



TRANSATLANTIC FORUM ON INCLUSIVE EARLY YEARS

INVESTING IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF YOUNG CHILDREN FROM MIGRANT AND LOW-INCOME FAMILIES

Successful Parent and Family Engagement in the Early Years:
Reaching out to Immigrant and Low-income Families
3rd Meeting: January 20 – 22, 2014

Synthesis Report

Introduction

The third meeting of the Transatlantic Forum on Inclusive Early Years (TFIEY), held in Lisbon, Portugal from January 20-22, 2014, was titled “Successful Parent and Family Engagement in the Early Years: Reaching out to Immigrant and Low-income Families.” The discussion sought to explore, among others, the following issues:

- How can the needs of families with a migrant background and parents experiencing poverty be addressed, ensuring that they are truly the “first educators” for their children and enabling them to act as advocates for their children’s success and well-being?
- What are innovative and effective practices being used in family engagement for children from migrant and low-income families across local systems and NGO’s that can be integrated at a systemic level?
- What are some models and programs that work successfully with low-income and immigrant parents and families with young children that incorporate health and early learning strategies in their curricula?
- What are effective ways in which ECEC programs can be leveraged as an opportunity to engage parents in training and other services as part of a dual generation poverty reduction and integration strategy?
- What are ways in which systems alignment affects ongoing parent and family engagement in children’s early years, and what are some lessons learned from cities and nations that have begun to implement integration and alignment efforts?

This synthesis paper is provided as a means of summarizing the key issues and themes addressed in the Forum’s discussion over the course of the meeting, and is not intended to reflect the views or recommendations of the Forum as a whole or of its operating partners and funders. For those seeking additional information, a complete archive of the presentations and papers provided as inputs to the event can be found [here](#).

The speakers and participants for the closed 3-day meeting included a diverse group of researchers, policy-makers, practitioners, and philanthropists representing 16 different countries and bringing their varied experiences and expertise to the transatlantic conversation. The following are some of the key points that were raised through both the research and practitioner presentations that provided a starting point for each of the meeting’s sessions.



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The importance of parent engagement

[Dr. Weiss' presentation](#) gave an introduction to the importance of parent engagement as a major predictor of later school success, and its importance in particular for low-income children and others who typically experience lower levels of parent engagement for many different reasons, several of which are discussed in the [US background paper](#) for the event. Her presentation discussed the need to move past the dominant assumption that “learning” occurs primarily or exclusively in schools, and understand the critical importance of out-of-school learning that can occur and the vital role that parents and families play in promoting these opportunities. Moreover, parents’ roles in sharing responsibility with early childhood programs, schools and communities to contribute to children’s learning and development must be continuous from birth throughout early childhood and school years, and must be provided systemically rather than as a series of random acts.

Dr. Weiss also introduced the idea of “demand parents”, setting the stage for an ongoing discussion regarding the tension between training parents vs. training professionals in order to bridge the divide between home, families, and schools, and what it truly means to create demand-led services. Promoting the idea of “demand parents” means empowering families and responding to each unique families’ interests and needs and engaging in true dialogue with families, reaching out to them in ways that build trust, comfort, and confidence. This is in contrast to practices where developed programmes are ‘offered’ to vulnerable families (and where they can almost be morally obliged to participate in because of their vulnerability).

The Role of Fathers

[Dr. Lewis](#), meanwhile, focused on the issue of paternal engagement within the larger picture of family engagement, making the case that studying men and children leads to a better understanding of how families function and children develop within the family context, with fathering behavior and patterns often serving as a “barometer” for overall family functioning.

In the UK, fathers are increasingly responsible for the care of their children, and research has shown that fathers do influence the development of their children, particularly in later years. Father-child play, as opposed to paternal attachment, has in particular been linked to improved school adjustment and peer competence, though these effects are embedded in a network of family and other relationships.

For migrant families and those experiencing poverty, paternal involvement is perhaps increasingly important to examine as paternal migration can place strains on individuals and families. And for fathers who are constrained by long hours of work and difficult and low-paying jobs, increased work-home conflicts often arise, affecting not only their parenting patterns but also co-parenting patterns for mothers as well as fathers.

Parenting programs as well as leave policies have sought to increase the involvement of fathers in their children’s development—studies have shown that involvement in parenting courses can lead to increased





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engagement of fathers with their children, as well as improved relationships with their partners and an increase in financial support. However, the challenge of recruitment into such programs was raised as an issue, with a need to understand the unique “culture” of fathers and to conduct outreach accordingly, through relevant channels and in the right venues.

These points were later echoed by [Roger Olley](#), the former Head of Services for Children North East in the UK. His presentation also raised the importance of reaching fathers early, during the prenatal period, in which fathers are often ignored. The idea that “early involvement predicts later involvement” holds true across all areas of family engagement, including paternal engagement. The importance of early involvement was similarly emphasized by [Silvia Pasqua](#), Professor at the University of Turin, who spoke not only of the higher rates of return on earlier interventions, but also the higher impact that parental time investment has on earlier years as compared with later in childhood.

Some of the key conclusions and major questions arising from these overview presentations that provided direction for the rest of the meeting included the specific challenge posed by the current economic climate, with families needing a baseline of resources and time in addition to relevant services, as well as the acknowledgement of a gap between the intentions of parent and family services and the actual outcomes they are able to deliver.

Promising Practices in Reaching and Serving Low-Income and Migrant Families

Several administrators, experts, and practitioners presented models of inspiring and innovative practice in working with low-income and migrant parents and families. While “family engagement” can refer to a wide variety of activities, the meeting broke down the types of programming encompassed under this term into a few major categories:

1. Parent Engagement in ECEC Program Provision and Policy

Nancy Aardema of the Logan Square Neighborhood Association and [Gjalt Jellesma from BOInK](#) presented on provisions that engage parents in existing early childhood programming and empower them to successfully navigate ECEC systems and successfully advocate for their children. Both of these programs, active in Chicago and all over the Netherlands, respectively, organize parents to give them a voice to negotiate for their rights and interests and those of their children. The Logan Square Neighborhood Association accomplishes this through a parent-mentor program, which seeks to bridge the divide between school culture and home culture for parents, many of whom do not speak English and are otherwise isolated in their communities. Parents are given training and are also engaged as para-professionals in their children’s classroom to take advantage of their language skills, empowering them first to act as equal partners in their children’s learning, and also to become leaders in their community to serve as advocates on other issues including, for instance, housing, wage, and immigration issues. This way, it becomes clear from firsthand what these families really need, which can be quite different from what professionals presume they need.





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BOinK serves as some kind of parent's union on ECEC and out-of-school care. BOinK gives a framework for parent's voices to improve the quality of ECEC services through increased parent engagement, particularly for parents from low socio-economic backgrounds. BOinK, however, takes the approach of negotiating on behalf of parents in order to improve legislation and insert important issues of quality in Dutch ECEC law through the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science.

Several other instances of parenting programs that are combined with early childhood education programs are also outlined in a [background paper for the meeting](#) on Two Generation Programs by Dr. Wim de Mey and Michel Vandenbroeck.

2. Family-Oriented Services with Active Parent Engagement

Two different models of interdisciplinary family centers in Sweden and the US were presented and discussed as instances of family-oriented services with active parent engagement. Both centers have practices built upon a thorough analysis of the social problems and social strengths of a specific neighborhood and context, addressing the question: what are the needs of a diversity of families, children, and how can we address their needs in order to improve the health, learning and development of all children and support the parents in their parental role as in their role as members of a society? The discussion was focused on the different underlying funding models of the two types of family centers and the advantages and disadvantages of both systems. While in Sweden, the centers are fully paid by the national and local government, in the US, the Mar Vista Centre in the US is fully privately funded.

In Sweden, traditional child health care services consist of pediatric nurses and pediatricians giving advice to families in a separate entity. These services reach, however, mostly middle class mothers born in Sweden. [Vibeke Bing, founder of the National Organization of the Swedish Family Centres](#), presented the Swedish model of a Family Center as an alternative model in which there is a strong link assumed between the well-being of children and the living conditions of their parent. A Family Center integrates maternity health care, child health care, an open pre-school and other social welfare activities in one building. By locating services in one place, the accessibility for children and parents increases, especially for immigrant parents. This health model, which originally started in the seventies as a bottom-up movement, is now officially recognized as an important part of the public child health policy. Family centers are free of charge and manage to reach a socio-economic diversity of families. By including an open preschool, these centers offer a meeting space for children and parents which positively affects the social network of parents, stimulates social learning and offers them social support. In an evaluation study, parents stressed the importance of being validated as a 'normal parent with a 'normal' child as one of the success factors of this program.

The [Mar Vista family Centre](#), a member organisation of the Los Angeles Preschool Advocacy Initiative (LAPAI), was founded in 1977 as a community preschool seeking to engage parents as partners in their children's education and social development. Lucia Diaz, director of the Mar Vista Family Centre, presented their 'Parent Engagement Model', built on the principles of personal responsibility and empowerment through education and leadership training. Parent and family engagement is considered a key for success in transforming a community, combating many social problems such as drugs, domestic





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violence, criminality and early school leaving. Currently the Mar Vista Family Center provides different services such as ECEC, college preparation, youth and parent leadership, health, wellness and recreational activities. An evaluation study demonstrated how long-term involvement with entire families has improved family functioning, decreased domestic violence and improved youth's academic successes and rate of attendance at institutes of higher education. More than 500 community leaders are trained in the community leadership and advocacy graduate program.

3. Parent Engagement in Health Services

In addition to focusing on early learning experiences, the issue of successfully engaging parents in preventive health services working with mothers of young children was also discussed. [Perrine Humblet of the Brussels Free University](#) presented the results of research on perinatal health services for vulnerable families provided in Belgium by ONE. Some of the key issues raised in this presentation focused on the asymmetric relationship between beneficiaries and the professionals serving them, particularly in the context of home visits, and ways in which this might be addressed, such as the need to work in a participatory way and engage "co-educationally," through open discussion and a strong effort to discover where parental concerns truly lie. She also made the point that although, in the case of Belgium, there is a perinatal system in place, a lack of recognition of the alignment between pre- and postnatal services is still evident, and a shortage of training, evaluation, and resources is prevalent.

[Michelle Sarju](#), meanwhile, spoke about her program, Open Arms Perinatal Services in Washington state. Open Arms provides doulas for low-income mothers to give mothers the support they need to give their newborn children the best start possible. The program provides a parenting curriculum delivered in the language of the women of the communities they service, and provided by staff of the same race. Similar to ONE, Open Arms strives not to "tell mothers what to do", but rather encourages mothers to reflect on what good parenting practice means to them and give them the strength and confidence they need to meet the socio-emotional and other needs of their children.

A key point in the discussion of these presentations focused on the need for increased networking and integration between pre-, peri-, and post-natal services and cross-agency collaboration to ensure that health and learning interventions for both children and families are able to work additively and cooperatively with one another, as outcomes are closely linked. The debate regarding targeted vs. universal services was again resurrected here with a discussion of the challenges surrounding a desire to scale up and mainstream effective services and diversify universal provisions, instead of referring specific groups to more targeted services. Another aspect in the discussion was the need to focus not only on standardized outcomes in rigorous evaluations, but also to place at least equal importance on equity and access.

4. Family Literacy Programs and other Family-Centered Services

[Heide Spruck-Wrigley of Literacy Work International](#) spoke about the Family Literacy model in the US, in which the four basic components of parent skills development, early childhood education, parent and children learning together, and parent education are brought together in one program. Through research and observation of over 40 family literacy programs across the country, promising practices within the Family Literacy approach specifically for children of immigrants were identified. These include: taking an





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additive rather than subtractive approach toward dual language development; focusing heavily on the use of vocabulary in context for young children; focusing heavily on face to face communication skills for their parents; introducing relevant content and ideas for adults in working on language development; integrating technology into adult instruction; emphasizing how children learn and thrive rather than on culturally specific child rearing behaviors; and teaching parents strategies for negotiating education and other systems to advocate for their children. Most importantly, programs need to be of high quality in order to be effective, and this means having well-trained bilingual and culturally competent staff.

[Flor Perez from Families in Schools](#) presented on their specific model of Family Literacy called Families reading Together for Student Success. This program is based on the idea that parents' role both at home and at school can be strengthened to benefit both children as well as the schools.

Both of these presentations emphasized the importance of not only bridging the gap between home and school through the inclusion of families in children's educational experience, but also the crucial part that parents can and must play to aid their children in striving for educational success, and the skills and support that they require in order to play this role, which led the forum's discussion into issues of dual generation strategy.

Promising Practices in Dual Generation Strategy

The challenges raised in enumerating the obstacles to effective family engagement policies and practices led naturally to issues of dual generation approaches, as the need for education and workforce support for parents in order to give them the resources, training and capacity to participate in programming opportunities was a recurring theme of discussion. With mothers' levels of education continuing to be the strongest predictor of children's academic success, there is an increasing interest in intergenerational approaches, according to an understanding that such programs can address the multigenerational, multidimensional challenges facing poor and migrant families, as explained in a Dr. de Mey and Vandenbroek's [background paper](#). Two presenters with proven programs provided examples of how such strategies can be designed to improve both child and family outcomes by addressing some of the structural challenges faced by low-income and immigrant families that are related to, but extend beyond their children's early learning experiences.

[Cigdem Kagitcibasi](#), Professor at Koc University and a founder of the Mother-Child Education Foundation, spoke about the Turkish Early Enrichment Project (TEEP), a program focused on training and enriching mothers through home-based support supporting their knowledge of children's cognitive and socioemotional development, as well as conducting empowerment activities for mothers based on a strengths-based approach. These activities were combined with provision of educational day care for these mothers' children to study the impact of the combination of these factors, which were expected to have an optimal impact on the overall development of the child. Through longitudinal study, it was found that these interventions had a significant impact on child outcomes, including not only cognitive development and school performance, but also long-term outcomes such as later workforce participation, credit card ownership, and computer ownership as adults.





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The TEEP also provides a valuable lesson on the ways in which rigorous evaluations can inform future program and policy design, as the Mother-Child Education Program, which is now available in 13 countries and reaches over 700,000 beneficiaries (primarily migrants), is based on the TEEP model as a result of its success.

[Jon Kerr](#), Adult Basic Education Director for the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, gave a presentation on Washington's I-BEST model, an accelerated pathway model that pairs basic skills instructors with career and technical instructors in the same classroom to allow students to earn college and workforce credentials while at the same time mastering critical skills, such as English language proficiency in the case of immigrant students. Data tells us that in the US, the greatest increase in economic attainment along the spectrum of adult education and training comes at the threshold of achieving at least one year of college level credits plus a credential of some kind. The economic stability that can result from effective training is important both for parents' ability to engage effectively in their young children's education, and also for child outcomes more generally. Moreover, as the US [background paper](#) for the forum illustrates, language proficiency and basic literacy skills are a necessary first step that many parents of young children require in order to participate in existing family engagement initiatives. Yet programs that provide such skills are often unavailable or inaccessible for the families that need them most. The presentation also discussed the need for parents to feel like true leaders in their families—a relationship that can often be reversed when children, even at a young age, are more proficient in language and with navigating education systems than their parents.

The discussion following these presentations spoke to the need for better ways to link data sets to look at outcomes for adults simultaneously with those of their children. Other points emphasized the incredibly high return on investment of the TEEP program, as a home-based program that utilizes the services of para-professionals and is not costly as a result. Several participants in this and other sessions raised the necessity of forming an articulated economic argument detailing the need for effective and accessible family services for marginalized populations in order to successfully steer policy debates alongside compelling data. At the same time, there was a shared agreement that the economic rationale should not be the only basis for advocating for the importance of these services.

Systems Integration, Alignment, and Reform

The forum's final panel was an interview discussion regarding the challenges inherent in incorporating diverse needs and new populations into mainstream systems and strategies to scale up the types of effective practice presented at the meeting and incentivize needed reform efforts to work effectively with diverse groups of parents. Discussants on the panel included Ludwig Gartner, Vice-Director of the Swiss Federal Social Insurance Office, Aisling Gillen, National Policy Development Manager at the Office of the Director of Children and Family Services in Ireland, and Delia Pompa, Senior Vice President of the National Council of La Raza, a Latino advocacy organization in the US.

The need for integrated systems





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Aisling Gillen spoke about the ongoing roll-out of a new integrated model bringing health and other early childhood services under one umbrella in Ireland. A new Child and Family Agency has now been established, with over 106 family resource centers all under one roof alongside their Educational Attendance Board as well as their Psychology Services, with the possibility of also bringing in public health nursing. Related to this integration initiative, she also raised the importance of having a designated Minister for Children as is the case in Ireland, and the impact that the Minister has had in being personally very supportive of the implementation of the current integration plan.

The many benefits of bringing together diverse professionals concerned with children's holistic development to work collaboratively was witnessed at one of the forum's site visits, Lumiar kindergarten, where teachers were seen working alongside social workers, doctors, oral hygienists and other professionals to support children's overall well-being, physical and mental health and self-confidence in a way that allows each of these workers to reach all children with ease, and without stigmatizing low-income and/or migrant families. This was a direct implementation of Portugal's National Health Plan (2012-2016), which covers the entire country and is based on values of equity, development, quality and democracy. This policy is translated at the community level, where local partners select those issues that are most urgent within their community context to address within their schools, depending on need.

Scaling-up, mainstreaming and communicating evidence-based parenting approaches

In terms of scaling up best practices, Aisling also spoke about steps being taken in Ireland to extract learning from local sites and mainstreaming proven practices across the country. She also discussed the importance of then communicating known evidence to practitioners to encourage them to incorporate more evidence-based thinking in their practice. To this end, a recent publication entitled "50 key messages in supporting parents" has recently been made available, outlining an evidence-based approach to parenting and listing relevant evidence below each principle. Yet the idea that at times, steps must be taken simply because "it is the right thing to do", and not necessarily because of an existing evidence base, is also important in making progress. In Ireland, only a small percentage of work is currently evidence based, though there is a steady, incremental move toward an evidence-based approach.

The federal role in a decentralized system

Ludwig Gartner discussed the difficulty of influencing policy change in a country such as Switzerland which is a federal state with all responsibilities for early childhood education being delegated at the Canton level, with little or no competences at the federal level, though ongoing debate continues about the role that can be played by the federal government through, for instance, subsidies to promote specific policies in the field and through the roll-out of a more general program combatting poverty in early childhood.

Empowering families as agents of change

Delia Pompa provided an overview of the early childhood policy landscape in the US, where the federal government similarly can only impact policy at the local level through the provision of federal funds which are then used for local implementation, though even these funds are limited in the impact that they can have. She also discussed the power of family advocacy and encouraging civic engagement as the core strategy at the National Council of La Raza to effect change through families. In this way, families can be given voice rather than being told what they need or should be doing. For vulnerable families who often





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do not speak English and have limited resources, there is a danger of becoming “pawns” of opposing political forces rather than being empowered to make decisions for themselves and their children. Currently, there is some hope that through immigration reform, some provisions for immigrant integration support will be included, creating room for families to be engaged in improving outcomes for their children through, for instance, access to language learning opportunities and information about legalization strategy. The [site visit](#) to the National Immigrant Support Centre (CNAI), for instance, demonstrated the power of providing information to parents and giving them the opportunity to be true decision-makers and agents of change.

The discussion following the interview panel continued to focus on a call for integration across systems, particularly for cross-agency collaboration both at the country and federal level. Several of the [site visits](#), including the visit to CNAI as well as the presentation on the National Early Childhood Intervention System, showed the benefits that arise from effective linkages between departments that normally operate independently, allowing practitioners to get a more holistic view of the challenges facing young children and the integrated strategies that would best address them. The need to create a trans-disciplinary approach toward ECEC at the EU level was also discussed, with a discussion of the problem posed by the fact that 0-3 year olds are currently overseen by Social Affairs/Welfare whereas 3-6 year olds are overseen by Education. As a result, policies and resources tend to be overly focused on the 3-6 year old population, when more investments are needed in the earlier years, and there is a need for continuous and aligned policies and practices.

Reinforced Points from Previous Meetings Running Throughout Forum:

Several of the recurring themes in discussion in this meeting of the TFIEY were points that had also arisen at the forum’s previous meetings, thereby reinforcing their importance and bringing attention to some of the most critical policy and practice issues in the ECEC field that impact underserved populations. Some of these included:

- The issue of quality and relevance and the ways in which they affect access: again, the question of hard-to-reach parents or rather hard-to-reach services? Many of the presenters framed their discussions around how to improve schools and services rather than asking how to engage parents, with the underlying assumption being that parents will not make use of services or stay engaged in them long-term unless they are of high quality. Clearly, the policy question is not whether to choose quality or access, but rather to pursue both hand-in-hand. Working on accessibility and serving the real (and not just the presumed) needs of vulnerable families is, in fact, an essential element of quality.
- The importance of involving parents in families in the process of policy and program creation: listening to the needs of parents and families and using this information as a starting point for effective programs is essential to success, rather than starting with a rigid definition of what parent engagement should be.
- The desirability of services that contain a social mix: the tension between targeted vs. universal services is a debate that has been constant throughout the forum. Many presenters and





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discussants have put an emphasis on the importance of having socially mixed services, and the policy challenge of how to achieve such a balance is one that continues to be raised.

- The need to ensure accountability and responsibility on the parts of governments: in this meeting, as in others, it has been made clear that simply mandating effective practices of universal services is not enough, and necessary funding and support must be provided to back up these policies must be provided. In the absence of these resources, provisions can have adverse effects, and large gaps are often evident between policy and practice.
- Early childhood services alone are not sufficient to address issues of poverty: programming in early childhood, and in this case in parent engagement, is not enough to solve the problems of the sub-populations being discussed through the forum. Good services for parents as well as children must be embedded in other structural supports and anti-poverty measures including employment, social security, housing and, for instance, literacy and language skills and workforce training as raised in the dual-generation conversation at this meeting.

Conclusion: Remaining Questions and Challenges

Several tensions repeatedly arose throughout the forum's discussion, and pointed to a few key questions and challenges that were left as key takeaways for participants to consider in their own work as practitioners, policymakers, and grantmakers.

How to create truly "demand-led" services?

Perhaps the primary question echoed throughout the forum's discussion was that of training parents vs. training professionals in achieving effective family engagement in early childhood services, and how to balance these two elements. While many in the forum advocated that listening to parents is crucial in order to build good services, the challenge of how to create truly "demand-led" services is one that must continually be revisited. In spite of very good intentions, it still seems quite difficult to really engage in a reciprocal relation with parents, to listen to their input and to start co-constructing services and provisions that have real meaning to them. Offering services to vulnerable families and hoping they will engage in them is still different from engaging them in the services as such.

How to navigate through the "labyrinth" of demand led services?

The second issue, rising out of the first, is that of the specialization that has grown out of this move toward demand-led services and how to better integrate and align the services that are currently available. The understanding, for instance, that Somali mothers must be treated and approached differently from Hispanic fathers is one that has led to specialized services for many different target groups, with a huge breadth of knowledge on how to work with these specific groups at the practitioner's level. As a result, we now need specialists in order to help beneficiaries to navigate this "labyrinth" of services that have been created. The result is a need for a new era of integration, networking, and comprehensive systems built through real collaboration. Discussions from the meeting's presentations centered around, for example, a need to integrate pre- and post-natal services as well as a need to include effective paternal outreach as part of family engagement services through effective gender diversity strategies rather than treating them as a separate entity.





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What does integration, collaboration and consolidation mean for grassroots organizations

Lastly, the matter of what such integration, collaboration and consolidation might mean for grassroots organizations that have proliferated over the past decades is another critical question. Should such effective organizations be scaled up in order to maximize impact, or should their knowledge and best practices be incorporated into mainstream services? And how might each of these strategies be effectively pursued?

Issues for future meetings

In addition to points that have been threading throughout the forum's meetings, several themes that will be addressed in future convenings were also reflected in this discussion on family engagement practices.

- 1) **Language and multilingualism**, and strategies on how to handle the politics and frequent controversy surrounding ways in which to treat maternal versus dominant languages in the early learning arena in different settings (either bilingual or multi-lingual, in the context of hyper-diversity).
- 2) **Evaluation**, which will be discussed in the next meeting of the TFIEY:
 - a. Several participants pointed to the dangers of relying only on randomized control trials as the ultimate standard for evaluation with a disproportionate focus on outcomes (defined by whom?), particularly in programs that are serving the most vulnerable populations.
 - b. The tension between the flexibility and creativity that is possible in smaller programs that work with hard-to-reach populations compared with the standardization and rigidity that often come along with taking a program to scale was one which was treated with concern.
 - c. This led to the question of how policies might successfully promote innovation and allow flexibility for effective practices, taking into account the needs of widely varying contexts and communities.

About the Forum:

The Transatlantic Forum on Inclusive Early Years (TFIEY), a 3-year project convened by the King Baudouin Foundation in partnership with several European and American foundations, aims to explore policies and programs supporting the early childhood development of children from migrant and low-income families in Europe and the United States. The Forum brings together leading policy-makers, practitioners, philanthropists and academics for each of its twice-annual meetings held in the EU and the US. These stakeholders have the opportunity to exchange the most recent research, strategies, policies, and innovations surrounding these issues, with the aim of leveraging and scaling up existing knowledge and research, and making early childhood education and care (ECEC) for children from migrant and low-income families a priority on the political agenda in Europe, the US, and beyond. Each meeting focuses on a specific theme relevant to the challenges facing these populations in ECEC, and is organized by the [King Baudouin Foundation](#) and the two operating partners for the initiative, the [VBJK Centre for Innovation in the Early Years](#) in Belgium, and the [Migration Policy Institute](#) in Washington, DC.





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The first two meetings of the TFIEY addressed the issues of:

1. [Disparities in Access for Children from Migrant and Low-Income Families](#) (Ghent, Belgium in January 2013); and
2. [Workforce Preparation and Curriculum Innovations](#) (New York, NY in July 2013)

Forthcoming convenings of the TFIEY, of which there will be seven in total, will focus on themes that will seek to explore several of the above issues in greater detail. Future planned themes, all of which will focus on low-income and migrant families in particular, will include: Evaluation (Amsterdam, June 30th – July 2nd), Integrated Systems, Multilingualism and Multiple Identities; the Role of National Governments, *Policy Levers, and Effective Decentralization; and Integrated Systems.*

