migrant communities have higher educational aspirations for their children than native-born parents.¹⁴ Many of the migrant parents who participated in the project mentioned that their children are their hope for a successful integration in Austria. The opportunity to learn about the education system and to then be able to better support their children on their path within this system is therefore highly attractive to migrant parents. This increased their interest to participate in ComPare. The topic of the project thus facilitated the access to the target group.

Self-empowerment took place in that migrant parents were enabled to take or guide their children's educational decisions based on the information they had acquired. Moreover, the participants of the project who had been trained during the STraPs learned how to organize and carry out meetings and talks, thus improving specific competences as well as general confidence. This might prove useful also in a working context. Therefore, the project ComPare potentially eased integration into the labour market not only for the future generation, but also directly for its participants.

Due to the special circumstances caused by the covid pandemic, the entire project was digitized at very short notice, i.e. the training sessions were turned into videos which were supported by chats. On the one hand, this brought some advantages regarding the project implementation and its overall effects. On the other hand, the limitations of digitization also became clear.

Addressing the target group of ComPare was challenging in general. A major advantage was that the acquisition of most participants took place before the Corona lock down. In some cases, participants could only be recruited thanks to the extensive existing network of the LEVW. This informal recruitment of participants can be hampered by communication on an exclusively digital basis. In general, for the digitization of such projects, this means that a comprehensive strategy for the digital acquisition of participants should be developed prior to the implementation.

Switching to training videos rather than in-person sessions had the advantage that participants were very flexible in terms of when and where to participate: New participants could join the

¹⁴ Raleigh, Elizabeth & Kao, Grace. (2010). Do Immigrant Minority Parents Have More Consistent College Aspirations For Their Children?. *Social Science Quarterly*. 91. 1083-1102. 10.1111/j.1540-6237.2010.00750.x.

project at any point in time, the videos could be watched at any moment suitable for the participant or in short bits, and commuting time was eliminated. The digitization of ComPare has also shown that language barriers can be overcome to a certain extent. Videos can be watched several times until they are understood. Also, translation programs can easily be used. In total, more people can be reached on digital way, when accessibility is taken into account. However, group cohesion and trust among each other can be limited in the digital sphere.

In summary, the digitization of projects can enable more people to participate if it is designed to be accessible. Nevertheless, access to the target group, the creation of trust and group cohesion can only be created in a limited way digitally, so it is important to develop a comprehensive strategy that includes sufficient time to plan the implementation and staff with the necessary IT skills.

4.2 Capacity building

The Milan project was not adopted one-to-one for Vienna. Rather, the idea for the pilot project emerged from a discussion process. A large part of the discussion process was to learn about structures and processes in each other's contexts. In these discussions, the project partners from Vienna and Milan understood that a transfer does not necessarily mean to implement an existing measure, but that it can be more beneficial to identify approaches and methodologies that apply to all circumstances and settings. This requires to examine the project thoroughly in order to determine its distinctive features and factors of success. Therefore, it is helpful that the project to be transferred is already evaluated regarding the advantages of the methodology and the challenges that occur from it. Such an intensive examination of a project can be highly instructive not only for the receiving partner (here: Vienna), but also for the institutions and partners who had implemented the original approach in the first place. This way, not only did the project partners in Vienna learn something new, but also the partners in Milan were able to benefit from the exchange.

The exchange between the project partners from Milan and Vienna was challenged in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. Since there were travel restrictions, mentoring visits did not take place as planned. Nevertheless, there was an ongoing exchange between the two partners via virtual meetings. This way, regular exchange can be improved. However, it is made more difficult for the project partners to obtain their own impression on site.