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HOW TO GUIDE CHILDREN SAFELY THROUGH DISTANCE LEARNING THROUGH TIMES OF CRISIS



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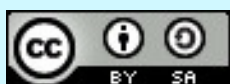
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www.upskilling-parents.eu



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1 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The family is the core of European society, the starting point for building democracy, participation and social change, and therefore social support and help for families with special needs is very important. When we work with young people, especially young families, families that are disadvantaged both in terms of education and socio-economically, we know that they often need help on the same issues. Consequently, the further development and promotion of higher quality continuing education for parents are particularly important to keep up with global developments and challenges and to support their children. Especially the shift to Distance Learning // Homeschooling // Distance Education due to the Corona epidemic showed how essential it is to provide a tremendous amount of learning in the role as parents so that they as well as their children remain capable of acting. Socio-economically disadvantaged families from educationally deprived backgrounds have great difficulty responding to such events so that they often feel excluded from society, and their children often leave school without qualifications. These families are often difficult to reach. Due to this, the main priority of this project is to identify effective and innovative ways/opportunities/services to break out of this cycle. The best practices collected and shared during the implementation are based on high value and quality principles.

In particular, we will research which internal family dispositions are predominant in the European Community, whether Greek and Austrian children, young people, parents and their families have similar problems or not, and which approaches to solving them might be helpful. Associated partners who are active in family counselling at schools and other institutions support the project with suggestions and inputs.



1 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Experience has shown that many parents and their families are relieved when they realise that they are not alone with their problems. For this reason, the results of the project are disseminated in the form of an online article, a guide and a collection of methods that describe how family problems are dealt with in a European comparison and show different approaches to solving them. In this way, not only the individual organizations benefit from the European added value, but also the families can get the feeling that other people in Europe are in a similar situation as they are and it leads to mutual understanding and sympathy across national borders.



2. PROJECT-TEAM

2.1 AKADEMIE FÜR POLITISCHE BILDUNG UND DEMOKRATIEFÖRDERNDE MAßNAHMEN



The Akademie für Politische Bildung und demokratiefördernde Maßnahmen is a non-profit association that addresses topics in the field of civic education for people of all ages in order to increase equal opportunities for unemployed and employed people, migrants and especially women in the labor market. We support the personal and academic development of children, adults and disadvantaged people through a variety of educational services for schools, businesses and public institutions.

The aim of our activities is to promote political education and support disadvantaged groups in participating in society through targeted educational programs, international understanding and cooperation, and written, visual and audio documentation.

Our team develops and implements innovative educational projects. Our competencies include coaching, consulting and research, as well as training to improve professional, digital and global competencies.

However, the core competencies of our association's work are supporting people to actively participate in society and strengthening active citizenship and European citizenship.

In our workshops, participants often use business games to learn how to apply and implement competencies such as media literacy, social entrepreneurship, communication strategies, intercultural dialogue, human rights and democracy. Our experienced trainers are constantly developing new methods tailored to the needs of the learners.

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2.2 EDUCOMMART



Educommart is a non-profit organization founded in 2016 and based in Athens. Educommart is an educational institution that offers continuing education for young people and adults. It also defines itself as a meeting place for creative educational pathways for adults who have the desire to make their own life path meaningful.

At the same time, Educommart is a meeting point for partner institutions that work on social, societal and economic bottlenecks with their projects and develop and implement educational programs together with Educommart. In doing so, they show ways to enrich the personal lives of individuals in their everyday and professional lives and thus have a positive impact on our society as a whole. To achieve its goals, Educommart focuses on values such as charity, solidarity, cooperation and trust.



Educommart wants to create space for new structures and impulses for a holistic approach to education. In doing so, it chooses ways of education, communication, music and art, which together form educommart's mission statement. The goal is movement and connection. The aim is to show that creativity is a holistic and interdisciplinary alternative to achieve educational processes and communication with each other at the same time. For example, even in ancient Greece, pupils were accompanied in their education not only by a school teacher but also by a music teacher. Even then, music was considered one of the most important, creative educational elements for personality development. Educommart therefore tries to design its project work as creatively as possible and with musical elements in order to establish contact with and raise awareness among a broadly interested public. Furthermore, the association focuses on socio-political, cultural-critical and media-pedagogical topics in order to sensitise families for a caring media education.

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2.3 FORM2YOU



Form2you Association is a non-profit association that aims to empower people, groups, organizations and communities to respond autonomously to the demands and needs of the social inclusion process. Form2you also develops social activities aimed at children, young people, adults and older people.

The aim is to support a wide range of initiatives to promote social inclusion through culture: ranging from the promotion of artistic practices by and for disadvantaged groups, to the dissemination of accessible digital content, by fostering integrated projects with a cultural background for local development and labor market integration in socio-cultural areas, as well as the promotion of the social inclusion of children and young people from vulnerable socio-economic contexts, to equalise opportunities and strengthen social cohesion, giving priority to the descendants of immigrants and disadvantaged communities. In addition, we offer a range of actions aimed at promoting the empowerment of potentially vulnerable groups, with a focus on personal and social skills development.



We achieve this by:

- Promoting social justice and inclusion of vulnerable groups;
- Sensitising civil society in general and families and institutions in particular to demonstrate the importance of inclusion;
- Volunteering;
- Strengthening young people's social participation, i.e. their involvement in the community to promote their active participation in decision-making processes;

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<https://form2you.pt/>



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2.4 SYSTEME IN BEWEGUNG



Systeme in Bewegung e.V. is a non-profit association from northern Germany. The team consists of full-time professionals and volunteers from educational, socio-pedagogical and psychological professions. The aim of the association is to support and accompany parents and families and to promote family cohesion. The association also wants to promote the exchange of information and the Europe-wide networking of parents as well as the European idea of solidarity. We believe that the smallest system in our society, the family, deserves special attention. In the demanding and fast-moving time we are experiencing today, it is important to create cohesion here. We want to achieve it by helping families to deal with the special tasks we have today creatively and constructively because Europe begins and works in small ways.

Systems in Motion creates space for exchange between people, organises training, provides advice and support to develop potential and use creative solutions. The highly qualified team is active at various locations throughout northern Germany.

They focus on movement promotion and experiential education as well as systemic, body-oriented counselling and family support. The team offers adult education, especially in the areas of stress coaching, relationship management and experiential education. In addition, Systeme in Bewegung provides systemic and media pedagogical counselling and coaching for individuals, couples and families. In cooperation with the Institute for Experiential Education, SIB has carried out various projects in the field of youth work.

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2.5 VSI ZMOGISKUJU ISTEKLIU STEBESENOS IR PLETROS BIURAS



The aims of ŽISP B are:

- to observe, analyse and evaluate social phenomena and processes in the field of social and educational policy;
- to create, adapt and implement innovative social and educational initiatives and projects related to formal and non-formal education for both professionals and various target groups.

The organization develops and implements various projects, initiatives and interventions both at national-local and transnational levels, in collaboration with formal and non-formal education providers, research centers, associations, NGOs, social cooperatives, SMEs, training centers, local institutions, public services, schools, etc.

The offers are aimed at different target groups: Young people, volunteers, victims of violence, (ex-)offenders, social risk families, social workers, social partners, people with disabilities, etc. The services provided include:

- Development and implementation of local and international projects, mostly with socially excluded target groups;
- Development and accreditation of various programs for youth workers, volunteers, offenders, postgraduate social workers, social worker assistants, nurses, managers, employers, etc.



ZISPB seeks to create or adapt new psychological services and training for the different groups of professionals working with young people and socially disadvantaged groups in order to provide them with information, advice and educational activities; to initiate, participate in and implement both local and international projects in the field of social work, formal and non-formal education; to improve the skills, competences and knowledge of professionals and volunteers and to provide them with methodological support.

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2.6 LUETEC



LUETEC was founded in Naples (IT) in 2000 as a university of the third stage of life and has developed, over the years, into a lifelong learning center that serves as a reference point for Neapolitan citizens.

LUETEC is also an EU training center, recognized in Europe as a partner and coordinator of many projects in both youth and adult education and vocational training. LUETEC has participated in more than 50+ projects and partnerships such as Leonardo da Vinci, Socrates, Grundtvig, Youth in Action and currently the Erasmus+ program.

LUETEC also works in the capacity of a consulting firm within the framework of European cooperation for private and public institutions: Municipalities, Community Consortia, Primary and Secondary Schools, Universities, Third Age Colleges, NGOs, Foundations and other adult education organization throughout Italy and Europe



LUETEC staff and teachers have great experience in setting up and developing Erasmus+ Strategic Partnerships, both in collaboration for innovation and in exchange of good practices.

The main objective of LUETEC is to develop studies and research for the development of new teaching/learning methods for young and adult people based on different themes: Foreign Languages, Creativity, Human Rights, ICT, Art and Music Therapy, Critical Thinking, Environmental Protection and Cultural Heritage Protection. LUETEC organizes cultural edutainment events such as opera concert lessons, classical music concert lessons and Neapolitan classical music show lessons in many venues around the city.

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3 PROBLEM OUTLINE HOMESCHOOLING

Homeschooling is generally understood as "[...] the educational approach in which children learn [temporarily or permanently] in their own home environment instead of attending a school [state or private] [1]

This form of learning has, so far, been chosen voluntarily by few parents and not because there is a lack of educational institutions or an economic necessity for it. These parents saw reasons for choosing this form of knowledge transfer primarily in protecting their children from a bad school climate, in taking the religious and moral value transmission into their own hands, as well as in living an alternative method of raising children. Thus, they were mainly parents who chose this form of knowledge transmission out of religious, academic or relationship-oriented motivation, i.e. bottom-up.[2]

These parents dealt with various forms of learning and prepared themselves well for this situation. They organized themselves and their family and created structures to successfully implement and realize this system.

Homeschooling as we experience it now, top-down, raises a lot of

problems. The change to homeschooling came almost overnight and teachers, children and parents hardly had time to adjust to these new circumstances. It was not voluntary and still overstrains the triangular relationship of teachers - pupils - parents. Above all, parents whose financial means are extremely limited cannot provide children with the necessary terminal equipment or internet access. Educationally disadvantaged groups are now even more difficult for teachers to reach and lack an understanding of the situation in which their children find themselves. The academic performance of these children is severely jeopardized, as are their future opportunities in the labor market.

[1]Deutscher Bundestag, Wissenschaftliche Dienste (Hg.): Homeschooling in westlichen Industrienationen. Verbreitung, Evaluierungsergebnisse, Elternmotive. S. 3. Available at: <https://www.bundestag.de/resource/blob/415424/dbc64afb565391f883ebe737ba44475f/wd-8-047-09-pdf-data.pdf>, last accessed on 12. April 2021.

[2].Deutscher Bundestag, Wissenschaftliche Dienste (Hg.): Homeschooling in westlichen Industrienationen. Verbreitung, Evaluierungsergebnisse, Elternmotive. S. 3. Available at: <https://www.bundestag.de/resource/blob/415424/dbc64afb565391f883ebe737ba44475f/wd-8-047-09-pdf-data.pdf>, last accessed on 12. April 2021



4 HOMESCHOOLING - A GAMECHANGER?

"Homeschooling" is a term that has suddenly entered our lives with the pandemic, throwing the systems of family and society out of balance. Parents all over the world are testing their own stamina in trying to support their children, especially students in the first grades, with the technology demanded. The problems are many, as it is a system that has never been tested or researched on this scale, and neither parents nor teachers have adequate training for it. Countries around the world, including Europe, do not have the internet infrastructure to connect so many students simultaneously and easily to an online system. Different communication platforms have been used and are still being tested.

The younger students in particular were not appropriately familiar with the use of new technologies. They might know how to play games or watch videos online, but that was it. Therefore, the presence and input of parents alongside their children during online lessons was and still is essential. It often leads to tension in the family, as the father or mother inevitably has to interrupt any other activity at this time.

The transition from face-to-face to online teaching is also a demanding process for teachers, as not all of them have sufficient technical as well as didactic know-how. In any case, the "use" of new media requires many and frequent breaks for younger children, which is unfortunately not taken into account and results in young pupils finding it difficult to concentrate and follow lessons after a certain point. The Greek Ministry of Education's decision to hold online classes at lunchtime, for example, is seen as particularly inappropriate, as this is the time when children of this age normally rest or take a nap. Consequently, it looks like they are sitting tired and exhausted in front of their laptops.



4.1 INCREASE IN SCREEN TIME



Researches document what parents know from experience: According to a survey conducted by Ipsos on behalf of the Global Myopia Source: Pixabay [3]

Awareness Coalition (GMAC) between 29 May and 2 June 2020 in the US the amount of time their children spend in front of screens more than doubled during the Covid 19 pandemic (from 21% to 44%).^[4] However, the increase in screen time is not only because the entire educational process is being realised online, but also because children are turning to this medium to escape the boredom, loneliness and negative feelings caused by the closure of schools and the loss of their social lives. Other surveys, such as YouTube, Netflix and Gaming: A Look at What Kids Are Doing With Their Increased Screen Time and Survey Shows Parents Alarmed as Kids' Screen Time^[5] Skyrockets During COVID-19 Crisis^[6], also show increasing numbers. In the first case, 70% of parents surveyed said their children spend at least 4 hours a day in front of devices during of the pandemic, while before it 60% said the daily limit was no more than 3 hours, and in the second case, almost half of parents (49%) said their children are online for more than 6 hours a day, compared to no more than 9% before.

[3] Weirather Steven: Available at: <https://pixabay.com/de/photos/mädchen-laptop-schulmaterial-5662435/>. last accessed on am 10. Mai 2021.

[4] Ipsos (Hg.) Public poll findings and methodology. V Available at: <https://www.ipsos.com/en-us/parents-try-limit-childrens-screen-time-it-increases-during-pandemic>. last accessed on 29. April 2021.

[5] Shevenock Sarah: Education and Entertainment. YouTube, Netflix and Gaming: A Look at What Kids Are Doing With Their Increased Screen Time. Available at: <https://morningconsult.com/2020/08/20/youtube-netflix-and-gaming-a-look-at-what-kids-are-doing-with-their-increased-screen-time/>. last accessed on 29. April 2021.

[6] Parentstogether Foundation: Survey Shows Parents Alarmed as Kids' Screen Time Skyrockets During COVID-19 Crisis. Available at: https://parents-together.org/survey-shows-parents-alarmed-as-kids-screen-time-skyrockets-during-covid-19-crisis/?mod=article_inlin

In terms of the content that minors interact with the most, the Morning Consult survey found that screen time is mostly spent on games, school lessons and social media, while YouTube and Netflix emerge as the most popular entertainment platforms for children and young people - according to their parents' responses.



NETFLIX



The two platforms, along with TikTok, appear to be equally popular in the Parents Together survey, while in the Ipsos survey about 3 in 5 parents said their children spend their digital time watching online movies and online shows, participating in homeschooling and/or video chatting



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4.2 WHAT DO TEENAGERS SAY?

A different perspective compared to the above surveys, whose results were based on parents' responses and assessments, is offered by the California Partners Project and the Child Mind Institute conducted in-depth interviews with 46 teenagers (aged 14-17) living in California to explore how they experience and cope with the limitations and stress of the pandemic.

It turned out that many teens have problems with the "screen saturation" they turn to in order to cope with the boredom, loneliness and negative emotions caused by school closures and the loss of their social lives.

The following quotes are given as examples:

- "TikTok is the app I spend most of my time on because it has stuff I really want to see. When I have nothing to do, TikTok is the obvious place to go" (girl, 14 years old).
- "When it (the pandemic) started, and when I heard that we wouldn't be going back (to schools), it was a pure shock. We couldn't meet up with friends and go to certain places and travel. It ruined my summer. Along with the anger comes the regret" (boy, 16 years).

"The lack of friendships, sports and other activities in normal life (living) that normally filled my days before the coronavirus leads to a heavy reliance on social media and games," said Harold Koplevich, a doctor and president of the Child Mind Institute. The full study can be found at <https://www.calpartnersproject.org/arethekidsalright>. [7]

[7]California Partners Project: In Depth Research Finds California Teens Struggling with Social Isolation and Screen Saturation. Available at:<https://www.calpartnersproject.org/arethekidsalright>. last accessed on 29. April 2021.



4.3 DIVERSE WORRIES OF THE PARENTS

In addition to screen time exposure, many of the above studies attempt to capture parents' attitudes and concerns, according to a recent survey in Children's Screen Time Has Soared in the Pandemic, Alarming Parents and Researchers | The New York Times. [8]

In the Ipsos survey, for example, 78% of parents agreed that increased screen time is detrimental to their children's eye health and 76% said they are looking for ways to reduce it, while in the Parents Together survey, several parents, cited incidents of cyberbullying and sexual harassment their children have faced. The amount of time young people in Germany spend using digital media has risen sharply too: According to the JIM Study 2020[9] , young people spent around 260 minutes a day online from Monday to Friday. It is an increase of about one hour compared to the previous year. Around 60 % of this time is spent on entertainment and games. In contrast, about 40 % of the time is invested in communication and information search.

As for Greek parents, according to a recent survey by the Hellenic Internet Safety Centre (EKAD)[10] , 64% of parents who participated in a new online survey among parents on the occasion of Internet Safety Day 2021 | SaferInternet4Kids.gr <https://saferinternet4kids.gr/nea/surveyparents2021>, express concern about how much time their children spend online and 68% are concerned about the way digital content influences them. In addition, about 5 in 10 parents say they have only partial control over their children's online activities, while 11% say they do not know who their children are chatting with within the digital space. On the other hand, 56% of parents say they often talk to their children about safe internet use and 81% say they set limits on the amount of time children spend in front of screens.

[8]Matt Richtel: Children's Screen Time Has Soared in the Pandemic, Alarming Parents and Researchers. 16. Jänner 2021. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/16/health/covid-kids-tech-use.html>. last accessed on 29. April 2021.

[9] V Available at: www.mpfs.de/studien/jim-studie/jimplus-2020/. last accessed on 29. April 2021.

[10] Hellenic Internet Safety Centre (EKAD). Η βασική αγωνία των γονιών, όπως προκύπτει από τα αποτελέσματα της έρευνας, είναι κατά 69% ο βαθμός επηρεασμού των παιδιών από το διαδικτυακό περιεχόμενο στο οποίο εκτίθενται και αμέσως μετά ακολουθεί κατά 64% ο χρόνος τον οποίο δαπανούν στο διαδίκτυο.



Similarly, the Hellenic Internet Safety Centre helpline receives calls from parents concerned not only about their children's addiction to online games, but also about bullying, sexting and sexual harassment. The Corona crisis harbors, in fact, some media-associated dangers. A longer media use time increases the risk for children and young people to come into contact with inappropriate content. The shift of social contacts to the internet has, e.g. in Germany, also increased the likelihood of becoming a victim of cyberbullying and led to the general increase of cyberbullying cases. Parents often feel overwhelmed by this issue as well.[11]

Conflicts between children of all ages and parents over screen time are intense and commonplace, and parents need support in trying to find balance in their children's lives and limit their internet use. "Is my child addicted?", "Should I throw away the game consoles?", "Should I cut the internet connection?", "What should I do to make my child listen to me?" and "How do I break this habit?" are some of the most common questions we are asked. At the same time, we notice that even very young children are now coming into contact with electronic media, whereas parents tended to avoid this in the past. Children aged 2, 3 and 4 play games, watch videos or are even taught about the internet.

[11]Studie „Cyberlife III“ der Techniker Krankenkasse und des Bündnisses gegen Cybermobbing, Nov. 2020. Available at: <https://www.tk.de/presse/themen/praevention/medienkompetenz/studie-cybermobbing-2095156>. last accessed on 29. April 2021.

4.4 THE CHILDREN DO NOT GET SICK, BUT SUFFER FROM THE PANDEMIC

According to recent UNICEF data, 168 million children worldwide could not attend classes because of Corona [12]

The children's aid project "Save the Children" estimates that a total of 74 days of lessons were missed; in Western Europe the figure was 28 days.

But the fate of 463 million students living in disadvantaged countries with inadequate internet access and lack of appropriate technical equipment was even worse, for they have been deprived of education altogether (<https://www.kathimerini.gr/society/561298786/tilekpaideysi-choris-internet-gia-oloyis/>) [13]

Children's absence from the school environment and extracurricular activities for such a long period of time weighs heavily as it affects the psychosomatic balance in terms of their natural socialization. Children lose contact with peers, the distance affects their teacher-student relationship, and in general, the sense of belonging, which is directly linked to the feeling of security and which is simply not compensated by an online contact. Emotional isolation is the main risk factor for the development of addictive behavior!

According to the latest scientific findings, it is particularly important to limit screen time in order to ensure the normal psychosocial development of minors. (<https://insidestory.gr/article/covid19-poso-kindyneyoyn-ta-paidia-apo-othoni>) [14]



[12] Tagesschau (Hg.): Weltweit 168 Millionen Kinder ohne Schule. 03. März 2021. Available at: <https://www.tagesschau.de/ausland/kinder-bildung-coronakrise-103.html>. last accessed on 29. April 2021.

[13] Ημεοίρα 463 εκατ. μαθητών, που ζουν σε χώρες με περιορισμένη πρόσβαση στο Ιντερνετ, ήταν ακόμη χειρότερη, καθώς στερήθηκαν εξ ολοκλήρου την εκπαίδευση. Available at: <https://www.kathimerini.gr/society/561298786/tilekpaideysi-choris-internet-gia-oloyis/>. last accessed on 1. Mai 2021.

[14] Αρκετός λόγος έχει γίνει για τις επιδράσεις της πολύωρης χρήσης της οθόνης. Available at: <https://insidestory.gr/article/covid19-poso-kindyneyoyn-ta-paidia-apo-othoni>. last accessed on 1. Mai 2021.

Parents who until before the pandemic tried to keep their children away from screens (TV, laptops and electronic games) are now contradicting themselves with the emerging reality.

Meanwhile, due to homeschooling and afternoon classes (in Greece, for example, for foreign languages, various other subjects and other activities), a great many children are developing a greater dependence on the internet and smartphone use and/or other types of health problems, such as an increase in myopia. At the same time, they suffer from loneliness and alienation from peers, especially lone children or children of single parents.

In addition, many parents report that they observe a sharp drop in their children's performance, show extremely reduced motivation in all dimensions (e.g. school, contact with friends) and no longer feel like doing anything except playing internet games. In other words, they describe children as resigned, absorbed, almost immobile. This is an extremely unpleasant situation to keep in mind. All those years before, following the instructions of neuroscientists and psychologists, we "fought" to keep our children away from screens. We encouraged them to play outdoors, to engage with their peers, to spend their free time playing board games or reading books. But then, one fine morning pandemic "broke out" and everything turned upside down. The computer becomes the only way out, opens the door to knowledge, provides access to education and is also one of the few ways to communicate with others. From "Don't sit at the computer all day" we have now arrived at saying "Sit at the computer, and learn!". Unfortunately, the consequences are many and affect the whole family. Red-eyed teenagers, sometimes because of the radiation of the "blue light" they are exposed to and sometimes from the long nights, as they have no ritualised sleep rhythm and have lost touch with their lives before the pandemic - life in offline mode. A-level students preparing for their final exams in the last few months have forgotten what it's like to write with a pen. 16-year-old pubescents flirt in social media only with pseudonyms, have dubious influencers as role models and vent their anger at any time in any online arenas that have meanwhile turned into their former "schoolyards".



5 WHAT EFFECT DOES HOMESCHOOLING HAVE ON PARENTS?

The COVID-19 pandemic has had an impact on most families: from insecurity to tension to constant fear. Some parents have lost their income and jobs, social life has been reduced to a minimum, and people have lived, and in some cases still live, in too cramped a space in their homes, also because more household members than usual are at home due to the Corona measures. [15]

The pandemic fundamentally changed the professional roles and personal lives of educators and parents. Parents became involuntary active participants in the learning process, in addition to the need to adapt to changes in work life and increased multiple household workloads. Navigating between an infinite number of resources, instructions, schedules and homework, especially for families with more than one child in the household, is really not easy, neither physically nor psychologically [16]

Families now also face the challenge of developing new forms of family communication, creating new rituals and driving their own development towards digitalized education. It can be an opportunity to restructure as a family and enjoy more time together. However, this can only succeed if parents are secure and feel competent to reconcile homeschooling and their own working lives. Then, enough capacities remain free to deal with the emotional and mental worlds of their own children in an unbiased and relaxed way. In most European families, however, this is not happening. Due to insecurity, fear and stress, parents often only have the strength to do the most necessary things to cope with everyday life.

[15]Patrick, S. W., Henkhaus, L. E., Zickafoose, J. S., Lovell, K., Halvorson, A., Loch, S., Letterie, M., Davis, M. M. (2020). Well-being of parents and children during the COVID-19 pandemic: A national survey. *Pediatrics*, E2020016824. Available at: <https://doi.org/d9ct>. last accessed on 29. April 2021.

[16]UNESCO. (2020). No Title. Available at: <https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse/learningneverstops/testimonies>. last accessed on 29. April 2021.



Parents faced the following challenges:

1. difficulties in not receiving adequate support and training in the use of digital tools. In most cases, skills are only enough to get through the next day.[17]
2. finding a balance between work and home education.
3. maintaining a positive relationship between children and educators.

In addition to the above challenges, parents still had to solve the difficulties of ensuring internet connection, accessibility to the school's electronic systems and setting up the children's e-learning platforms.[18]

Furthermore, parents find it difficult to be effectively involved and engaged in their children's learning due to their work commitments, especially in single-parent families. Often the only parent is working and is not available to support children during their own home office hours when they are working. For some children who suffer from concentration difficulties or are reluctant to participate in class, parental involvement is crucial. [19]

Children with concentration problems can easily get caught up in non-learning online activities while homeschooling. With classes going on throughout the day and homework to do as well, children spend an average of 6-8 hours in front of a screen.

[17]OECD. (2020). Learning remotely when schools close. 1–13. Available at: https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/view/?ref=127_127063-iiwm328658&title=Learning-remotely-when-schools-close. last accessed on 29. April 2021.

[18]Vuorikari, R., Velicu, A., Chaudron, S., Cachia, R., Di Gioia, R., & Europäische Kommission Gemeinsame Forschungsstelle. (2020). How families handled emergency remote schooling during the Covid-19 lockdown in spring 2020 summary of key findings from families with children in 11 European countries. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.2760/31977>. last accessed on 29. April 2021.

[19]Bol, T. (2020). (2020, April 30). Inequality in homeschooling during the Corona crisis in the Netherlands. First Results from the LISS Panel. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.31235/osf.io/hf32q>. last accessed on 29. April 2021.



Constant sitting in front of the computer can also lead to work overload for children.[20] In addition, children and young people in homeschooling often find it difficult to clearly distinguish between leisure time and school. By learning at home, there is a danger of putting off tasks and losing the rhythm of the day. Many teenagers find it difficult to get up on time in the morning and to structure themselves. If teenagers crawl out of bed only five minutes before the first video conference or do their schoolwork in the middle of the night, conflicts with parents are inevitable. Especially since they, in turn, are under pressure and feel guilty because they do not manage to sufficiently support the children in homeschooling alongside their own work. Many feels burnt out and reach the limits of their capacity.

Special attention should be paid to parents who are affected by social exclusion and come from poorer backgrounds. These parents more often face the dilemma of not having internet access and not being able to provide their children with computers, laptops and the like because they cannot afford them. When Lithuania switched to Distance Learning, about 35,000 children in the country did not have access to necessary technological equipment at home. It meant that these children were not able to follow lessons online, and it caused parents to be afraid, as they could not assess what this meant for their children's future.[21]

Research shows that screens can be harmful to children, especially over long periods of time, so young children should not spend more than 3 hours a day in front of computers.[22] However, primary school pupils spend much more time in front of screens these days. For this reason, according to a survey by Vilnius University, almost half of the parents of primary school pupils (46%) and more than a third (38%) of the parents of fifth to eighth-graders are not positive about homeschooling as a form of education, while 28% of the parents of primary school pupils and 26% of the parents of fifth to eighth-graders are positive or very positive.

[20]Ferri, F., Grifoni, P., & Guzzo, T. (2020). Online Learning and Emergency Remote Teaching: Opportunities and Challenges in Emergency Situations. *Societies*, 10(4), 86. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.3390/soc10040086>. last accessed on 29. April 2021.

[21]Kristina Tamelytė: Nuotolinis mokymas kelia daug iššūkių, bet suteikia naujų galimybių ir vilties. 2. April 2020. V Available at: <https://www.bernardinai.lt/2020-04-02-nuotolinis-mokymas-kelia-daug-issukiu-bet-suteikia-nauju-galimybiu-ir-vilties/>. last accessed on 1. Mai 2021.

[22]Pappas Stephanie: What do we really know about kids and screens? 1. April 2020. Available at: <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2020/04/cover-kids-screens>. last accessed on 1. Mai 2021



Homeschooling as a method of imparting knowledge is more attractive to parents of older pupils themselves. One-third of primary school teachers (36%) rated homeschooling as a method of imparting knowledge as less suitable and for one-quarter of primary school teachers (26%) it is a highly unsuitable method of imparting knowledge. Only 14% of the primary school teachers find this method suitable and 20% very suitable. Overall, the teachers assessed homeschooling more positively and also noted positive tendencies that arose due to distance learning. [23]

Many parents would now take more interest and accompany their children's learning. Some students who performed well in the past showed by switching to homeschooling that they needed more support to be able to work independently, while others were more engaged when learning in a quiet and familiar environment without too much peer pressure. [24]

Improved child-parent relationships were associated with lower parental employment and the ability to spend more time with children, especially when parents were on holiday or leave. Parental involvement in children's homeschooling is also a key factor in children's learning success. [25]

Parents' mental health has deteriorated during the pandemic. There is an obvious fear that children will be left behind and have worse chances in the labor market or that their school career will be affected due to gaps in knowledge that are now developing.

[23]Roma, J. (n.d.). VU rekomendacijos dėl covid-19 VU tyrimas.

[24] Sara Bubb, M.-A. J. (n.d.). Learning from the COVID-19 home-schooling experience: Listening to pupils, parents/carers and teachers. Improving Schools. Available at: <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1177/1365480220958797>. last accessed on 29. April 2021.

[25] Wai-Cook, S.-S. M. (2020). The Reality of Home-Based Learning During COVID-19: Roles of Parents, Teachers, and School Administration in Promoting Self-Directed Learning. *Journal of School Administration Research and Development*, 5(S2), 86–92.



When organizing homeschooling, it is imperative to develop a clear structure and make it available to teachers, parents and students so that the educational process is well mapped, focusing on the following criteria: the platforms used in class; allocated times; rules for implementing online teaching; requirements regarding internet connection and registrations for the various platforms; online safety of participants; organization and availability of social, emotional and educational support. This platform must ensure the safety of the students - it is not possible to connect through links that can be forwarded to third parties. It reduces moments of disruption during lessons.[26]

In addition, there is still a need to improve the engagement between parents and school so that all children are effectively supported during homeschooling.[27] It would help reduce parents' anxiety and they could better support their children in learning at home.

[26]Ferri, F., Grifoni, P., & Guzzo, T. (2020). Online Learning and Emergency Remote Teaching: Opportunities and Challenges in Emergency Situations. *Societies*, 10(4), 86. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.3390/soc10040086>. last accessed on 29. April 2021.

[27]OECD. (2020). Learning remotely when schools close. 1–13. Available at: https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/view/?ref=127_127063-iiwm328658&title=Learning-remotely-when-schools-close. last accessed on am 29. April 2021.



6 WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES OF HOMESCHOOLING FOR CHILDREN?

The global pandemic has brought with it the need to rethink ways of imparting knowledge. Suddenly, without any generation before us ever having experienced this reality, we find ourselves having to limit our actions enormously. Now we spend most of the day within our four walls and leave them only for the most necessary activities.

Even though countries are reopening schools, health challenges remain and affect the organization of schooling, where restrictions may remain or be relaxed. School communities have returned and continue to return after the holidays under new conditions that have required and continue to require forward planning and continued flexibility. One approach being discussed is blended learning - a combination of school teaching and homeschooling.

Fear was a real feature in the beginning:

"In the current context, danger is invisible, and because it is also unknown, individuals are not prepared to deal with it because there is no available, symbolically transmitted repertoire in our culture to face it" (...) "We have always denied death because we are immortal in our unconscious. The thought of death itself can be very difficult and unbearable. At this moment we are facing it. That is why it is impossible not to think about it" [28]

[28]Gilson Iannini, (2020) Pandemic effect: fear appears with more intensity in the population. Available <https://www.medicina.ufmg.br/efeito-pandemia-medo-aparece-com-mais-intensidade-na-populacao/>.last accessed on 29. April 2021. at:



Recognizing that this virus primarily affects the respiratory tract and leads to death more often than other viral diseases, society has had to adapt to meet the demands and obligations in education under Article 14, Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union [29] , because:

"Everyone has the right to education and to have access to vocational education and training;

This right includes the right to free compulsory education;

The freedom to establish educational institutions, while respecting democratic principles, and the right of parents to ensure the education and teaching of their children in conformity with their religious, philosophical and pedagogical convictions, shall be respected in accordance with the provisions of national laws governing the exercise of this freedom and right "[30]

So it has become crucial to create a system for online teaching. Undoubtedly a big challenge, as neither the majority of teachers nor the students were psychologically prepared. Many did not have the necessary skills to use these technologies and / or the necessary equipment. For children who suddenly found themselves isolated from almost everything and everyone at home, this kind of teaching brought a whole new reality. In the school context, the data suggest that existing skills play a role, as especially students with lower educational levels performed worse after switching to homeschooling. [31]

On the other hand, although cognitive skills alone are the basis of all learning, they are not likely to influence success in homeschooling. Self-motivation skills, attitudes towards learning and self-esteem have proved to be important in determining academic success. [32] It suggests that students without competencies in autonomous learning, may not be able to succeed in homeschooling. It is also related to the socio-economic status of the family of origin. [33]

[29] Lisbon Treaty (2009): Available at: https://www.parlamento.pt/europa/Documents/Tratado_Versao_Consolidada.pdf. last accessed on 29. April 2021.

[30] Lisbon Treaty (2009). Available at: https://www.parlamento.pt/europa/Documents/Tratado_Versao_Consolidada.pdf. last accessed on 29. April 2021.

[31] Distance Learning in Higher Education: Evidence from a Randomized Experiment, Cacault (2019). Available at: <https://econpapers.repec.org/paper/cprceprdp/13666.htm>. last accessed on 29. April 2021.

[32] Cunha, Anabela (2013) The Importance of Extracurricular Activities in School Motivation and School Success. Available at: <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/61014587.pdf>. last accessed on 29. April 2021.

[33] Pedro Carneiro: The Impact of Early Cognitive and Non-Cognitive Skills on Later Outcomes. 1. Nov. 2007. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/4807581_The_Impact_of_Early_Cognitive_and_Non-Cognitive_Skills_on_Later_Outcomes. last accessed on 1. Mai 2021.



For many children, especially those who have experienced a transition to another school, another place of residence or even from one country to another, school often becomes the only place where they can build and maintain their social life. It is also the only place where they can learn educational practices and exchange ideas, as many parents are unable to adequately support their children for various reasons (language difficulties, lack of knowledge about the school environment, job overload, etc.). In addition, peers and school play an important role in terms of socialisation. [34]

With the outbreak of COVID-19 and the closure of schools, spaces were changed and no longer fulfilled their traditional functions. The school temporarily ceased to be a place that allowed for new experiences based on experiences made / traditional ones. [35]

Consequently, the home became the space where children, parents and teachers had their experiences. Thus, distance learning led to a shift in spaces that not only impacted on experiences gained through school attendance, learning in school, other learning methods, etc., but also implied impacts on cultural, domestic and everyday experiences. [36]

A study in Portugal points out that "the inequalities in school performance that were present in the Portuguese education system before the pandemic will necessarily be exacerbated by current conditions". Officials compared several statistical data concerning the living conditions of children in Portugal, focusing on children who are most disadvantaged and pointing out the importance of keeping the most disadvantaged students in school attendance for the duration of the pandemic:

"The findings also help to reinforce the importance of returning to face-to-face teaching as soon as health conditions allow, bearing in mind the priority given to pupils in the school year planning until the second cycle". [37]

[34]Popyk (2019) The impact of distance learning on the social practices of schoolchildren during the COVID-19 pandemic. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/346216051_The_impact_of_distance_learning_on_the_social_practices_of_schoolchildren_during_the_COVID-19_pandemic_reconstructing_values_of_migrant_children_in_Poland

[35]Pierre Bourdieu: theory in practice (1990). Available at: http://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0034-76122006000100003. last accessed on 29. April 2021.

[36]Spurling (2013) Theories of practice. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/298102903_Theories_of_practice_and_sustainable_consumption. last accessed on 29. April 2021.

[37]Peralta, Susana (2020) distance learning exacerbates inequalities. Available at: <https://www.dnoticias.pt/2021/2/5/249558-ensino-a-distancia-agrava-desigualdades-entre-criancas/>. last accessed on 29. April 2021.



The study also stresses that "housing conditions are crucial to the success of homeschooling". After the latest 2019 data provided by the National Institute of Statistics (INE) [38] was released, it showed that around 25.8% of all Portuguese children under 12 years old in Portugal live in a home where the roof is leaking water, the walls, foundation and floor are damp and the window frames or floor are rotten.

In addition, almost 13% cannot heat their home sufficiently and 9.2% do not have enough light in their accommodation, 15.5% live in housing that is too scarce and 6.5% live in an area with a high level of crime or violence. Almost 13% reported having to deal with visible pollution or other environmental problems in their living environment.

Mental health and the promotion of mental well-being is an issue of growing importance in today's societies.

Around 450 million people worldwide suffer from some form of mental impairment or behavioral disorder. However, only a small minority receive appropriate treatment. Due to the ever-increasing demand for treatment in this regard, the cost of treatment has risen significantly. It is estimated that mental impairment and behavioral disorders account for about 12% of the total expenditure burden related to the treatment of diseases. However, the allocated budget of each country for mental health is mostly less than 1% of the total expenditure related to health. [39]

According to a study by the School of Nursing of Coimbra, [40] Portugal, for the school year 2019-2020, as many as 20% of children and young people have at least one mental disorder. Almost 31% of young people show depressive symptoms, most of them of moderate or severe severity. The scenario may have been exacerbated by the quarantine period and social isolation. "Isolation thus exacerbates mental disorders and, in certain circumstances, may delay resolution of contextual problems. Frequent or prolonged isolation is a factor that always has a negative impact on children's mental health. [41]

[38] INE 2019. Available at: [https://www.ine.pt/xportal/xmain?](https://www.ine.pt/xportal/xmain?xpid=INE&xpgid=ine_publicacoes&PUBLICACOESTipo=ea&PUBLICACOEcolecao=107827&selTab=tab0&xlang=pt)

[xpid=INE&xpgid=ine_publicacoes&PUBLICACOESTipo=ea&PUBLICACOEcolecao=107827&selTab=tab0&xlang=pt](https://www.ine.pt/xportal/xmain?xpid=INE&xpgid=ine_publicacoes&PUBLICACOESTipo=ea&PUBLICACOEcolecao=107827&selTab=tab0&xlang=pt). last accessed on 1. Mai. 2021.

[39] WHO (2001) The world health report 2001 - Mental Health: New Understanding, New Hope. Available at: <https://www.who.int/whr/2001/en/>. last accessed on 29. April 2021.

[40] Pangaio, Nuno: Prevenção de Comportamentos Suicidários. 2020. Available at: https://web.esenfc.pt/v02/pa/conteudos/downloadArtigo.php?id_ficheiro=579&codigo=. last accessed on 1. Mai 2021.

[41] Pangaio, Nuno (2020). Available at: <https://www.dn.pt/edicao-do-dia/19-jan-2021/pandemia-efeito-na-saude-mental-de-criancas-e-jovens-podera-prolongar-se-13246507.html>. last accessed on 29. April 2021.



In general, ongoing insecurity, social isolation and fear seem to fuel mental health symptoms and illnesses. In addition, current incidence levels, limitations and dangers from Corona are reported at all times and everywhere, but help services are not sufficiently advertised and parents as well as children often do not know where to find help for mental health problems.

Especially children from difficult family backgrounds, who might otherwise have been able to turn to their teachers in a low-threshold way in the course of a school day, do not have this chance in homeschooling. And it is also difficult for the teachers to assess how the children are doing. Even when they join in video conferences, which does not work for all students, the microphone and the camera are often switched off. This means that no impression can be gained of how the children and young people are doing. Communication is very difficult. In addition, teachers do not know who is listening in on the video conference, which raises additional data protection issues.

The same applies to recreational activities, which had to be stopped during the Corona pandemic. They are normally not only a place where children and young people have social contacts with their peers and thus a supportive network, but also here there is a lack of adult reference persons outside the family with whom one could talk about worries and problems if the parents do not come into question as contact persons, for example in cases of domestic violence or abuse.

Being more or permanently at home, has also led to an increase in domestic violence, especially against women and children, according to initial studies.

There are also less dramatic issues: the many hours spent together as a family can become a burden in combination with the tense mental state of many people and the additional load of homeschooling, it can lead to conflicts.



In Portugal, in an effort to create and provide diverse resources to support schools, the Ministry of Education has created a complementary series of resources for primary and secondary education that are broadcast on national television and made available on the #EstudoEmCasa website of the Directorate General of Education.

#EstudoEmCasa do Ensino Básico (Learning at Home) is the name of the space that offers educational programmes from 09h to 16h30. The daily content is presented in 30-minute sessions and serves all school years. They are primarily a complementary tool for teachers' work with their students. These themed pedagogical blocks offer content that is part of basic learning from Year 1 to Year 9, grouped by: Year 1, Year 2, Year 3 and Year 4, Year 5 and Year 6, Year 7 and Year 8 and Year 9.

However, #EstudoEmCasa does not replace teacher intervention. It is only a resource that is intended and can be included as a supplement to the distance learning curriculum of each school.

For pupils, the following points need to be considered in homeschooling:

- Organisation of the school timetable
- Access to equipment
- Digital tools
- Individual support for students - the shared responsibility of parents and guardians
- Support for students in designing the learning environment in Distance Learning
- Managing vocational education and training and work-based learning.



Basically, it can be said that while everything new is scary, the more we educate ourselves, the less we fear the unknown:

"The future is not the result of choosing between alternative paths offered by the present, but a place that is created. The future is not a place we go to, but one we create. The paths are not to be found but to be made, and the activity of making them changes both the maker and the destination" (Schaar, John) [42]

[42]John Schaar. Available at: <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/1056113-the-future-is-not-a-result-of-choices-among-alternative>. last accessed on 1. Mai 2021.



7 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, sharing and comparing our partner countries experiences, emerged that European families went and are still going through the same issues that we can summarize as follow: “before Covid 19 Pandemic, Homeschooling was chosen by parents to give their children a different education type. The pandemic forced all parents, students and teacher to switch to this teaching method which brought them to face many challenges”.

Families, particularly those in a disadvantaged condition, could not easily provide their children with the equipment they needed to participate in the online classes. Both parents and teachers had to adjust and upgrade their skills to cope with online lessons and face children difficulties to stay focused and attentive, trying creative and engaging approaches. Parents had to divide their time and attention between their work from home and meet their children needs helping them to use the necessary devices for online lessons. In addition to their economical worries, and the fear of the worldwide health situation, parents had to deal with the practical problems connected to the increase of time spent at home, all together, all day long. They were also forced to let their children spend more time online for their education and leisure activities. In a normal situation, parents would not allow their children to spend much time online, but now there are no other options. Children are bored and sad, so they turn to online activities to fill the dull time. The time spent in front of screens affects children’s health and behaviour, lessens sight health, exposes children to cyberbullying and sexual harassment. Parents are also scared about their children’s future. The gaps in education might affect their future career. Their efforts to keep children away from online activities causes conflicts between parents and children and exacerbates pre-existing conditions. Home is not always a safe place. Whether it is a home of violence or has poor conditions, it becomes a trap for children. The uncertainty also caused a rise in the number of mental illness. Teachers, on the other hand, don’t have enough means, support or skills to fulfil all their tasks as educators, as mentors and as role models outside the families.



8 HOW CAN ADULT EDUCATION STAKEHOLDERS SUPPORT PARENTS?

In a recent survey conducted within the framework of an Erasmus+ project "Europarents 2020", it was found that parental training is very rarely used. Rather, parents seek advice from friends or colleagues in conflict situations. So how can adult educators establish contact between parents and course providers? In general, we as a project consortium, which consists of experts from various institutions working with schools, parents, children and with families in general, recommend that especially schools should provide a kind of platform for further education for parents. Especially in the context of the Corona epidemic, gaps in the education system, as well as the gap between the socio-economically advantaged and disadvantaged classes, have become visible. After more than a year of homeschooling, schools, parents and unfortunately also the state are still in a certain state of shock and there is a lack of good problem-solving approaches and offers for parents.

In order to overcome this problem, there is a need for numerous actors who could provide offers in this regard.

Not only adult education institutions but also

- providers of parental education
- private initiatives
- municipalities
- regional associations
- institutions and associations in the field of children, youth and families;
- parents' associations
- childcare facilities, etc. can generate offers that help parents and thus indirectly their children.



Further education for parents would be particularly necessary for the following areas:

Media literacy

- Communication on the internet - netiquette, dealing with cyber
- lobbying/hate speech.
- Safety on the internet - data protection/copyright
- Collaborative tools - MS Teams, Zoom, etc.
- Content creation tools

Social skills

- Communication
- Time Management
- Conflict avoidance - conflict resolution

General topics

- Designing the workplace - Learning corner
- Learning to learn
- Self-determined learning
- Media use vs. "real" free time

Due to the fact that there is an enormous need for this, we are planning a follow-up project that will provide exactly such offers. This platform would then be available to all parents and schools as OER. In order to really bring this offer to the parents, we will work directly with schools and support them in their work with parents. Because parental work begins at school. There, teachers have the chance to address parents who are most likely to need it and to point them to offers. This platform could also offer special courses developed at the request of the teachers and thus offer exactly those courses that are most needed. Actors in adult education thus enter into a cooperative process that promotes the exchange of innovative methods and possibilities and has an enormous impact in the field of further education at school for people of tomorrow. Supporting children more effectively, enabling them to have a successful school career, thereby minimising the school drop-out rate, means developing them into adults who can actively participate in society and have a good start in working life.



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