School+Family Alliance: Paradigm

School + Family Alliance

Partners

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Introduction

Across Europe, early school leaving (ESL) remains a stubborn and complex educational challenge. Despite significant policy efforts and frameworks at both the national and European levels, large numbers of young people continue to disengage from formal education before completing their upper secondary studies. ESL is not merely an educational issue—it is a socio-economic one, closely tied to poverty, unemployment, intergenerational disadvantage, and social exclusion (European Commission, 2013). Tackling ESL requires a systemic approach that moves beyond academic performance metrics and addresses the broader ecosystem surrounding students.

One of the most underleveraged yet powerful components of this ecosystem is the family. Decades of research have underscored the positive effects of parental involvement on students' academic performance, school attendance, and social development (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Epstein, 2011). However, many school systems still operate under fragmented or top-down models of parental engagement, often excluding families from meaningful participation in school life. This is especially true for disadvantaged families, who may face linguistic, cultural, socio-economic, or institutional barriers that inhibit their involvement.

The School + Family Alliance (S+FA) project emerged in response to these gaps, with the conviction that sustainable solutions to ESL must begin with inclusive, collaborative school environments where families are seen—and supported—as key educational stakeholders. The project is grounded in a "whole-school approach" to education, where systemic reform, shared values, and collective responsibility form the basis for school improvement and student success (Kreider, Caspe, Kennedy, & Weiss, 2007). Within this framework, schools are encouraged to actively engage parents not just as beneficiaries or occasional participants, but as co-educators and co-creators of the learning environment.

This Implementation Guide—The Project Paradigm—represents the culmination of the project's efforts to articulate, test, and systematize a replicable model of school-family collaboration aimed at combating early school leaving. Its core purpose is to present a transferable framework based on the S+FA model that schools, policymakers, and educational stakeholders across Europe can adapt to their local contexts, while also consolidating the tools, methodologies, and evidence gathered during the project into a structured, accessible guide that supports implementation, scaling, and sustainability.

The Paradigm is not merely a documentation of activities. It is a synthesis—a combination of principles, practices, insights, and resources developed through intensive cross-country collaboration, piloting, and evaluation. Its design recognizes that no two schools are alike, and therefore flexibility, cultural responsiveness, and contextual relevance are embedded throughout.

The S+FA project posits that one of the most promising ways to reduce early school leaving is by strengthening the relational and communicative ties between families and schools. Research confirms that when parents are actively engaged in their children's education, students are more likely to succeed academically, feel emotionally supported, and develop positive attitudes toward school (Weiss, Lopez, & Rosenberg, 2010). Moreover, increased parental engagement has been linked to better classroom behavior, higher aspirations, and greater persistence in school (Jeynes, 2005).

However, simply calling for "more parental involvement" is insufficient. The challenge lies in establishing structured, inclusive mechanisms that support and empower all families to participate, especially those who are marginalized or disconnected from traditional school processes. This requires intentional action: tailored training for educators, supportive tools for parents, and school-wide strategies that foster a welcoming, inclusive climate. The S+FA project responds to this challenge with a comprehensive model that is both strategic and grounded in lived practice.

The S+FA project was implemented across six countries—Bulgaria, Greece, Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Turkey—between 2023 and 2025. It brought together universities, NGOs, and schools in a transnational partnership aimed at co-developing and testing an alliance-based approach to parental engagement. The project followed a well-structured action plan organized into five interconnected work packages:

Project Coordination and Management, under the leadership of Sofia University, played a central role in ensuring the smooth and effective implementation of all project activities. This included overseeing the strategic alignment of partner efforts with the overall goals of the initiative, maintaining high standards of quality across deliverables, and implementing a robust evaluation framework to monitor progress and impact. Sofia University facilitated ongoing communication between partners, addressed challenges proactively, and ensured compliance with both internal and external requirements throughout the project lifecycle.

Guidelines and Action Plans, also coordinated by Sofia University, focused on identifying and addressing the specific needs of participating schools. This work began with a comprehensive school needs analysis that provided the foundation for the development of a tailored School + Family Alliance Strategy. These efforts culminated in the creation of practical Guidelines to support schools in fostering strong family engagement, as well as the design of school-level Action Plans that provided concrete steps for implementing the strategy at the local level.

Educational Support, led by Ege University, was responsible for developing a wide range of training and learning materials aimed at enhancing the capacity of both educators and parents. This included the design of innovative training curricula, the production of user-friendly handbooks, and the creation of diverse learning resources to support effective communication and collaboration between schools and families. These tools were designed to be adaptable, inclusive, and aligned with best practices in contemporary education.

Paradigm Development, coordinated by the Athens Lifelong Learning Institute, focused on creating a new, holistic model for school-family collaboration. This phase included a comprehensive "Train the Trainer" event, equipping educators with the knowledge and skills needed to cascade training within their communities. It also featured a series of teacher seminars and parent workshops, fostering mutual understanding and partnership. The insights, experiences, and methodologies developed during this phase were compiled into The Project Paradigm e-book, which serves as a legacy document and a practical guide for future initiatives.

Dissemination, co-led by Aproximar and the Athens Lifelong Learning Institute (ALLI), aimed to maximize the reach and visibility of the project both during its implementation and beyond its conclusion. This included a comprehensive outreach strategy, active stakeholder engagement through events and communications, and the promotion of project outcomes via digital platforms and public forums. The dissemination team worked to ensure the project's sustainability by fostering long-term visibility, encouraging uptake by other institutions, and building a community of practice around the project's core principles.

Throughout the project lifecycle, a diverse range of stakeholders was actively involved, including experienced teachers, disadvantaged parents, school leaders, and community actors. Their contributions shaped the development, testing, and refinement of all educational materials and strategies, ensuring that the model reflects real-world needs and conditions.

The Project Paradigm e-book is designed to be both practical and conceptual. It is structured into the following core chapters:

1. **Theoretical Framework** – An exploration of the foundational concepts guiding the project, such as inclusive education, the whole-school approach, and parental involvement.

2. **Methodologies and Tools** – A detailed presentation of the curricula, handbooks, and training activities developed and piloted across partner countries.

3. **The Piloting** – Evidence and examples from the implementation phase in schools, highlighting challenges, adaptations, and successes in building school-family alliances.

4. **Scaling Up, Localization, and Adaptation** – Strategic insights for transferring the model to new settings, including planning tools, case examples, and localization strategies.

5. **Conclusion** – Reflections on the project's outcomes and potential for future impact.

The guide also includes annexes with piloting reports, templates, and practical tools that schools and organizations can directly apply in their own work.

What distinguishes the Project Paradigm is its dual focus on inclusion and sustainability. The model is designed not as a one-size-fits-all solution but as a flexible framework that can be adapted to the needs and realities of diverse school communities. The materials are multilingual, accessible, and culturally sensitive, with specific attention given to ensuring that disadvantaged families are not left behind.

In terms of sustainability, the Paradigm offers more than a snapshot of project outputs—it lays the foundation for continued learning, capacity-building, and institutional change. Schools are encouraged to see parental engagement not as an episodic activity but as a long-term commitment that requires leadership, collaboration, and professional development.

1. Theoretical Framework

The School+Family Alliance initiative recognizes that although parental involvement in children's education is connected to various benefits, promoting active family participation is not always an easy task for schools.

The present chapter delves into key concepts on which the School+Family Alliance intervention is built. It explores the meaning behind parental participation, its importance in student outcomes, the difference between school-based and home-based involvement, the many benefits as well as the barriers that families often have to overcome in this process.

We will also get into the concept of the Whole School Approach (WSA), its potential advantages to building a healthier, positive and engaging school climate, the multiple factors that must be considered when implementing WSA activities, recurring challenges that schools that work through WSA can face and some of the key elements of WSA interventions that allow for more effective outcomes.

This chapter will also explore the partnership between schools and families, highlighting the importance of going beyond traditional approaches and ensuring that all families receive engaging opportunities to actively participate. We will also present the Framework of Six Types of Involvement and a list of strategies for teachers and educators to put into practice to reach out and engage families.

1.1. The Concept of Parental Participation

"To comply with the system of integrated support for their students, schools need to build a partnership with parents and develop mutual responsibility for children's success in the educational system" - (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017: 137).

Parental allocation of resources to children's education has been increasingly recognized as a fundamental factor in students' academic success. There is still no consensus regarding the definition of "parental involvement" or "parental participation," which are often used interchangeably. However, most authors agree on key aspects of it:

- "[...] Parental participation is considered to comprise a partnership and participating in activities in reciprocal communication with children, other parents, and teachers on several levels (Purola & Kuusisto, 2021: 3);

- "Parental aspirations for their children's academic achievement, parents' communication with their children about education and school matters, parents' participation in school activities, parents' communication with teachers about their children, and parental supervision at home" (Fan, 2001).

The School+Family Alliance initiative acknowledges that the active participation of families, not only in monitoring the academic performance of children but also in closely communicating with them to maintain a strong and positive bond, is an essential strategy to ensure that students feel encouraged and inspired (Ntekane, 2018). Literature on the topic and case studies reveal that the academic success of children is more strongly influenced by parental involvement than by factors such as socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, or the educational background of parents (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017). This underscores the lasting benefits of active parental engagement in shaping the future of younger generations.

There are many ways in which families can engage in their children's school life. One example is the home-based type of involvement, which often happens at students' homes, although it is not limited to this space (Barger *et al.*, 2019). In practice, families perform it by creating learning environments at home, by putting children in contact with activities that stimulate their educational learning (for example, by taking them to museums and historical buildings in the city), and by providing support in students' homework (Schmid & Garrels, 2021). Another example is the school-based type of involvement, which is based on communication between parents and the school professionals (*ibid*). Active participation in the decision-making processes of the school, being a member of the Parent-Teacher Association, regularly communicating with teachers and educators, volunteering and participating in school events are some of the ways families can engage in school-based involvement (Barger *et al.* 2019).

The School+Family Alliance Consortium also highlights the many benefits of active parental participation, including greater feelings of encouragement, support, appreciation and validation for children. From a developmental perspective, children benefit from an increase in their social skills and in their ability to self-manage and self-regulate their behaviour. Other positive outcomes due to the involvement of families in early childhood include higher reading and math scores, fewer attendance issues, and fewer behavioral problems (McDowell *et al.*, 2018). The benefits from parental engagement are experienced by children and young people of all ages (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017):

- For elementary school children, it results in enhanced academic performance, language development, and social skills;

- For middle and high school students, it is associated with higher achievement and stronger future aspirations.

However, we also recognize that there are still many barriers to families' full participation in the academic life of their offspring. According not only to scholars in the field of education, but also to the Needs Analysis performed by the School+Family Alliance Partnership, a great number of families are often challenged by diverse demands of daily life, socioeconomic status, long or inflexible work hours, limited educational attainment, and cultural differences (including language), which keep them from actively supporting children both at home and at school (*ibid*).

1.2. The Whole-School Approach

The Whole School Approach (WSA) "encompasses the idea that for interventions to positively affect student social, emotional, and academic outcomes, the entire school context must be considered" (Zhou *et al.*, 2025: 13). By focusing on improving organizational and structural frameworks to create a deeper, more lasting impact, rather than just addressing individual needs, the Whole School Approach (WSA) provides great improvement potential not only to well-being but also to academic outcomes (Zhou *et al.*, 2025).

Examples of the multiple factors taken into consideration by the WSA include (Zhou *et al.*, 2025: 13):

Curriculum and teaching	School culture and ethos, policy and operations	Physical environment
Relationships and partnerships within the school	The larger community in which the school resides	

Image 1 – Example of factors incorporated in the WSA

Since it considers not only the perspectives of children and young people but also those of teachers, educators, professionals from the school, families, and community members, the WSA acknowledges the dynamic and complex nature of the school ecosystem. It has been increasingly promoted by many government bodies, which highlight the potential of interventions that go beyond the classroom, covering areas such as school culture, pedagogical practices, stakeholder engagement, and strong senior leadership in emotional health and well-being (*ibid*). In interventions aimed at tackling the stigma and raising awareness about mental health, research has shown positive outcomes for children in their social, educational, physical and mental health. This has been particularly beneficial for students at risk, displaying symptoms of mental health issues (Spencer *et al.*, 2022).

Besides all the positive outcomes related to the WSA, we also acknowledge the potential barriers to the success of interventions based on this approach. The literature reveals that insufficient teacher training, limited funding and limited involvement from all members of the school community, including parents, teachers, students and non-teaching staff, have

been identified as frequent challenges faced by those that implement WSA (Cavanagh *et al.*, 2024).

To effectively promote the bridge between the school and the families and to create a positive impact for all children and youth, the School+Family Alliance Partnership proposes a dynamic and wide perspective on the school environment and on all stakeholders within it, building on the key elements of WSA interventions that allow for more effective outcomes, which include the following key elements (Zhou *et al.*, 2025):

- **The overall climate at the school and its ethos**: since the existence of a welcoming and positive environment has direct effect on the results of behaviour change interventions at schools;

- **The involvement of the family and the community in children's well-being:** research has highlighted the importance of family participation, and more specifically of parental participation, in the outcomes of school-based interventions. In addition to the involvement of parents, the wider community has a key role in contributing to children and young people's healthy development. This can involve reinforcing skills developed at school, strengthening community ties, building bridges between students and external resources, and more.

- **Developing more targeted interventions**: although WSA often focuses on all those involved in the school context, it is important to consider those in need of additional support. Based on continuous monitoring of WSA, it is possible to identify and address potential weaknesses to ensure that every student receives the support they need.

Moreover, the School+Family Alliance partners agree that "no two schools' needs are the same" (Zhou *et al.*, 2025: 5). Therefore, it is essential that WSA interventions be grounded in "effective implementation, stakeholder commitment, adequate resources, and a nuanced understanding of the diverse needs of the school community" (*ibid*). By doing so, schools are more likely to encourage family participation in the academic life of students and promote their well-being and overall success.

1.3. The Partnership Between Schools and Families

Over the past few decades, many studies have emphasized the link between active engagement from the family and the academic success of children. As discussed in the previous section, when families take an active role in the student's school life, regardless of their age, it often results in improved classroom dynamics and in increased expectations from teachers, stronger student–teacher relationships, and greater cultural competence. In the process of promoting the participation of families in students' lives, schools play a fundamental role not only in proposing conventional activities, but in going beyond those to create engaging opportunities for active engagement. In other words (Kelty & Wakabayashi, 2020: 1)):

"Schools must also actively reach out to children's primary caregivers, who may not necessarily be parents, to jointly support children's learning and development in ways most effective yet comfortable for families."

Despite all evidence that supports parental participation, many schools still lack a formalized plan for engagement. To address this gap, schools must reflect on their goals, what is already put in place and define evidence-based approaches adapted to the context of each group. To successfully welcome and support all families, regardless of their socioeconomic status, race, cultural background and other characteristics, schools must comprehend what kind of support is more helpful to less-involved families, plan and monitor progress in relation to the goals jointly defined (Education Endowment Foundation, 2018).

In this process, one important factor for parents to effectively engage is the perception that the invitations they receive from teachers or the school are genuine. Studies performed in Japan and the USA reveal that when mothers consider that teachers are more inviting, it is more likely that they volunteer in the classroom, reach out to teachers, and maintain communication (Yulanti *et al*. 2022).

According to the Framework of Six Types of Involvement, created and updated by Joyce Epstein and her collaborators since the 1990s, there are many ways in which families can participate in students' academic life. In this Framework, it is also possible for schools to better understand how each of the six types of parental involvement can be effectively put into practice in comprehensive school programs (Organizing Engagement, 2024):

- ✔ **Type 1 (Parenting)**: Help all families establish home environments to support children as students;

- ✔ **Type 2 (Communicating)**: Design effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communications about school programs and their children's progress;

- ✔ **Type 3 (Volunteering)**: Recruit and organize parent help and support;

- ✔ **Type 4 (Learning at Home)**: Provide information and ideas to families about how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions, and planning;

- ✔ **Type 5 (Decision-Making)**: Include parents in school decisions, developing parent leaders and representatives;

- ✔ **Type 6 (Collaborating with the Community)**: Identify and integrate resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning and development.

The School+Family Alliance Partnership acknowledges that promoting parental engagement is not always an easy task for schools, especially considering the many barriers pointed out by the literature and confirmed by our Needs Analysis (Intellectual Output 2) with families in Bulgaria, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Turkey and Greece. However,

authors such as Henderson & Mapp (2002) provide valuable insights on how school professionals can proceed:

- **Facilitating Communication:** includes an open communication with families, keeping them updated on academic progress, social development and school events, allowing parents to share concerns and suggestions through a two-way interaction, both in-person and remote options for families to participate;

- **Creating an Open and Welcoming Environment**: includes making all families feel welcomed and valued, fostering tolerance and inclusivity, creating spaces for open dialogue, organizing shared events and encouraging family participation in the educational process;

- **Encouraging Collaboration**: includes encouraging accessible events and activities that align with the interests of the families and don't require time or resources that schools may not have. It's important that family involvement is active, with families as collaborators, not just passive observers;

- **Providing Resources and Support**: includes providing resources and support to families facing challenges such as financial constraints, lack of space, or limited time. Schools can also offer workshops or talks on home education and supply accessible materials to help families support their children's learning at home;

- **Valuing and Defending Diversity:** includes acknowledging and respecting the cultural, linguistic and socioeconomic diversity of families, adapting participation strategies to ensure all families can be fully involved, regardless of their background.

For the School+Family Alliance project, which believes that family engagement includes "activities and behaviors that connect with and support children in ways that are interactive, purposeful, and directed toward meaningful learning and affective outcomes" (Kelty & Wakabayashi, 2020: 2), there is an urgent need to plan, implement and evaluate tailored interventions that target positive outcomes for all key stakeholders in the school context.

In the next chapters, readers will have the opportunity to find out more about ideas and strategies for successfully promoting family participation in children's education and the results from all practical activities performed by the School+Family Alliance partners regarding the key topics of the initiative.

1.4. Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has explored the core concepts underlying the School+Family Alliance intervention, providing the theoretical foundation for the activities proposed by the initiative. While the benefits of active family participation in education are well recognised, we have also acknowledged the challenges that schools often face in encouraging meaningful engagement.

We explored the importance of both school-based and home-based involvement, the many advantages of such participation, and the common barriers families may encounter. The chapter also introduces the Whole School Approach (WSA), discussing its potential to foster a healthier, more inclusive school climate, as well as the key considerations and challenges involved in its implementation.

Moreover, we have emphasised the value of strong partnerships between schools and families, highlighting the need to move beyond traditional practices to ensure that all families are offered accessible and engaging opportunities to participate actively. Lastly, we have presented the Framework of Six Types of Involvement, along with practical strategies for educators to strengthen family engagement in a sustainable and impactful way.

In the following chapters, readers will explore the methodologies and tools developed throughout the School+Family Alliance project, including detailed descriptions of its workflow, curricula, and training materials (Chapter 2). The piloting phase will then be presented, offering real-world examples from participating countries, along with insights from national reports and evaluations (Chapter 3). Chapter 4 will focus on scaling up and providing practical guidance and strategic tools for implementing the project in diverse contexts.

2. Methodologies and Tools

The School + Family Alliance project is a comprehensive initiative structured around five main work packages, each contributing to a cohesive strategy aimed at strengthening school-family collaboration across Europe. The School + Family Alliance project follows a structured action plan to ensure effective coordination, implementation, and dissemination.

The first work package pertains to project management. Related to the first work package, the primary responsibility belongs to Sofia University. It focuses on project setup, quality assurance, evaluation, and monitoring. The project began with the establishment of National Project Teams between February and April 2023, followed by the signing of agreements with partner institutions in May 2023. Regular online meetings were initiated with a kick-off meeting in March 2023, and subsequent sessions were scheduled monthly, including the last Tuesday of each month. Key transnational partners' meetings were held and planned in Athens (May 2023), Granada (November 2023), Sofia (June 2024), and Palermo (May 2025). PRISM is responsible for carrying out the overall project evaluation.

The second work package is related to strategy building. It specifically prioritizes guidelines and action plans and the development of strategic resources. Related to the second work package, the primary responsibility belongs to Sofia University. This phase includes a detailed school needs analysis (April–October 2023), followed by the creation of the School+Family Alliance Strategy Guidelines (https://schoolfamilyalliance.eu/strategy-guidelines-en/) (September 2023–February 2024) and Action Plans (September 2023–March 2024). The process culminates in a comprehensive guide reflecting evidence-based best practices tailored to schools.

The third work package is related to education. It is the core of the project since it concentrates on structured learning materials for teachers and parents. Related to the third work package, the primary responsibility belongs to Ege University. From November 2023 to May 2024, dedicated curricula and handbooks were developed, alongside a Trainers' Guide. All resources, including printed materials, are designed to facilitate practical implementation of the alliance model in diverse educational settings.

The fourth work package is related to setting the project's paradigm. It emphasizes hands-on training and paradigm formulation. Related to the fourth work package, the primary responsibility belongs to the Athens Lifelong Learning Institute. The training program begins with a "Train the Trainer" event in Bulgaria (September 2024), followed by two teacher seminars in each of the six participating countries: Bulgaria, Greece, Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Türkiye (May and July 2025). Similarly, two parent workshops per country were held between May and July 2025. This work package concludes with the development of the School+Family Alliance Paradigm

(https://schoolfamilyalliance.eu/resources-pdf-new/), which spans from October 2024 through August 2025.

The fifth work package is related to dissemination. It ensures the project's visibility and impact. Related to the fifth work package, the primary responsibility belongs to Aproximar and Athens Lifelong Learning Institute. A dynamic dissemination plan and strategy guides activities from April 2023 to August 2025, including the launch and maintenance of a project website, social media campaigns, and multiple press releases from each partner. National workshops are conducted in each of the participating countries—Greece, Bulgaria, Portugal, Spain, Italy, and Türkiye - enhance outreach and stakeholder engagement between February and August 2025.

2.1. Project Activities

Partners in their respective nations completed a variety of tasks within the project framework, including multiple stakeholders. The primary participants in the project were parents of disadvantaged students, many of whom faced their own socioeconomic challenges, and they actively contributed to the development and evaluation of instructional resources. They filled out surveys, took part in focus groups, and provided input throughout the project. There were 40 parents from each partner country engaged. At a "Train-the-Trainer" event in Sofia, the 12 trainers received detailed instructions on the curriculum, teaching approaches, and training materials. Twelve experienced teachers were educated as trainers and played an important role in content development, building on their professional experiences in schools with limited parental involvement. Additionally, 20 other teachers provided input on the training materials, ensuring their relevance and efficacy.

We assisted schools with the pilot implementation of the School + Family Alliance Action Plans, which we created cooperatively with school teams. Following that, two seminars were organized in each partner country, with a total of 120 teachers (10 per seminar) participating in 20-hour curriculum-based courses. Even if these numbers represent the initiative's initial goal, Ege University scrupulously adhered to the criteria and numbers established at the outset to contribute to the project's successful execution. In parallel, parent workshops were given at each school, involving 240 parents (20 at each workshop), with each session lasting 15 hours and covering curriculum subjects. These seminars were delivered by qualified teachers, and each participant received handbooks suited to their specific needs.

All pilot activities were reviewed by participants, and their feedback helped to shape the School + Family Alliance Paradigm, an e-book developed as a thorough guide for schools looking to replicate the project approach. This paradigm aims to foster sustainability and future adoption. In summary, the project worked directly with 12 trainer teachers, 120 seminar participants, 240 parents, and 12 school communities—two from each partner country—to change schools into more inclusive environments. The project's broad dissemination aims to inspire additional schools across Europe to adopt or adapt the offered ways to improve parental engagement and promote inclusive education.

The project included both general and specific activities designed to encourage parental involvement in schooling. Overall, the School + Family Alliance Strategy Guidelines were created to describe the important concerns that must be addressed in order to increase parental participation. Schools can adapt these guidelines to their unique settings, laying the groundwork for more focused activities. Specifically, each participating school developed its own School + Family Alliance Action Plan, recognizing that every school operates as a unique ecosystem with unique challenges, making universal solutions unfeasible. As part of this process, dedicated School + Family Alliance Teams were formed within each school to carry out these plans. These personalized activities validated the overall guidelines' relevance and flexibility, demonstrating their potential for wider applicability beyond the first twelve schools that participated in the study. The general and specific activities were effective, adaptive, and appropriate in any educational context where parental engagement is needed to address the issue of early school dropouts (Kreider, Caspe, Kennedy, & Weiss, 2007).

2.2. Tools, Curricula, and Training

The School Needs Analysis, an output of Work Package 1, is a report that collects input from key stakeholders in the school community, especially teachers and parents, regarding their experiences with parental involvement. Data was collected through surveys, interviews, and focus group discussions conducted within each participating country. The combined findings were presented in a report. This needs analysis served as the main reference for identifying necessary actions within the school setting to effectively attract and involve parents—detailing what should be done, when, how frequently, and in what manner.

The School + Family Alliance Strategy Guidelines, an output of Work Package 2, is a comprehensive framework that addresses several key themes related to parental engagement in education. It covers national and European agendas concerning disadvantaged learners and early school dropouts, outlining the importance of tackling these issues. The guidelines also explore the principles and effective practices of parental involvement, highlighting the role of professional development for educational practitioners. This includes identifying their training needs to foster meaningful collaboration with parents. Additionally, the guideline emphasizes strategies to boost parents' participation in education through targeted training and upskilling activities.

The project developed tools based on various educational resources, which were produced as part of Work Package 3, to strengthen the bond between families and schools. The Handbook for Teachers (https://schoolfamilyalliance.eu/teachers-handbook/), aligned with the teacher training curriculum, served as a vital resource covering themes such as parental involvement, teacher responsibilities, and school-family partnerships. Printed in 100 copies per partner language, it included theoretical content, practical guidance, and relevant exercises. A similar Handbook for Parents (https://schoolfamilyalliance.eu/parents-handbook-en/)—also produced in 100 copies per country—offered both conceptual insights and practical strategies to encourage active

parental engagement, mirroring the content of the workshops. Additionally, a multilingual Trainers' Guide (https://schoolfamilyalliance.eu/trainers-guide/), printed in 50 copies per country, was created to support workshop facilitators. We paid special attention to ensuring that disadvantaged parents and teachers could access and benefit from these materials. Both groups were involved from the project's beginning, contributing to the needs assessment, content development, and participation in training sessions.

These tools played a crucial role in achieving the project's goal: fostering strong, collaborative relationships between schools and families to promote the educational inclusion of all students, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. By enhancing the skills and knowledge of both teachers and parents, the training helped build effective cooperation aimed at supporting children's academic and personal development. The curricula, handbooks, and guide all contributed to this process by providing comprehensive content for training.

The project developed key educational resources as part of the Work Package 3 (https://schoolfamilyalliance.eu/), starting with tailored curricula for both teachers and parents. The Curriculum for Teachers, which was later compiled into the Handbook for Teachers, is a five-module framework focusing on key areas such as benefits and barriers of parental engagement, the role of the teachers and the school in parental engagement, the School+Family Alliance Strategy and School Action Plan, building the school-parent bridge, types of and means for effective parental involvement, follow-up, evaluation, and revision (Epstein, 2011).

Likewise, the Curriculum for Parents—aimed particularly at those with minimal involvement in their children's education—was developed to support their active participation in the school community. It includes five thematic areas: advocacy for children, building a relationship with your child, communication and cooperation with the teacher, understanding school curriculum and how school works, and school-based management and shared decision-making (Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

Both curricula were designed to address the specific needs of their target groups and were accompanied by corresponding handbooks to support the learning process. Additionally, a Trainers' Guide (https://schoolfamilyalliance.eu/trainers-guide/) was created to prepare the 12 teacher-trainers responsible for conducting the workshops and seminars. This guide, used in the Train-the-Trainer sessions, included key topics such as the principles of parental engagement and professional development.

2.3. Conclusion

As a result of the activities, workshops for parents and seminars for teachers were successfully conducted using the prepared educational materials and methods. Parents gained valuable skills and confidence to engage with schools and support their children's learning, while teachers developed the competencies needed to involve families as active partners in the educational process. The handbooks, especially, offered concrete strategies for integrating parents into classroom and school activities. Trainers, too, were

well-equipped with the necessary tools and methodologies to effectively deliver the sessions and support the professional growth of both teachers and parents.

Specific Results for Participating Schools:

The schools involved in the project engaged in both research and implementation activities, such as participating in focus group discussions and interviews, forming school teams, and developing tailored action plans. Through these efforts, the schools gained more profound insight into their specific challenges, particularly concerning the inclusion of all students—especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds—parental involvement in school life, and the underlying causes of early school leaving. These activities helped raise awareness about possible solutions, including fostering a positive whole-school climate and encouraging the active participation of all parents in school processes. As a result, the participating schools laid the foundation for future initiatives, recognizing that meaningful change requires careful planning and the collective involvement of the entire school community.

General Results for Other Schools:

The outcomes of this project also provide an invaluable example for other schools—both within the participating countries and across Europe—interested in addressing early school leaving through improved parental engagement. These schools can use the project's structured approach, including its defined steps, guidelines, and methodologies, as a practical blueprint for action.

Wider Impact Across Europe:

The broader European educational community stands to benefit from the project's outputs, as the materials and strategies developed are relevant to many countries facing similar challenges. By promoting stronger family-school partnerships, the project contributes to efforts to reduce early school leaving and build more inclusive educational environments across the continent.

3. The Piloting

This chapter presents the results of the testing phases that took place in all the partner countries of the School+Family Alliance project: Bulgaria, Greece, Portugal, Italy, Spain and Turkey.

The piloting phase of the project was of crucial importance to verify the effectiveness and value of the School+Family Alliance strategy and tools created to foster a successful school-family cooperation against school dropout, especially in high-risk educational contexts. This phase was implemented through a series of training seminars for teachers and experts in education from different schools in all the participant countries, conducted alongside with workshop sessions for parents.

Each partner country delivered the training activities in accordance with the structure set out in the project proposal, while tailoring the agenda and format of the sessions to the specific needs and characteristics of the schools and the trainees' group. Each training session combined theoretical knowledge with interactive and practical exercises, followed by a final evaluation of the activities carried out mainly through questionnaires. The participants' feedback contributed to identifying useful recommendations for the improvement of future training opportunities.

3.1. Athens Lifelong Learning Institute (Greece)

As part of the School+Family Alliance project activities, four teacher training seminars were successfully delivered in Greece, involving four primary schools located in Athens and the Thessaloniki regional unit, with a total number of 28 participants. The seminar series was structured around four training modules developed through the project, aimed at enhancing teachers' ability to foster inclusive and effective cooperation with families. The sessions were interactive, combining theory, group reflection, and practical exercises about key topics, such as benefits and barriers to parental engagement, the teachers' role and effective strategies for parental involvement in school life. The seminars were evaluated by participants through evaluation questionnaires, from which a positive response emerged: 95.5% of the teachers stated that the seminars had a great impact on them and considered the theme very or quite important, and the combination of theoretical inputs and practical exercises was also appreciated by teachers who claimed to use them in collaboration with other colleagues to create realistic strategies in the future to solve issues like parental disengagement or conflict. To enhance school-family collaboration, ensuring sustainable, positive outcomes in the long run, participants recommended increasing experiential and interactive elements to boost engagement and practical learning. They also suggested involving specialized professionals, like psychologists and social workers, since in both training and school settings it is essential to address family-related challenges. Additionally, more practical, hands-on activities should be incorporated to maintain engagement.

To further strengthen school-family cooperation, five parent workshops were delivered in five Greek schools between February and May 2025, in the same areas as the ones where the seminars were conducted. The workshops involved 81 participants and included two sessions combining theory with practical activities. The goal was to equip parents with practical tools and strategies to actively support their children's education and contribute meaningfully to school life. Workshop sessions focused on five key themes: child advocacy, parent-child relationships, communication with teachers, understanding the school system, and shared decision-making. Through group discussions and interactive tasks, parents were able to share their experiences and opinions. Following the activities, the impact of the workshops was evaluated through a questionnaire, to which only 10 participants responded. However, half of the respondents rated the workshop as "very important" and the other half as "quite important" to them personally, showing the overall value and positive impact of the activities. Moreover, qualitative data show the appreciation of the participants for the workshops as an opportunity to reflect on their involvement in their children's school life and discover new practices about communication with the school. Parents eventually gave some suggestions to improve future training processes, such as conducting more frequent meetings to ease participation, involving experts to address parents' concerns and support emotional well-being, and involving other school staff members so that the collaboration could expand at all levels of the school environment.

3.2. GrowthCoop (Spain)

With regard to the activities carried out in Spain, with particular reference to the seminars for teachers, two sessions were delivered between 22nd-24th of April 2025, respectively in Carlos V School in Águilas, Murcia, providing primary and secondary education, and EFA El Soto, situated in rural Granada, offering vocational and secondary education. Both schools serve a diverse student population, with families from various socioeconomic backgrounds. The seminars involved a total number of 20 participants. The seminars explored the importance of parent-teacher collaboration and ways to strengthen it. Key topics included identifying communication barriers and finding effective solutions, using tools for productive meetings and feedback, and applying principles of positive parent-teacher relationships. The practical activities carried out emphasized best practices for proactive communication and strategies for constructively resolving misunderstandings. Teachers engaged in group discussions, role-playing, and scenario-based exercises to apply the concepts in practical settings and enhance their collaboration skills with parents. Overall, the participants appreciated the seminars and highlighted that the strategies discussed will help build stronger trust with families. Moreover, the seminars led to the development of a draft communication protocol for use within the school and to the proposal from teachers to schedule regular parent feedback sessions.

As planned in the project, the piloting phase included workshops for parents that were conducted between the 11th of April and the 14th of May 2025, in the same schools as the ones where the seminars took place. The workshops involved a total of 40

participants, with diverse socio-economic backgrounds. The aim of the workshops was to highlight the importance of family engagement in education through the reflection on key topics discussed, including the role of parents as active partners in the educational process, effective communication strategies, approaches to supporting learning at home, and recognizing cultural diversity as a valuable asset within the school community. The sessions included practical tools to enhance parent-teacher communication, interactive activities aimed at strengthening home-school collaboration, and opportunities for group reflection and feedback. At the end of the workshops, the participants evaluated the training activities, showing appreciation for the practical strategies shared, highlighting that role-play activities helped them better understand teachers' perspectives. They also suggested having regular workshops throughout the year. The outcomes of these workshops were quite interesting: parents established a liaison group, planning to schedule quarterly follow-up meetings, and some of them also agreed to participate in a volunteering program to support extracurricular activities and peer learning.

3.3. PRISM Impresa Sociale s.r.l. (Italy)

The implementation of the piloting phase in Italy occurred between May and June 2025. The training seminars for teachers were carried out in collaboration with the associated organization Training&HR, and they involved a total number of 40 participants from schools of different educational levels (early childhood, primary, lower and upper secondary education). Moreover, teachers from adult and professional training centers were also involved. Many of the educational institutions engaged in the activities operate in socio-economically disadvantaged areas. Each session of the seminars was structured around a specific module of the School+Family Teacher's Manual, offering participants both theoretical insights and practical tools. The topics addressed included family engagement strategies, inclusive classroom practices, emotional intelligence, and innovative approaches to parent-teacher collaboration. The reflection on these central themes was facilitated through debates, group exchanges, and targeted questions. From the participants' point of view, the addressed topics were highly relevant and useful for their practical implications. The seminars were seen as highly relevant and motivating, especially in regions with high dropout rates like Sicily, due to their practical focus on real educational challenges. Participants described the experience as significant for their professional development and expressed strong support for repeating and expanding such initiatives to include parents and other stakeholders. Although most participants did not suggest improvements, the overall response confirmed the seminars' effectiveness and reinforced the importance of sustained, long-term engagement with educators and local communities. Finally, thanks to the participants' recommendations, new demands emerged, such as organizing regular and follow-up training sessions, involving school principals and support staff in training opportunities, and creating mixed groups training sessions with teachers and parents to foster mutual understanding and collaboration.

As part of capacity-building and community engagement efforts, two cycles of parent workshops were successfully delivered between May and June 2025, involving 32 participants. Each workshop consisted of four sessions aimed at reaching diverse

community groups. Held at Training&HR—an associated partner with strong local ties—the workshops benefited from a welcoming environment and effective participant recruitment. Sessions were based on the School+Family Parent's Guide, covering topics such as communication with schools, home learning support, emotional well-being, and building strong school-family partnerships. These workshops provided parents with practical tools, a space for open dialogue, and opportunities to reflect on their role in their children's education. They also enabled parents to share experiences, build confidence, and take an active role in supporting their children's educational journey. Ultimately, the initiative supported the project's broader goal of fostering inclusive, community-driven approaches to reducing early school leaving and strengthening collaboration between families and educational institutions. The positive impact of the workshops is evident and results from the participants' feedback: parents found the activities "very significant" and improved their understanding of their role in the educational process. A key conclusion drawn was the clear need and willingness among parents to be more actively involved in their children's education—not only at home, but also through strengthened partnerships with schools and educators. Based on the outcomes of the parent workshops, several recommendations were made, such as incorporating more practical examples, role-playing, and experiential learning to enhance engagement. Follow-up sessions and peer support groups are suggested to sustain momentum and support long-term impact, while providing materials in simplified and multilingual formats would be fundamental to expand outreach.

3.4. Ege University (Turkey)

The piloting phase in Turkey was implemented through a cycle of seminars for teachers in two primary schools in Izmir, characterised by socio-economic diversity and students with migrant backgrounds. The engagement of these educational institutions in the teacher seminars offered valuable insights into the day-to-day challenges faced by educators working in such settings. The seminars took place in April 2025 and involved a total number of 20 participants. Some key topics were discussed, such as the family involvement in the educational process, considering family diversity, potential barriers and the need for inclusive activities to implement the School+Family Alliance approach. Teachers discussed the importance of trust, cultural sensitivity, and consistent communication in building strong relationships with families. Practical tools from the School+Family Alliance were employed, helping educators align engagement strategies with school culture and integrate them into daily routines. Sessions encouraged using feedback and reflection to continuously improve family involvement efforts. The impact of the activities for both schools was highly positive, with participants rating the seminars an average of 4 out of 5. Teachers praised the content's quality and relevance to their daily work and school contexts. They also valued the interactive format, especially the group discussions, collaborative activities, and peer exchange. The implementation of the teacher training seminars under the School+Family Alliance project yielded several notable outcomes: the successful delivery of the training activities, carefully tailored to the specific needs and socio-cultural contexts of each school, a productive engagement of the teachers, who enhanced their knowledge and practical tools to foster inclusive and

sustainable cooperation with families. Finally, some recommendations were provided, among which expanding participation to include more educators and school staff, increasing training duration or offering follow-up sessions, integrating more practical activities such as real-life case studies and classroom scenarios.

As a part of the project's broader aim to enhance educational quality and foster stronger school-family collaboration, the schools involved in the seminars hosted the workshops for parents, involving 40 participants, primarily those whose children come from disadvantaged backgrounds and are at higher risk of school dropout. The content of the workshop activities was based on the project's curriculum, and the key topics covered the need to build parents' confidence and skills to be active participants in their children's education, the positive impact of the parents' involvement on the learning process, and practical strategies to strengthen the family-school cooperation. The workshops received highly positive feedback, as reported through open discussions and structured evaluation forms. A total of 52 individuals—including 40 parents, along with school administrators and staff—shared their reflections, providing valuable insights into the sessions' impact and areas for improvement. Feedback from both participating schools indicated strong overall satisfaction, with the workshops earning an average rating of 4.1 out of 5. Participants particularly appreciated the relevance and quality of the content, noting its direct connection to their real-life experiences. The interactive format, featuring group discussions, hands-on activities, and peer exchange, was also widely praised for its engaging and supportive approach. Both parents and educators emphasized the need for continued support and follow-up, suggesting that ongoing training opportunities would help reinforce and expand the impact of the sessions. Overall, there was a strong, shared understanding of the importance of school-family collaboration, with participants showing renewed motivation to build more inclusive and cooperative school environments.

3.5. Sofia University (Bulgaria)

With regard to the implementation of the piloting phase in Bulgaria, the training seminars for teachers were held in February 2025, hosted by two primary schools, respectively in Sofia and Rakitovo, where the student body is predominantly of Roma children, part of whom come from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds. The seminars involved a total number of 28 participants, who explored key topics such as understanding barriers to school attendance among Roma children, the importance of trust-building with parents, the role of the school in community cohesion, the use of informal and accessible approaches to engage families, and the creation of individualized strategies for at-risk students. With regard to the participants' feedback, quite mixed responses emerged: part of the teachers, with particular reference to those working in the school in Sofia, claimed to appreciate the training activities and the practice exchange but found the strategies for Roma parent engagement not new and ineffective, since some of them were already applied in their school. Nevertheless, the seminars' materials and activities were considered a precious opportunity for teachers to exchange effective practices for preventing school dropout. Despite the concerns highlighted, some useful ideas were

developed, such as providing real working practices for engaging parents in the school life, developing short visual materials to support teacher-parent communication, and organizing regular team reflection meetings to share experience and challenges.

Alongside the seminars for teachers, workshops for parents were held between March-April 2025, involving a total number of 42 participants. The main purposes of the meetings were building trust between the school and families, raising awareness about the importance of regular school attendance, and empowering parents to support their children's learning. The training sessions cover central topics, such as strategies to become involved in the child's school life, ways to encourage children to stay at school, effective communication with school staff, overcoming cultural barriers towards the Roma community, and suggestions to improve community cooperation. With regard to the participants' feedback, despite some initial reluctance due to the prejudices they had faced in their own experience in school, the parents appreciated their involvement in the training activities. They highlighted the importance of the creation of a safe space to share their experiences and concerns and expressed the need for more activities of the same kind. On the basis of the positive feedback collected, parents showed more willingness in cooperating with teachers and understood better how education positively affects children's future. Finally, some recommendations were outlined, including organizing regular informal parent meetings, creating a group of parent volunteers as "education ambassadors," and offering basic skills training sessions for interested parents.

3.6. Aproximar (Portugal)

The implementation of the piloting phase in Portugal, with particular reference to the seminars for teachers, occurred between the 29th of April and the 12th of June 2025 and involved two primary school groups, respectively in Alfragide, Amadora, and in Arcozelo, Vila Nova de Gaia. These schools are attended by significant quotas of students from the Roma community and with a migrant background. With an initial number of 32 participants, those who completed the training activities were 24. In the first edition of seminars, issues centered around limited parental involvement in school life, particularly among vulnerable groups like the Roma and migrant families. One serious issue considered, for instance, was that many parents lack formal education themselves and place little value on schooling. Language barriers and occasional student violence highlighted the need for cultural inclusion and conflict resolution strategies. The training emphasized valuing diversity and involving families in meaningful ways. The second edition of seminars highlighted that many parents saw education as solely the school's responsibility and cited time constraints. Interestingly, migrant families were often more engaged, making strong efforts to understand the education system and use technology, such as translation apps, to communicate. Overall, both seminars served their purpose, stressing the importance of building stronger school-family relationships and recognizing the diverse needs of the community. At the end of the training activities, participants evaluated them through a survey, in which participants highlighted several strengths of the seminar, emphasizing the relevance of the content in addressing current educational challenges and the opportunity to share diverse strategies for parental involvement. They

appreciated the trainer's expertise, availability, and the collaborative atmosphere that encouraged the exchange of experiences. Furthermore, the clarification of key concepts and open discussions on emerging issues in Portuguese schools were considered valuable. However, some participants noted that they prefer interactive exercises rather than theoretical sessions and suggested making the presentations shorter in order to leave more time to do practical activities. Other suggestions emphasized the importance of focusing on parental skills training, particularly in their school context, where involving families and raising awareness about the school's importance is urgent. The general outcome of the seminars resulting from the post-training questionnaire suggests that the intervention positively contributed to the participants' professional development, particularly in their interactions in the school-family context.

In addition to the seminars for teachers, Aproximar also implemented two editions of the Workshop for Parents, based on the curriculum developed in IO3 and adapted to the local context. The first edition, carried out online between May and June 2025, involved 7 parents from the Almeida Garrett and Sophia de Mello Breyner School Groups, both schools with a high presence of Roma and migrant families. The sessions explored benefits and barriers to parental involvement, strategies for building stronger family–child relationships, communication with schools, and participatory school management. Despite challenges in mobilizing a wider group of parents, the sessions created a safe space where participants could share experiences, reflect on their role in their children's education, and imagine what an "ideal school" should look like.

The second edition took place in August 2025 at *Ludoteca de Brejos* in Cascais, with 9 parents, all from migrant backgrounds. These in-person sessions highlighted sensitive issues such as racism, xenophobia, bullying, and violence, but also positive aspects like friendship and community. Through interactive activities, parents reflected on their motivations and barriers to engaging with schools, carried out a SWOT analysis of the family–school alliance, and shared concrete strategies to support their children (e.g., setting routines, homework support, and communication at home). The Aproximar team adapted the activities to participants' literacy and communication levels, ensuring inclusiveness and meaningful participation.

Both editions provided valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities of parental involvement in education. While difficulties in mobilizing families remain, the workshops showed that, when given space and tools, parents are willing to actively contribute to their children's educational paths. Moreover, the sessions strengthened trust between families, schools, and the community, underscoring the importance of targeted and culturally sensitive approaches in engaging vulnerable groups.

3.7. Conclusion

Considering the overall results of the training activities carried out in the piloting phase of the School+Family Alliance project, both teachers, experts in the field of education, and parents were provided with effective tools to enhance their cooperation, in compliance with the broader objectives of the project, such as reducing school dropout in

disadvantaged socio-economic contexts, actively involving parents in the educational process, and integrating excellence into education for disadvantaged students who face a high risk of early school dropout.

With regard to the practical aspects of the training activities, the participants' feedback proves the successful delivery of such activities and the positive impact they had on the participants' set of competences and soft skills. Despite the diversity of the educational contexts in the partner countries and the different responses of the participants, some common needs and requests emerged in the evaluation process: many of the practices shared among teachers and parents in the training sessions need to be consolidated and replicated over time in order to establish a solid partnership to support students in their educational journey.

4. Scaling up, Localization and Adaptation

The fourth chapter of the School+Family project, "Scaling up, localization and adaptation," offers a practical exercise to extend and contextualise the materials and focuses developed during the project in various European educational environments. Acknowledging the normative, cultural, and structural differences among the participating countries' educational systems, this chapter suggests specific strategies to adapt teacher and family manuals to local realities without sacrificing the project's pedagogical coherence or collaborative focus.

Additionally, there are planning and management techniques to help the project be implemented in new contexts, along with useful tools that can support its sustainability and reproducibility throughout time. The ultimate goal is to ensure that school-family ties can be strengthened in each educational community in Europe through inclusive, participatory, and culturally sensitive processes.

4.1. Adaptation of Materials and Approaches to Local Contexts

The adaptation of the School+Family project's materials to the many European contexts necessitates a well-structured approach that guarantees pedagogical coherence, respect for diversity, and practical implementation efficiency. For such implementation This implementation is broken down into five steps, based on the information in the Teacher and Parent Handbooks, to carry out this localisation process in any social setting.

Step 1: Examination of the local educational and sociocultural background

Before using the materials, it is necessary to analyse the educational and family environment in which they will be used. The Handbook for Teachers' contents, particularly in Chapters 2 and 3, emphasise the significance of comprehending the structural and cultural barriers that may hinder parental participation (for example, language barriers, lack of time, inadequate training, or lack of confidence towards the school).

This diagnosis should include:

- National policies about family involvement.
- Educational norms regarding participation.
- Linguistic and cultural diversity.
- The socioeconomic and educational well-being of families.

For instance, in situations where there is a high level of cultural or migratory diversity, as in the case study of Amsterdam in the teacher's handbook, it is imperative to take into account cultural mediators or material translation.

Step 2: Contextualised content revision

Although the School+Family materials were designed with an emphasis on Europe, they contain elements that may need to be adjusted in each country. For instance, the Handbook for Parents makes reference to specific laws such as the Declaration of Salamanca, the European Pillar of Social Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Niño. Although these references are applicable in all socioeconomic countries, their actual implementation in schools may differ depending on the national framework.

Additionally, practical examples like "Parent-Led School Improvement" in Spain or "Coalition for Inclusion" in Italy should be complemented by local examples that enable families to relate to the content.

Step 3: Linguistic and cultural adaptation

Manuals must be translated into the local language while honouring both literalness and cultural idiosyncrasy. Ideas like school-based administration, educational partnerships, active parental participation, and decision-making procedures must have comparable meanings for the target families.

For instance, the paternity handbook emphasises the significance of valuing effort over results and avoiding child comparisons, two crucial concepts that may resonate more or less depending on the educational system and the most prevalent family values in the community.

As explained in the chapter on educational systems for parents, it will also be necessary to translate terms related to school buildings (such as gyms, lyceums, and dimotikos) to their local equivalents.

Step 4: Participatory validation with local actors

After the contents have been translated and adjusted, it is essential to hold validation sessions with family representatives, teachers, and local educational experts. This co-validation makes it possible to confirm the materials' applicability, accessibility, and relevance.

These sessions should also cover emerging topics that may not be adequately covered in the foundational materials, such as:

- Inclusion of LGBTI+ families.
- Intercultural education.
- Digital inequalities.

The section on "Building the School–Parents Bridge" in the teacher handbook notes that collaboration is only possible if schools establish a relationship of trust, open

communication, and responsibility with the families. This principle must also direct the adaptation process.

Step 5: Training and assistance for using the materials

The School+Family manuals are not meant to be read passively; they must be engaged through educational activities. To do this, it is advised that:

- Training for teachers on how to involve families, based on Handbook for Teachers Chapter 3.

- Family-centred tutorials based on the Handbook for Parents' "Building a Relationship with the Child" or "Communication with Teachers" modules.

- Employing active methodologies, such as role-playing games, brainstorming sessions, group projects, and reunion simulations.

- One noteworthy practice would be the establishment of mixed-level seminars where families and teachers together examine the resources and ideas for how to adapt their content to the realities of their school.

4.2. Strategic Planning and Management Techniques for Scaling Up the Project in Other Contexts

The scale of School+Family to new educational environments or regions cannot be approached as a straightforward mechanical replication of the original model requires a comprehensive, adaptable, and context-sensitive strategy that combines multisectoral collaboration, distributed leadership, and planning tools. Drawing on the principles extracted from the manuals, we highlight the following planning and management techniques:

a. Implementation through pilot experiences

Prior to a large-scale implementation, it is helpful to choose a group of educational centres that operate as demonstrative pilots. This makes it possible to:

- Assess the suitability of the modified materials.
- Calculate the initial impacts.
- Adapting strategies based on the outcomes.

According to the Handbook for Teachers, every school has its own identity and should modify its action plan based on its own needs, particularly in cases of early school abandonment or low family participation. As a result, pilots serve as learning and improvement spaces.

b. Utilising shared leadership teams

Distributing responsibility among many educational agents is necessary for the escalation. The establishment of interdisciplinary work teams (including instructors, families, directors, municipal technicians, and local associations) enables the project's management capacity to be increased.

One of the pillars of the School+Family approach, according to the teacher's manual, is encouraging cooperation among all parties involved—not just families and teachers, but also the community and administration.

c. Management using SMART objectives

The scaling-up goals should be:

- Specific, linked to actual needs (e.g., improving secondary support).
- Measurable with clear indicators (number of meetings, joint activities, etc.).
- Achievable, taking into account resources and timeframes.
- Relevant in accordance with local priorities.
- Temporary, with defined timeframes.

This approach is consistent with the "School+Family Action Plan" suggested in the teacher's manual, which emphasises the significance of defining clear developmental phases and activities assigned to designated responsibilities.

d. Multilateral coordination and strategic alliances

Effective scaling also necessitates forming partnerships with local institutions, such as social services:

- Educational administrations.
- Associations of fathers.
- Community organisations.

These partnerships may help spread the word about the project, finance it, or train key personnel. The experiences listed in the family handbook, such as the improvement prompted by parents at a Madrid school, demonstrate the value of horizontal collaboration networks.

e. Continuous evaluation and dynamic adjustment

Lastly, any escalation process should include a participatory evaluation strategy that enables:

- Measuring progress.
- Finding weak points or resistances.

- Modify activities and focus.

The Handbook for Teachers suggests tools like surveys, observations, or interviews to get useful information from families as well as teachers and students.

4.2. Practical Planning Tools for Future Implementation

It is advised to provide a set of practical tools to the involved educational centres and agents in order to facilitate the replication and adaptation of the School+Family approach. The most pertinent ones are described below, all of which are compatible with the materials suggested in the manuals:

a. Matrix for content adaptation

It is a work table that enables assessing the various manual blocks and determining their local applicability. For example:

Element	Applicable without changes?	Requires adaptation?	Proposed action	Responsible
Communication with teachers	✔	No	Translate and distribute	Local coordinator
School legislation	✘	Yes	Replace with national regulations	Educational technician

Because both the Handbook for Teachers and the Handbook for Parents require contextualisation (for example, Chapter 5 of the Handbook for Parents on National Educational Systems), this type of tool can be used for both.

b. The Implementation Command Card

It is a visual tracking tool that enables it to be controlled by project development phases, defining:

- Goals by phase.
- Activities that are planned.
- Indicators of success.
- Relevant dates.
- Human resources involved.

This focus is in line with the School+Family Action Plan model found in the teacher's manual, which includes task assignments, chronograms, and phase-by-phase planning.

c. Self-evaluation and Feedback Questionnaires

The manuals emphasise the importance of both active participation and formative assessment. To this end, the following tools can be designed:

- Questionnaires for families (perceptions of involvement, usefulness of materials).
- Questionnaires for teachers (school–family collaboration networks).
- Maturity levels of the alliance (communication, openness, and shared responsibility).

These tools can combine open-ended questions with quantitative rating scales. In addition, they support the adaptation of strategies and the measurement of the project's long-term impact.

d. Stakeholder and Resource Mapping

Identifying the key stakeholders in the area (both internal and external to the school) and the resources they offer is essential for the sustainability of the project.

The map can be organised around the following categories:

- School centre (teachers, management team, parents' association).
- Educational administration (inspectors, municipal technicians).
- Civil society (NGOs, cultural associations, volunteers).
- Community resources (libraries, civic centres, local radio stations).

Intersectoral collaboration, strongly advocated in both manuals, requires this preliminary mapping to be successfully activated.

e. Good Practice Manual and Activity Bank

Finally, it is advisable to create and update a document or platform containing:

- Good practices collected in each country/region.
- Activities already successfully implemented, such as workshops, events, cultural festivals or peer tutoring between families and teachers.
- Local adaptations of project modules (for example, a version of "Building a Relationship with the Child" contextualised to rural or urban areas).

This resource bank can grow collaboratively and become a legacy of the project for future implementations.

4.3. Conclusion

The success of the School+Family project in many contexts depends on its ability to rationally adjust to the unique characteristics of each territory. Beyond simply translating the materials, it is essential to consider them from a local perspective, include them into the educational dynamics, and support their implementation through ongoing training, discussion, and evaluation.

To scale the project with quality, strategic planning, cross-sectoral collaboration, and active commitment from the entire educational community are required. The tools presented here enable progress towards a structural change in the relationship between school and family, fostering more equitable, effective, and participatory education. The School+Family approach can become a transferable model to strengthen the bonds between teachers, families, and communities throughout Europe through a flexible yet cohesive application.

Conclusion

The School+Family Alliance project stands as more than a research initiative or a collection of training activities, as it embodies the living idea of an alliance between schools and families. Across diverse contexts in Europe, from urban classrooms to rural educational environments, this Paradigm has proven that when educators and parents come together with a shared purpose, the educational journey of children is reshaped for the better.

Teachers and parents are not two sides of an equation but partners working towards the same goal: unlocking every child's potential. What the project has shown through practical implementation, training, and reflection, is that trust can be developed through conscious effort. It flourishes when teachers are equipped with the skills to communicate openly, when parents are invited to share their voices and experiences, and when both groups work as equals rather than in parallel.

What makes the School+Family Alliance project distinctive is its participatory and context-sensitive approach. It did not seek to impose a single formula across six countries but instead provided a framework flexible enough to adapt to local realities. This adaptability ensured that the Paradigm resonated equally in Italy and Turkey, Spain, Portugal, Greece and Bulgaria, each with its own educational traditions and family dynamics. The strength of the Alliance lies in this capacity to balance shared European goals with the uniqueness of local contexts.

The implementation phase of the project brought the Paradigm to life. During this phase, the project brought together a diverse mix of participants. Teachers, trainers, parents, and entire school teams were engaged. Teacher training, guided by the Teacher Handbook, offered educators the essential tools to understand parental engagement better and build effective communication with parents and children, supporting their progress. At the same time, parent workshops, based on the Parent Handbook, offered families necessary strategies and knowledge to take an active role in their children's learning. Across the 6 partner countries, over 12 school communities, 12 trainer teachers, 120 seminar participants, and 240 parents took part in these activities. Participants highlighted how combining theory with practical exercises made the learning relevant and engaging, and many expressed a desire for even more interactive, experiential activities, underlining the value of this approach.

The feedback from these piloting sessions points to some clear outcomes. Teachers shared that the seminars offered them concrete and practical ideas they could apply in their daily work, such as new ways to engage parents, more constructive approaches to managing conflict, and strategies to strengthen teamwork within the school. Parents, in turn, appreciated the workshops as opportunities to better understand school routines, communicate more openly with teachers, and take an active role in decision-making and

supporting their children's learning at home. Across all contexts, the project succeeded in creating a safe and inclusive space for dialogue, reflection, and skill-building, showing that strong school-family collaboration can grow when supported with the right tools and guidance.

Beyond skills and strategies, the project also fostered cultural change. Teachers began to see parents as education partners, whereas parents were looking at schools as accessible rather than distant places supporting in parallel project's sustainability, which consists another fundamental principle. In many cases, relationships formed during the training persisted afterwards, with teachers and parents initiating new forms of cooperation. This verifies that School+Family Alliance is not a short-lived intervention but also has long-term results.

The School+Family Alliance also provides a roadmap for future European cooperation. In an era where inequality in education often reflects broader social and economic divides, projects like this show that inclusion must begin with collaboration and building trust. Families from disadvantaged backgrounds, or those navigating cultural and linguistic diversity, often face barriers to participating in school life. By actively reaching out to these families and valuing their contributions, School+Family Alliance demonstrates the importance of building relationships and not just having adequate resources.

In conclusion, the School+Family Alliance Paradigm offers both a vision and a practice: a vision of schools and families united as allies in the education of children, and a practice of training, tools, and strategies that make this vision real. Its success in 6 different European contexts validates its relevance and adaptability and offers a pattern for others to follow without limits.

The School+Family Alliance is finally a call to action. It reminds us that education is most effective when it is collective, when schools and families stand side by side, learning from each other and working together toward the ultimate goal. As the project closes, what remains is a living alliance that can continue to grow, inspire, and shape the future of education across Europe.

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Additional materials used:

1. **School+Family Alliance Strategy Guidelines**

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2. Handbook for Teachers

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3. Handbook for Parents

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4. Trainers' Guide

School+Family Alliance. (n.d.). *Trainers' Guide*. Retrieved August 21, 2025, from https://schoolfamilyalliance.eu/trainers-guide/

5. School+Family Alliance Action Plans

School+Family Alliance. (n.d.). *School+Family Alliance Action Plans*. Retrieved June 6, 2025, from https://schoolfamilyalliance.eu/

6. National Piloting Reports

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