

D6.3 E-STEP Good Practice Guide

Project Number	Nº. 539498-LLP-1-2013-1-GR-COMENIUS-CMP
Work package	6
Partner	CTI
Authors	Andreas Koskeris, Evangelia Boufardea
Document Type	Report
Distribution	Public
Status	Final
Document file	D6.3 E-STEP Good Practice Guide.docx
Version	v2.1
Date	19.10.2015
Number of pages	26

Acknowledgement:

This work has been partly funded by the European Commission through E-STEP project (Grant Agreement N° 2013-3698/001-001, Project Number 539498-LLP-1-2013-1-GR-COMENIUS-CMP 2013-3698). The authors wish to acknowledge the Commission for their support.

Versions of the Document

Version	Date	Contributor	Summary of Changes
v1.0	21.09.2015	Andreas Koskeris	1st version of deliverable
v1.1	23.09.2015	Evangelia Boufardea	Additions in 1st version of deliverable
v1.2	27.09.2015	Alan Bruce, Heinrich Rollmann	Review with comments
v2.0	28.09.2015	Evangelia Boufardea	Changes based on previous reviews
v2.1	19.10.2015	Alex Kendall	Grammar and syntax correction. Additions in the text.



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1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of this document is to provide a summary of the E-STEP project approach along with the findings from the project implementation. The deliverable seeks to understand the needs and aspirations of teachers, parents and students within the home-school relationship, and how the use of social networking tools may support best practice as well as raise new issues for home-school relationships. This Good Practice Guide brings together a range of relevant resources and evidence, synthesizing background policy and research with original empirical research findings. This is designed to lead to specific guidance for policy makers and training curriculum developers. The Guide is expected to act as a main exploitation means for E-STEP and it will be available on the official E-STEP website

The following sections include:

- E-STEP project (brief outline of the project aims and objectives)
- E-STEP methodology
 - a. Good practice reports
 - b. Overview of Training Framework
 - c. Implementation strategy and outcomes
- E-STEP outcomes (case studies on school action plans and their key results)
- E-STEP guidelines for further exploitation (based on project results: Ideas/proposals/guidelines for development of actions either E-STEP or based on E-STEP)
- Sustainability and Ownership of project outcomes

2. The E-STEP Project



E-STEP (<http://www.estep-project.eu/>) intends to help teachers and school managers acquire and reinforce attitudes, skills, knowledge and qualifications that will enable them to effectively **engage parents in schooling and interact with them through social networking technologies**. The activities produced through the project are designed in such a way to achieve this goal through developing, implementing and evaluating a training scheme for teachers aimed to improve such skills.

To this end E-STEP set the following objectives:

- To effectively **identify teachers', school managers' and parents' needs for effective collaboration** on school activities for the learner's benefit, as well as to locate barriers to and enablers for effective teacher-parent partnerships.
- To **develop a training framework** to improve teachers' and school manager's awareness and skills for effective collaboration with parents through use of social networking tools.
- To **implement the proposed training framework** by training teachers, school managers and school ICT experts.
- To **develop a community of practice** (teachers, school managers and parents) that will also facilitate the project's sustainability.
- To **evaluate the impact of the proposed approach** in terms of the effectiveness of the teacher training framework and engagement of parents in school-based activities
- To widely disseminate the project approach and outcomes to European educational and policy-making communities.

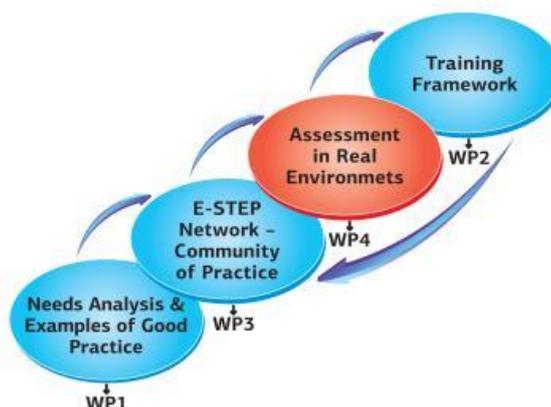
The final outcome of the project is **a specialized training framework and supportive materials for teachers** around Europe that enable them to:

- Support, engage and motivate parents to utilize social networking systems in order to collaborate with teachers
- Develop strategies and initiatives that teachers and school managers could use to communicate effectively with parents and to engage them in support of their children's learning at home and at school.
- Enable school leaders to support their school teachers on designing and effectively implementing parental engagements activities.

The training framework will be sustained in the future through the use of an online training process along with toolkits and guidelines for school staff. This process will enable teachers to become familiar with empirical knowledge about parents' engagement, and to directly apply this knowledge base in real-life situations in selected pilot schools around Europe.

The list of involved **target groups** (either directly or indirectly) is:

- Teachers
- School managers
- Parents
- Students
- Schools/ Schools networks
- Ministries/Policy makers/ Educational authorities
- Researchers in the field educational innovations
- Project partners



E-STEP is organised in 7 **Work Packages**, 4 of which are allocated to directing (WP1), developing (WP2), implementing (WP3) and evaluating (WP4) the training approach for teachers, school managers and ICT staff across Europe.

During the lifetime of the E-STEP project several actions were undertaken that illustrate the importance of parental engagement. Furthermore the outcomes emerging from the application

of the Training Framework in real environments are encouraging and will motivate more teachers and parents to try to build school-home relationships. Below, the E-STEP methodology is presented as well as some good practice cases from partner countries. At the end of the document, useful tips about parental engagement are given based on the E-STEP experience.

3. E-STEP METHODOLOGY

3.1 Review of good practices and needs analysis

The development of the E-STEP approach and training framework was based on a review of existing good practice across six countries, as well as on the collection and analysis of teachers' and parents' needs in all five of the participating countries. More specifically, the literature review yielded 21 cases, covering 1,144 schools, which varied in terms of the coordinating institutions, objectives, duration, types of schools involved and target groups. This task was further illuminated by empirical data collected through:

- a) 12 needs elicitation workshops/focus groups that were organized in all five of the participating countries (Austria, Bulgaria, Greece, Ireland and the UK) with parents, teachers and school leaders;
- b) A survey for parents that received 148 responses from all 5 of the participating countries;
- c) A survey conducted in Bulgaria, completed by 483 Heads of schools and 619 teachers. Below is a synopsis of the findings of the literature review, the focus groups and the survey.

In summary, the **forms of parents' participation in schooling** collected through the literature review include:

- Taking the initiative for organising workshops and lectures in their children's schools on issues such as anger management, discipline problems, drugs, professional orientation, interpersonal relations at school and at home, bullying, etc (Bulgaria, Ireland).
- Attending interactive workshops on improving school-family relationships (Cyprus).
- Getting involved in training and learning activities with their children (Cyprus).
- Having online access to school information on their child's attendance, attainment and behaviour, and to learning resources via a learning platform, including "skills for life" training and use of ICT (United Kingdom).
- Having access to learning resources through learning platform technologies (LPTs).
- Getting engaged in distance learning programmes (United Kingdom, Ireland).
- Teaching in the classroom on a regular basis, depending on their expertise, education and profession (Greece).
- Organising extra-curricular activities (e.g. symposia, art festivals), all aiming at improving effective partnerships and active collaboration (Cyprus, Ireland).

- Participating in activities that focused specifically on strengthening parents' and teachers' collaboration, such as parenting classes, out of hours clubs, communication via e-mails and text messages (United Kingdom).

Teachers' skills and attitudes that were identified (implicitly or explicitly) as important in fostering parental engagement in the 21 cases collected could be categorised as: a) communication, organisational and negotiation skills, b) Technical/ ICT support skills. The latter were reported as important in the cases that involved use of technology and ICT tools. However, the first category of skills was found to be a prerequisite for any sort of collaboration between schools and parents.

Technology was used in 8 of the 21 practices reviewed. The **tools** included the edumoodle LMS platform (Austria), blogs, mailing lists (Bulgaria), digital database, e-classes, blogs, website (Greece), e-mails, texting systems, website communication from school to home, was more evident than collaboration (United Kingdom), concept mapping, pupil log, online questionnaires, whiteboards lesson content and loggings software on the tablet (United Kingdom), websites, electronic newsletter, social media (Facebook, Twitter) (Ireland).

In most of these cases parents were likely to be recipients of information (in the form of newsletters, announcements on general information on school events through websites and blogs), rather than providers or collaborators. Overall, technology seemed to be used in order to facilitate communication, and in most cases one-way, rather than to provide opportunities for interaction and collaboration between schools/teachers and parents. Even so, there are some more positive reports from Austria, where a majority of parents have welcomed the newly available NMS schools' information network and associated resources as well as from the UK, where parents were involved in a computer-based homework support programme, despite having varying attitudes to supporting traditional homework in general.

Based on the analysis of the workshop reports, the survey for parents and the two Bulgarian surveys for teachers and school principals, the following key points have emerged. These have informed the design of the ESTEP training framework:

- **Although Parents state that they are open and willing** to get engaged this is not always applied in practice. This was made evident both in the workshops, as well as from the parents' survey results, which showed that although parents considered substantial involvement to be very important, the actual level of their involvement was significantly lower and they were often not very active (mainly receiving information rather than contributing). The same seemed to apply to teachers: With a few exceptions, although most teachers openly stated that they welcome parental engagement, they still had reservations related to financial issues, work overload, as well as the perception of parental engagement as an unwelcomed intervention in their work. There was a sense that each party tended to "blame" the other for not being willing or capable of cooperating. Thus, it becomes clear that parents' engagement

should be dealt with as a two way process where power balance, authority issues and roles should be carefully addressed. This was also evident from the review of good practice of teacher–parent collaboration.

- Following on from the previous point, there is a **need to agree on the terms of reference**, i.e. parental engagement and/or parental involvement. As such the training programme of E-STEP ensures that teachers explore this difference and understand the value and potential impact on attainment and achievement of different forms of parental interaction with school.
- **Teachers' attitudes and skills** for effective parental engagement seem to be very closely linked. Training teachers on communication skills, that were reported as the number one factor, cannot be dissociated from supporting them to develop attitudes such as empathy for parents' perspectives, diversities, perceptions and own experiences from schooling. This emphasis on communicative and affective skills for teachers was found both in the studies where technology was used as well as in the ones where collaboration with parents was implemented in more 'traditional' ways.
- Similarly, teachers' individual attitudes and skills cannot be viewed in isolation from the overall **school ethos**: Any intervention or training on effectively engaging parents should be placed within a wider whole school strategy for developing a school ethos that values parental engagement. This should be complemented by a co-ordinated staff development programme that trains all staff within a school, regardless of role, to engage effectively and productively with parents.
- In addition to these skills, teachers need to have a highly developed **understanding of the policy and legal framework** within which they work and to be able to exercise good judgement in relation to these.
- Not all parents have access to the internet at home and schools need to be **mindful of not creating a digital divide**. Similarly, parents' fluency in the dominant languages and discourses of the school are a key issue and parental engagement strategies need to take careful account of this.
- Regarding the use of social media for communicating with parents, there were mixed views from both parents and teachers, with the exception of the specific schools from the United Kingdom that are already implementing such practices. This was also supported by survey findings, suggesting that there is need for training teachers on **efficient communication through ICT**, i.e. on how the perceived positive aspects of phone or face-to-face communication (i.e. synchronous communication) can be transferred to online contexts.
- Regarding the potential of social media for parents' engagement, the results of the parents' survey suggested that parents tend to expect that their involvement through social media will simply reflect or substitute their current, conventional types of involvement. It is important thus to present the benefits of **ICT tools** and the new opportunities that they can provide **for advanced and additional engagement and interaction** between parents and schools.



- Resistance towards the use of social media for educational purposes and for engaging parents seems to be more intense in Primary education, mainly due to privacy and security issues.
- Social media and ICT to support parental engagement is more likely to be more widely used if it is **accessible on portable devices**, particularly mobile phones (iPhones, smartphones) and tablets.
- Most teachers and parents have very little experience of collaborative parental engagement in non face-to-face contexts, and this type of interaction is still highly valued by both sides, especially by parents. **Social media should be an enhancement to skills not a replacement** and will only work if good face-to-face relations are already in place.
- Most of the studies discussed across countries exploit few of the affordances of web 2.0 – ‘broadcast’ or ‘transmission’ was the dominant form of parental engagement identified in the literature - positioning parents as consumers rather than producers or active and agentive participants in children’s school learning. **Social media tools provide new opportunities to reconfigure and re-conceptualise parental engagement.**
- Training on ICT was reported in all countries as important for teachers; however it was implied that teachers who are not familiar with ICT and social networking technologies need first to be convinced of the benefits these can provide and develop more **positive mindsets** and greater confidence in their use.
- **Training for teachers needs to be generative and enquiry oriented** so that teachers are able to explore and take account of the complexities of the social, cultural and economic contexts within which they operate professionally to ensure that PE initiatives are nuanced and meaningful to communities in which schools participate.
- Effective engagement activities might seek to position **parents as co-constructors** rather than recipients or consumers.
- Parents need **clear guidance** about how to help their child with homework activities and these activities need to be designed to encourage parental collaboration. Parental enjoyment of homework activities increased with increased involvement.
- Joint activities between parents and teachers that involve role-playing and stepping into each other’s shoes had positive results (based on the review in Greece) in understanding each other’s views. These could also respond to another need that was identified in Ireland, that it is important for teachers to be **aware of parents’ backgrounds**. Socioeconomic differences between parents and teachers, parental demoralisation and marginality, inequality and exclusion due to the recent economic crisis need to be taken into account when designing teachers training, so they are able to take account of the complexities of parents’ social and economic contexts.

3.2 E-STEP Training Framework



The E-STEP framework, was based on the findings outlined above and represents a learning programme that aims to support reflective approaches to parental engagement that draw on effective use of social media.

The framework has been designed for use by any member of the school's professional community including **school leaders, teachers** and **ICT coordinators**. The generative nature of the framework means that the framework user, and their local, strategic priorities, are always the starting point for E-STEP actions. As such the framework is useful to a wide range of users and can be flexed to achieve a broad spectrum of purposes from micro-interventions at the level of a single class teacher working with their own class and a discrete group of parents to a whole school focus led by the senior leadership team or across school ICT coordinator.

The E-STEP framework recognizes that because no two schools or college contexts are the same, parental engagement strategies that make use of social media must be tailored to the specific needs of the school community if they are to be successful. As such, the framework encourages users to take an enquiry-based, or action research, approach that will put them and their school at the centre of learning enabling them to: build grounded knowledge about their parent community; articulate local vision and aspirations for parental engagement; and work collaboratively towards implementation of a 'road map' for development and transformation. The E-STEP framework also accepts that individual teachers, parents and school communities are at different stages in their adoption and use of social media. Throughout the learning process users will be encouraged to explore social media in two ways; as a context for stimulating and sharing their own thinking and learning and collaborating; and as potential tools to support and facilitate new ways of working and interacting with parents.

The framework comprises three modules or ESTEPS, that, taken together, will enable users to work through three key stages of a participatory action research process, a process in which both the enquirer and an active 'participant' in the context is explored. This will involve:

- *documenting and contextualising the current situation in relation to parental engagement and use of social media in their context;*
- *identifying development goals and working towards change;*
- *understanding impact, affect and influence.*

It is hoped that working through the ESTEPS will not only support development of teacher's parental engagement work but also enable users to work competently and confidently within an action research cycle, and build research expertise and capacity within the school that can be put to work in other aspects of school development and support a sustainable capacity to improve over the longer term.

Learning with the E-STEP framework can be paced to suit teachers' own timeframe for the work they want to undertake. They can choose which areas of work to spend most or least time on according to what they hope to achieve. It is advisable to work through each of the modules however so that the teacher completes the whole action research cycle to ensure that

his/her aims have been met, the impact of the E-STEP intervention fully understood and that selected success criteria have been met. Completing the cycle will also help teachers to plan the 'what next' so that they can continue to develop and improve over the longer term.

3.3 Implementation of the Training Framework

E-STEP partners piloted and tested the Training Framework, so as to help school staff (teachers and heads of schools) improve partnerships with parents through social networking technologies. The following activities were undertaken:

- Creation of Implementation plans describing training activities and providing guidelines to partners on the organization of the online and face-to-face training seminars for school staff.
- Organization of 2 phases of seminars (132 schools in total) in order to test and evaluate the training framework.
- Each phase undertook a detailed evaluation procedure leading to recommendations for further enhancement and revision of the training framework.
- Following the seminars, participating schools organized and implemented several school based activities (utilizing social networking platforms of their preference or the Open Discovery Space Platform).



How a new school can use the Training Framework?

Research evidence suggests that teachers and trainers generally prefer to plan and produce their own lesson plans and resources so as to work in ways that suit their own teaching styles and preferences and respond effectively to the needs of their students.

As mentioned above participating schools were involved in this way: First, the teachers were trained in well-organized workshops based on a PAR (Participatory action research) 'inquiry' method. The training workshop raised teachers awareness about issues and debates in parental engagement including obstacles to successful engagement and the potential gains of an effective strategy. Each school spent time identifying their own goals and exploring the



issues and challenges specific to their context. They then designed an ESTEP intervention suitable for their school and an action plan that would help to implement their intervention. The implementation of the activity depended on the nature of activity, the type of school and the available period. A brief guide follows below on how to use the E-STEP material:

STEP #1: Read carefully the E-STEP Training Framework and the Trainees' guide

The E-STEP Training Framework comprises three modules that, taken together, enable teachers to work through three key stages of a participatory action research process, a process in which teachers are both the enquirer and an active 'participant' in the context being explored.

The Trainees' guide accompanies the E-STEP Training Framework and is supported by a teacher's guide and a suite of learning activities. Together these resources support schools to develop, implement and evaluate strategies to engage parents more actively and effectively in the work of the school through use of social networking technologies. This process will enable teachers to

- **explore** key issues and debates in parental engagement;
- **engage** with the wider school community to better understand parental engagement and the existing and potential roles of social media in their own context;
- **create** new meanings, identities and roles in relation to parental engagement;
- **experiment** with social media as a tool to support effective parental engagement;
- **collaborate** with parents, teachers and the wider school community;
- **drive** innovation and implement change.

STEP #2: Understanding meanings and value of parental engagement

This step follows the study of the Trainees' Guide and based on Module one. Module one, '**Understanding Parental Engagement in Context**', introduce action research methodologies, modes and strategies and open up exploration of key concepts and definitions. Teachers will be encouraged to experiment with social media (for example E-STEP community in ODS <http://portal.opendiscoveryspace.eu/community/teachers-and-parents-collaborative-community-669875>) and engage in reflexive evaluation of existing practice, cultures, attitudes and values.

The teachers in order to explore definitions and values should reply to crucial questions

- *What issues or concerns are motivating you to think about parental engagement?*
- *How would you describe current practice, attitudes and values towards parental engagement at your school?*
- *How are you currently using social media to support parental engagement?*



- *What do you want to achieve through your parental engagement work?*
- *How is your definition of parental engagement developing in brief?*

STEP #3: Contexts for parental engagement

The next step is about **planning and implementing context specific parental engagement** which will facilitate a series of interventions derived directly from the close examination of the school/college context undertaken in previous step. Teachers should identify strategic priorities for their institution alongside a bespoke, context specific, 'road map' for change that will identify the key actions and dependencies (resources, roles, responsibilities, training needs) that will be required to realise the aspirations articulated in previous step.

Teachers in order to explore their own context – planning their parental engagement review, should reply to following questions.

- *What are the key questions driving your review?*
- *Who do you want to involve in your audit?*
- *How will you involve others (parents, young people, wider community, etc)?*
- *Are there any ethical issues that you will need to take in to consideration? How will you respond to these to ensure that your road map for change is undertaken responsibly?*
- *What evidence will you need to collect?*
- *How are you going to collect additional data?*
- *How might you model use of social media to support the review process?*

STEP #4: Forms of Parental Engagement

Teachers should see the **parental engagement in practice: understanding outcomes, impact and influence**. This step is based on Module 3 of the Trainees' Guide and teachers will explore a range of strategies for documenting, describing and evaluating the outcomes of parental engagement in practice. It will support design, development and implementation of robust and rigorous evaluation tools that draw on a range of qualitative and quantitative traditions.

In order teachers to design a "Road Map" for change, some useful questions should be replied

- *What are the key issues arising from your review?*
- *What will the benefits and impact of your action plan be? Who will be the beneficiaries?*
- *What works well and what do you want to do more of? What doesn't work so that you could do better? What new areas of activity do you want to develop? What's the base-line against which you will judge progression and development?*
- *What's your timeframe for change?*



- *What roles and responsibilities will you need to allocate to achieve your actions?*
- *What new resources will you need to support your road map?*
- *What support will you need to be successful? For what, and from whom? How will you go about this?*
- *What would be appropriate indicators of success?*
- *How will you combine your practitioner enquiry role with your teacher/professional role. What do you see as the possible problems and how will you address them?*

STEP #5: Design the Action Plan

Based on all the previous steps, teachers will be able to design an appropriate and effective action plan, suitable for their school. The social media that will be used should be known to parents. Undoubtedly if the parents are accustomed with the proposed social networking tool the action plan will be successful. Teachers can see some best cases of action plans in UK here <https://workingwiththestep.wordpress.com/>

STEP #6: Implementation of the Action Plan

The final and most important step is the implementation of the action plan. Teachers should follow their action plan and try to engage the parents skipping the possible obstacles. The use of social networking tools is compulsory.

4. E-STEP RESULTS

In this Section we present some best cases of action plans implemented in schools in partners' countries following the two phases of seminars organization.

4.1 E-STEP in Austria

Parents' training and involvement on a school's LMS platform



School: Private New Middle School Marianum Steinberg, Austria

The school is one of the basic and most important educational institutions of our society. The new, private middle school and high school Marianum Steinberg in Burgenland in Austria offers pupils the best possible education, motivated by the Christian view of the person in cooperation with all school partners. The school do not want the pupils to just give the legally prescribed curriculum, but to prepare them for secondary schools, in their profession and later stages of life. That is they attach great importance to holistic education.

The parents are a mainstay of the school partnership and together, the school and parents strive for the welfare of their students. The goal is to talk to parents and teachers, better learn to know each other, learn mutual support, and information exchange of needs and ideas.

The learning management platform LMS.at was expanded into an interactive communication and information platform for parents (https://lms.at/lmsteam/download/file/info_eltern.pdf).

On this platform, information can become recurrent questions, and problem solving suggestions, retrieved and entered automatically. In further development it should be available for communication between teachers and parents. The new communication technologies (circular mail, digital music books, chat, news, calendar, etc.) enable parents to support the learning process of their children more effectively. The challenge is for parents to initiate this type of communication and encourage them to recognize and embrace the benefits.

The introduction of the LMS.at platform is part of the school development and is based on the proven concept of piloting the LMS.at platform. The School Management also benefit from use of the LMS.at platform.

Parents receive an access and safety training to the LMS.at platform. Parents support their children in the learning process and discuss this regularly with the help of the tools offered by the LMS.at platform.

4.2 E-STEP in Bulgaria

51 Secondary School „Elissaveta Bagryana“



51th Secondary School „Elissaveta Bagryana“ in Sofia is a school with rich history and traditions. It is 53 years old and is situated just 2 km away from the center of the city. From 1991 an "Arts"

profile is studied in the school and many activities are oriented to arts and creativity. Currently the school has almost 1200 students from first to twelfth grade. The school team consists of 85 people, including 70 teaching staff. There are also 15 children with special educational needs for whom special care is taken.

The school offers an excellent schooling environment, a beautiful park, a small chapel and sports facilities. ICT is taught from second to twelfth grade. Some of the students have international certificates INGOT. Local computer labs provide over 200 computer stations with high speed internet, which places the school in one of the top places in Bulgaria. Most classes are equipped with electronic books, interactive boards and other presentation hardware and different advanced methods are used to increase understanding and learning of the students and their effectiveness in class. The school has a separate building, which houses cozy dining room for 120 students. This dining room is equipped with a kitchen where qualified cooks prepare hot and healthy food for the students.

The teachers are highly qualified and continuously participate in training courses, some teachers have undertaken specialized study in Europe and the US. Students receive good training, proved by their high results on external evaluations. Many students have earned prestigious awards in different school Olympiads and competitions. They also develop various extracurricular activities - sports, theater, media, and interest clubs, leading to numerous performances of the young artists over the years - exhibitions, workshops, participation in various competitions. Through the "Confucius Center" a Chinese teacher was attracted to teach Chinese language and culture.

The school participates in many international projects supported by EC funding (Comenius) which has helped the development of huge network of contacts as well as in many national and global initiatives with different institutional partners such as New Bulgarian University, Sofia University "Kliment. Ohridski", Microsoft - Bulgaria, Bulgarian National Research Network Association etc.

51 Secondary School actively cooperates actively with many non-governmental organizations (NGO) as the association "Parents," "Paideia" Foundation, "National Network of Children" and others and actively encourages projects with parental involvement. The school participates in the E-STEP project from the very beginning and has hosted two workshops already. Due to the



active involvement and participation of school staff four new Facebook pages were created by teachers (in addition to the main one "School 51") where there is an active dialogue and exchange of views between parents and teachers. The pages are as follows:

- "initial stage"- <https://www.facebook.com/51sou>
- "junior" - <https://www.facebook.com/progimnasia51sou>
- "high school" - <https://www.facebook.com/gymnasium51sou>
- "healthy life" - <https://www.facebook.com/Здравословен-начин-на-живот-за-ученици-родители-и-учители-на-51-СОУ-317462978413943/timeline/>

For the past academic year daily attendance doubled every three months to reach in September 2015 respectively 420, 280, 240, 180 visits per day. In 24 of the 42 classes, parents and class teachers themselves created closed Facebook groups to exchange information. The number of absences between the first and the second term decreased by 6% and the average grade in school increased by 7 percentage points due to the increased interaction between teachers and parents and broader involvement of parents in schooling activities. These numbers are real proof of the dedication of the teaching staff in parental engagement issues and the improvement of school results due to the coordinated effort and the use of new innovative ICT and social media.

4.3 E-STEP in Greece

Primary School of Highland Zone, Zakynthos

The Highland Zone Primary School is located in the village of Aghios Leontas in the western, mountainous, side of Zakynthos island. The village has 415 inhabitants and its location (26kms) from the capital of the island makes the school hard to be accessed by pupils who come from other neighbouring villages. The school has 6 members of staff, 4 General Education teachers, 1 Physical Education teacher and 1 English teacher. Multiculturalism is the main characteristic of the local community, due to the popularity of Zakynthos as a touristic destination, which has resulted in a big number of mixed marriages. The school principal, Mrs Xanthie Chouliara, has organised several events in the school in order to bridge the gap between pupils' and parents' different nationalities, cultures and languages, which were welcomed by parents and had very positive outcomes. This has been also welcomed by the majority of parents who are familiar with technology and online communication. The school is generally active in addressing issues of variability and conflict resolution and was granted an excellence award at national level among 1035 schools for a project against racism. This news was also congratulated and disseminated by the [Parents' Union](#) in Zakynthos.

The school is also active in using technology, to the extent that the school equipment allows this, and E-mail is used on a daily basis to update the parents on school activities, curriculum

issues and homework. Their E-STEP activity focused on E-safety and extended in 8 two-hour training sessions for parents that were delivered by 3 teachers.

The key priorities they set were:

- Raising pupils' and parents' awareness on the potential dangers when using the internet.
- Informing parents and pupils on cases of cybercrime and digital terrorism and how to deal with them.
- Dealing with addiction to facebook and over- exposure of personal information.

The overarching approach was that technology and the internet have numerous benefits, however parents and pupils should be adequately informed on how to protect themselves from dangers. Through the seminars they organized in school they also intended to enhance parents' overall digital literacy and specific technology skills, and to actively involve them in an ongoing strategy of the school for safety on the internet. Other stakeholders were also involved such as the Greek [Cyber Crime Unit](#) and the local School Counsellor. Google hang-out was used for parents who could not attend the face-to-face meetings, which were recorded and openly accessible on Youtube. The training materials they used in their meetings with parents were also posted on the Greek digital community of E-STEP on the [ODS portal](#). The activity was also disseminated through the [national e-safety organization](#). The main benefit that was reported from the overall activity was that the school adopted a holistic approach towards e-safety and parents participated as a very active target- group in it, since they were persuaded about the importance of e-safety both for them and for their children. Below we present the artifact that Mrs Xanthie Chouliara produced in the E-STEP training workshop, presenting her view of teachers' and parents' relationships in the Primary School of Highland Zone.



4.4 E-STEP in Ireland

Killinarden Sacred Heart Senior National School

Killinarden Sacred Heart Senior National School (SNS), a primary level school, is located in West Dublin, in a large urban area which has been classified as disadvantaged under the Irish Government's DEIS scheme [for supporting disadvantaged areas through additional educational supports). There historically have been high levels of unemployment in the area, particularly long-term unemployed, also low educational attainment and many parents with negative school experiences, leading to a challenge for teachers when endeavouring to work with families.



The school is a 'senior' national or primary school, so it operates from third class to sixth. There are 290 pupils, with each year having three classes, each class at that level denoted by the teacher's name rather than being classified by number. There are 12 classes in total.



Current use of Social Media within the school

The school has been using edmodo, the educational social media tool, with teachers and students.



The school has also begun using Class Dojo. The school is a participant in the Digital Schools of Distinction programme.



Edmodo began last year with the older children in sixth class. Students took to it immediately, loving the new way of working. As it has proved successful the use of EDMODO is being extended, with the teacher, Kevin, who led it previously with 6th class now working with the new intake in 3rd class, where it is hoped that the children will become familiar with this social media tool at an earlier stage.

Killinarden SNS E-Step Actions

The school is represented in E-Step by Gerry Diver. As part of the action plans Gerry introduced some of the parents of the children in 6th class to EDMODO as viewers of the activities. The initial response gave good feedback, however as the religious cycle of confirmations began in the late spring for students, the time was limited and active feedback dropped off. With the expanded use of Edmodo in the school, it is planned to encourage and engage more parents to participate with it.



The other Social Media engagement with parents has been through Class DoJO. This operates as a behavioural rewards system in App form, and allows texts with parents.



Outcome to Date of E-Step Activity

Gerry is planning to extend the use of Edmodo and bring it to the parents of children in all the classes. With Class Dojo, he got a positive response from parents whose children were having particular issues such as homework. He shared the class dojo apps, and through this parents

could see the homework being set, and were better able to support their children. This has proven successful, as they liked this option. Social media engagement with parents was slow to start, however the variety and attractiveness of the social media tools being used is proving effective and will hopefully grow.

4.5 E-STEP in UK

Chad Vale Primary School

Chad Vale is a two-form entry primary school (for children aged 4-11) located in Edgbaston, Birmingham in the West Midlands of England. The school, which opened in 1974 as a one-form entry primary school, is situated in secluded, pleasant grounds, with adjacent woodland and has its own sports field with multi-use games area and an attractive grassed play area. There are currently (September 2015) thirteen classes, two in Reception to Y5 and a single class in Year 6. Chad Vale works pro-actively to develop close relationships between home and school to enable school to work collaboratively with families and carers to support children to achieve their full potential. The school has a long tradition of using ICT in the classroom and more recently has harnessed its expertise in this area to [work more actively with parents](#). To complement a formal reporting system used in the school for academic purposes, the school makes extensive use of Twitter, [@chadvaleprimary](#), and [Facebook](#) to interact with parents and in particular to open a 'window' on the day to day activities of the school. The school has a very well developed E-safety strategy and was the first primary school in England to be [awarded the 360 E-safety award](#).



As a mature and adventurous, and ground-breaking, user of social media Chad Vale Primary, under the leadership of ICT co-ordinator Kerry Grosvenor decided that their ESTEP action needed to focus on evaluation. As such their plan focused on the impact of the school's Twitter use. Kerry designed a questionnaire for parents and worked with Dave Harte and Phil Taylor to make use of [social media analytics](#) to find out more about the reach, influence and value of the school's work with Twitter. Here is the detailed report – [E-](#)



[Step Case Study – Chad Vale Primary School](#). Kerry talks about what she found out and the next steps for the school in this [video](#).

5. E-STEP GUIDELINES

The aim of this section is to present, based on project results, ideas and proposals for development of exploitation actions based on the experiences derived from E-STEP implementation.

Some of the most effective exploitation methods are centered on a number of points and methods which include:

- Networking
 - Adoption of the E-STEP training material in future national and international training academies for teachers and heads of schools organized by EA, funded mainly through ERASMUS+ KA1 (School staff mobility).
 - Presentation of the E-STEP project results to other educational providers in the EU that are interested in parental engagement. They will use E-STEP resources not only to support activities but also to improve the field of parental engagement. The E-STEP community on platforms like Open Discovery Space (ODS) will help this, since it will be enriched with new members constantly.
 - Development of linkage with organizations like EDEN, NCRE, etc
 - Promotion of E-STEP results in European school networks (e.g. EUN, ENIS)
 - Regular discussions with school directors (especially from ODS and ISE projects) regarding parental engagement follow up activities based on E-STEP.
 - E-STEP project outcomes to be presented during suitable events dedicated to e-learning and innovative education – conferences, round tables, ICT training workshops etc.

- Linkage to allied initiatives
 - Collaboration with the Ministries of Education in order to reach the National educational systems about the E-STEP project and convince them to use project products.
 - Constant contact with national and EU level parents associations in order to integrate project training framework into their own activities.
 - Ongoing reviews of trending issues in relation with parental engagement
 - Enhancing profile (academic and applied) through

- Further application of the E-STEP training framework and following this, further research on the issue of parental engagement through social networking tools

These approaches were planned in the original E-STEP project proposal. The strong and engaged involvement of target groups and stakeholders (teachers, school managers, policy makers) in the identification of needs and the structure and implementation of the training framework was regarded as central to the goal of developing increased levels of user acceptance, ownership and commitment beyond the end of the project. Moreover, workshops, summer schools, local dissemination activities and the concluding conference that will be organized during the life-cycle of E-STEP have been conceptualized with the aim of supporting long-term bonds within and between the E-STEP teachers' and parents' community. After the project is finished, all partners are expected to continue to support this in their respective countries. The training approach is in line with their mission and can be integrated in the numerous projects and training programs operated at national and international levels which target teachers' competences, professional development, school leadership and development as well as use of online applications. The use of social networking tools is designed to establish these communities during the project's course, to foster sustainability and future extension as information hubs and sharing points of experiences and practices around teacher-parent partnerships.

The ODS platform was used to provide E-STEP materials for webinars and anyone interested in getting trained based on E-STEP guidelines can find this material here <http://portal.opendiscoveryspace.eu/community/e-step-webinar-830104> . The E-STEP community <http://portal.opendiscoveryspace.eu/community/teachers-and-parents-collaborative-community-669875#> includes teachers and parents who participated in E-STEP as pilot schools, but also welcomes other teachers and parents who are interested in building effective partnerships. As members of the community you can access and upload resources on parental engagement, post news and events and take part in discussions with teachers and parents from all around Europe.

6. SUSTAINABILITY AND OWNERSHIP

In addition to what is presented on Section 5 concerning further exploitation activities (from the consortium and relevant stakeholders utilizing project results) which are directly related with project results sustainability and future usage, partners are committed to continue the existence of their network and collaboration through:

- a. Continuous existence of project's web site
- b. Provide support services for potential beneficiaries through project's web site



- c. Enhance the web site with additional information and results from E-STEP based activities for the partners' network of associated partners (mainly schools)
- d. Identify possible future opportunities to further enhance project results and outcomes

To support this agreement, the partnership decided to hold an IPR agreement. This means that any product, material or design or other work created as a direct consequence of the implementation of the Project E-STEP and especially the E-STEP public deliverables included in the E-STEP Portal, are available to third parties and Consortium members under the terms of the ***Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported Public License***.



This project has been funded with support from the European Commission.

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