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Paper

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## **HIPPY – Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters**

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Andreas Novy*

Case Study N°11  
July 2015

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## 1. The initiative and its organizers

HIPPY is an internationally renowned program in the field of early childhood intervention. The acronym stands for Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters and the program aims at preparing parents and especially mothers with little education, from low social strata, and therefore often with migratory background, for their role of preparing their four to six year-old children for school. First, instructors with similar socio-economic and/or cultural background to the target group visit the families once per week at their home to train the parents and familiarize them with the teaching materials. In a second step, the parents spend twenty minutes per day going through the playing and learning materials with the child. The supervisory relationship is intended to last for up to two school years, depending on the age of the child when the family enters the program. Additionally, group meetings and field trips are offered.

HIPPY Austria was established under the auspices of HIPPY International in 2007 by the association *beratungsgruppe.at* (*Beratungsgruppe* means counseling group). A pilot project was established in one of the Viennese districts, funded by the city of Vienna, and in 2008 the project was expanded with different sources of funding. By 2012 HIPPY Vienna offered more than 80 program places in nine of the 23 districts, still carried out by *beratungsgruppe.at*. This further expansion was possible due to the financing by the EIF (European Integration Fund), and two Austrian federal ministries, namely of integration (BMI) and of economy, family and youth (BMWFJ). With this shift to national sources of funding, the expansion of HIPPY Austria outside Vienna also became possible. HIPPY already came to the city of Graz in Styria, one of the nine Austrian federal provinces, in 2009, but in 2012, due to the initiative of the newly appointed state secretary for integration, HIPPY was expanded to five more provinces as well as other places in Styria, offering additional 150 program places. The association *beratungsgruppe.at* serves as the coordinating unit for HIPPY Austria, i.e. *beratungsgruppe.at* helped the respective organizations in the provinces in setting up a HIPPY program in the same way the *beratungsgruppe.at* was helped by HIPPY International. These are *alpha nova* in Styria, *Katholisches Bildungswerk* in Carinthia, and *menschen.leben*, the association which coordinates the programs in Lower Austria, Salzburg, and Tyrol.

*Beratungsgruppe.at* was founded as an association in 2006; it aims at fostering equality of chances for people from low social strata and/or with low educational attainment. The association offers an array of target-group specific projects, with a focus on enabling forms of self-help. It is a non-profit, non-governmental or party-affiliated network of trainers, coaches and counselors in the field of adult education. *Alpha nova* in Styria is a company, which was established in 1992. It offers services for people with disabilities and other people facing barriers to social inclusion. It is not profit-oriented and employs 360 people under public mandate, who produce a large variety of services to foster the integration of the target group in different fields (in employment, housing, family/youth, social-psychological services, and education). The *Katholisches Bildungswerk* in Carinthia is the educational institute of the Catholic Church. *Menschen.leben* is an association that is active in several Austrian provinces with its headquarters in Lower Austria. It was established in 2006 and offers a wide range of projects and services in the fields of integration/education/language, asylum, gender equality and diversity, psychological counseling, and youth welfare.

While interviews were conducted with *beratungsgruppe.at*, *Katholisches Bildungswerk* and *alpha nova*, this report focuses on HIPPY Vienna due to the limited space of the report. Certain aspects of HIPPY are centrally specified by HIPPY International and therefore similar across the provinces, yet the programs

differ in other aspects as for instance in the target group, which is dependent on the source of funding. However, in the last chapter on the governance challenges the focus on Vienna is abandoned. Where appropriate, differences are explained and insights from all interviewees and focus group participants are taken up.

## **2. Basic information on the (local) context and the emerging problems**

HIPPY is especially relevant in the conservative Austrian welfare regime because of the combination of the large role parents play in determining their children's educational careers and the disadvantaged situation especially of families with migratory background. Familial factors such as the parental affection of the mother and the familial structure, including the time dedicated to the children, and socio-economic as well as socio-cultural factors seem to have a stronger impact on the further development of the child at the pre-school age than the quantity and quality of non-familial care in institutions (Stanzel-Tischler, Breit 2009: 16f). Due to the early segmentation in the Austrian school system, education opportunities are highly dependent on the education of the parents. Comparative studies show that children from the second generation of Turkish immigrants have significantly less chances in education systems such as the Austrian or the German when compared with countries such as France or Sweden that rely more on integrative all-day learning (Baysu, de Valk 2012). Results of the international PISA comparisons have shown big differences in educational achievements between children of native Austrians and those of foreign descent (OECD 2010). While children with a non-German mother tongue are clearly underrepresented in academic secondary schools (with a share of only 16 percent), they are strongly over-represented in special needs schools (about 30 percent). While 70 percent of pupils attending academic secondary schools have parents who have left school with a university entrance certificate themselves (*Matura*), this applies only to about 30 to 35 percent of children who attend less advanced school types (Herzog-Punzenberger et al. 2012, 8f). Also, the share of young adults of non-Austrian descent who are unemployed is more than twice as high as among the reference group of native Austrians, at roughly 17 vs. 8 per cent (Mayrhuber et al. 2012: 34). The Austrian deficits in providing the youth with sufficient perspectives for the future have less to do with a weak labor market or with inadequate education opportunities than with access problems that certain groups confront. Besides issues of ethnicity, empirical data also show a relatively strong correlation between household income and educational careers of children (Schenk 2008).

Early education and care, although neglected in the public discourse on education in Austria, is the crucial basis for life chances and educational careers. According to the European Commission, it is the foundation for successful lifelong learning, social integration, personal development and employability (Europäische Kommission 2011). It is assumed that the returns on investment in education are larger at the pre-school age than at later ages and they are particularly high for children from socially disadvantaged families and children with migratory background. Positive effects of early care and education include improved cognitive skills, increased willingness to learn, better educational attainment, and strengthened social integration. Furthermore, in the medium and long-term early education and care reduces costs resulting from early differentiation in the Austrian school system and decreases the risk of later dependence on social transfers significantly. It also improves the labor market participation and income situation of mothers (see Petanovitsch, Schmid 2012 for an overview of Austrian and international studies).

There are three models of early education and care prevalent in Europe, with most welfare states relying on a combination of them. Firstly, the institutionalized setting with qualified pedagogues, for instance in kindergartens. Secondly, domestic early child care usually offered by laypersons without specific training, such as daycare parenting. And thirdly, programs to support families in their role in early education and care; this is the category HIPPY falls into. With the Barcelona targets of 2002, the EU has set benchmarks to increase the offers to reach at least 33 percent of children under three years of age and at least 90 percent of the children between three years old and the school entrance age by 2010. (Julius Raab Stiftung 2013) Austria has made a lot of progress within the past ten years in this respect, almost tripling the number of children under three years for whom care places are provided, reaching 23 percent in 2014. Regional differences are, however, strong, with offers for 40 percent of children under three years of age in Vienna, compared to 12 and 13 percent in Styria and Upper Austria. The development in care places for children between three and five was less dynamic, which is however due to the already high level 10 years ago. In 2013/14, 91 percent of these children had care places, compared to 82 percent ten years earlier. However, only about a third of those places allow the parents to work full time (35 percent in 2013/14 compared to only 15 percent in 2003/04). Overall, the situation has improved, but regional differences remain strong. (Arbeiterkammer Wien 2015) In 2010, Austria has introduced a compulsory year in kindergarten. Since 2008 it has promoted language proficiency assessment and development at the kindergarten level. Some provinces, e.g. Vienna, have furthermore introduced one year of kindergarten free of charge. (Lex-Nalis 2010)

Over the last years, a broad, supra-partisan reform coalition for the Austrian educational sector has emerged. It is composed of experts, professionals, left wing parties and progressive parts of Austrian industry. It is supported by OECD- and mainstream researchers and economists who suggest a large set of changes. Its opponents are mainly the conservative teachers union and parents.

It is mainly focused on school reform, especially overcoming the separation of children at age ten. But it also aims at strengthening the importance of elementary pedagogy. To start with, at this young age education and care should necessarily be intertwined, i.e. overcoming the sole focus on care. Other demanded modifications include: changes in the framework conditions in terms of the number of pedagogues and children per group, the fostering of male participation in early care and education, and the professionalization and fair remuneration of the kindergarten teams; institutionalized cooperation between kindergartens and primary schools; an additional kindergarten year free of charge; the adaptation of opening hours to promote female labor market participation; and especially, a stronger role of the federal government in terms of harmonization or the introduction of unified educational standards across the provinces (Lex-Nalis 2010, Julius Raab Stiftung 2013; Wirtschaftskammer Wien 2015).

In 2011, almost 400 thousand Austrians signed a referendum promoting structural changes in the education system, including elementary pedagogy. This successful referendum shows the relevance and support for these educational reforms. In early 2012 this has been discussed in the Austrian parliament (Österreichisches Parlament 2012), but has not led to profound changes ever since (Androsch 2014). It has, however, supported a propulsive climate for experimentation, and therefore for social innovations.

However, the institutional framework for changing the structure of schooling is quite complex. While education is in the primary responsibility of the federal ministry of education, some aspects of primary and

lower secondary schooling – such as occupational laws and salary schemes as well as the maintenance of school buildings – are organized by the provinces. Nursery schooling is almost the sole responsibility of the provinces, although the framework and strategic aspects for most types of education are negotiated with the federal level. Besides the distribution of competences between the levels of statehood, frictions are also caused by ideological differences between political parties and special interests, not least those of teachers.

Austria is characterized by cultural and lingual diversity, which is particularly evident in the education system. In the school year 2010-2011 a quarter of primary school children in Austria had a native language other than German. This share can be as high as 40 percent in large cities in the provinces of Salzburg and Upper Austria and more than half in the capital Vienna. The most frequent languages other than German are Turkish and Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian with about seven per cent each (Herzog-Punzenberger et al. 2012: 6). The standing of multilingual children in the school system depends on several context factors such as the prestige of the language, the immigration history of the ethnic group, its socio-economic composition and their legal standing (Herzog-Punzenberger, Schnell 2012). HIPPY Austria targets families that meet the criteria of educationally disadvantaged people as elaborated in a UNESCO (2006) study. The study found that children's educational attainment strongly depends on a number of risk-factors of the mother: educational attainment, low income, rural background and isolation of the mother (due to socio-economic risk factors or due to psychosocial impairments, including those arising from immigration experiences and from social exclusion in the country of destination). The women targeted by HIPPY Austria largely stems from Islamic countries of origin, and often rural areas, they have little formal (academic and/or vocational) training, and insufficient German language skills. Another barrier is that they are largely not familiar with Austrian norms and institutions. They generally also have childcare responsibilities and their families are characterized by traditional gender roles. Due to these reasons, they hardly enter in contact with public institutions and their social and labor market participation is particularly difficult. (Frankl, Kratky 2007: 4; Alexa 2010: 9ff)

Regarding integration policy in Austria, the framework is rather poorly developed. A coherent national integration framework is still not in place, although the new minister from the conservative party (ÖVP) has given more attention to this policy field than previous politicians. There is a deliberate effort to modernize conventional conservative policies in the field of integration, interculturality and education. However, a study of the OECD (Krause, Liebig 2011) criticizes the lack of effective policy coordination at the federal level and advises to improve the framework conditions for a coherent and effective integration policy. The only structured integration program for new arrivals at the federal level is language training. In a context of increasing unemployment and a political shift to law and order-solutions, immigration policies have become more restrictive with an increasing emphasis on mandatory language courses. Such programs have increased significantly, largely financed by the Public Employment Service (AMS), although they have rarely been effective in fostering labor market integration or social participation. A public offer in Vienna is the course *Mama lernt Deutsch* ('Mom studies German'), which encourages mothers with migratory background to partake in six hours of low-threshold German lessons per week at a kindergarten, school or adult education center. The program is promoted and financed by the administrative unit for integration and diversity (*Magistratsabteilung 17*) and the ministry of education (*BMUKK*). Other measures



rely on non-governmental organizations at the sub-national level and efforts are often small-scale and project-based (Österle, Heitzmann 2015).

### 3. Genesis of the initiative

HIPPY was first started in Israel in 1969, when it was addressed towards immigrant families with children aged between four and six years old, from the lower social strata and with low levels of educational attainment. The program has since been further developed according to academic progress in the field of early childhood education and adapted to various local contexts. Today, HIPPY International is a network of organizations offering HIPPY support in ten countries: Israel, Canada, USA, Australia, New Zealand, Argentina, South Africa, Italy (South Tyrol), Germany and Austria. HIPPY-inspired programs are furthermore implemented in Turkey, Finland, the Netherlands, and Denmark. The headquarters of HIPPY International continue to be at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in Israel.

HIPPY Austria was first started with the school year of 2006/07. One of the initiators, a member of *beratungsgruppe.at*, learned about HIPPY when watching TV and decided to bring the program to Austria at *beratungsgruppe.at*. Several districts in Vienna showed interest and there was an awareness of the necessity of such a program by a number of district officials. This coincided with the EIF's thematic focus on educational disadvantages, without which projects for the HIPPY target group would not be possible, as stated by the interviewees. For the first year, the city of Vienna additionally provided start-up funding. Ever since 2007 however, the city has not contributed financially. This role was taken up by the Viennese districts, as the EIF requires that 50 per cent is paid by local or national resources; this means, of the approximately 100.000 Euros HIPPY Vienna currently receives, half stems from EU resources. Obtaining local funding remained difficult, especially since HIPPY is a comparatively expensive program with costs per child at 2.000 Euros per year. But in 2012, the minister of integration supported and promoted HIPPY, and two federal ministries started contributing financially. The ministry of integration (BMI) and the ministry of economy, family and youth (BMWFJ) thus made it possible to spread HIPPY to other provinces. Strengthening and supporting the family as the key unit for successful integration and educational capacities is in tune with the family-centered focus of the conservative Austrian welfare regime. Yet, differently from prior policies, which put all responsibility on the private household, public resources are made available to support at risk of poverty households.

*Beratungsgruppe.at* started HIPPY in one district in Vienna after entering into contract with HIPPY International and did so with guidance from HIPPY Germany (Alexa 2010: 7). During the first year, 24 Turkish families were supported, as the targeting of third country nationals is an EIF requirement and Turkish citizens are the largest non-EU immigrant group in Vienna. This number was doubled the following year, when HIPPY Vienna was expanded to include four districts, and in 2009 already 93 families took part in the program. Today, Vienna remains the province with the largest amount of program spaces (at approximately 80); HIPPY is now offered in nine districts. The association *alpha nova* in Styria learned about HIPPY Vienna in 2009 and started the project with the help of the HIPPY Vienna team, which simultaneously acts as the HIPPY Austria coordinating team. The experienced HIPPY Vienna team could for instance share insights on how to reach the target group and find adequate home-visitors, these were furthermore trained

and supported by the Viennese home-visitor. All other HIPPY projects in the provinces were started in 2012, when political interest rose on the national level and resources were made available.

#### **4. The activities and organization**

HIPPY is a supplement to early childhood education and care institutions that aims at helping parents, and especially mothers, to teach their pre-school children. Most aspects of national HIPPY programs are standardized by HIPPY International: the learning materials are provided; the staff generally consists of one professional coordinator and supervisor and a number of para-professional home visitors from the target group community. The teaching method is based on role-playing where the home-visitor first goes through the materials with the mother, thereby empowering her to teach her children and prepare them for the school experience; and the weekly visits are supplemented with group meetings and excursions.

A main characteristic of HIPPY that is quite unique in the Austrian context is that the program is structured around the principle of going to the target group, instead of having the target group come to the program. Not only is the initiative based on individual visits at the families' home, but the acquisition of the project participants, i.e. the mothers/families, also happens directly in their neighborhood by the home-visitors. The home-visitors share the socio-cultural background and generally speak the language of the target group. In the case of HIPPY Vienna this is almost entirely Turkish. In Carinthia on the other hand, also families with Austrian citizenship can be included in the target group, as HIPPY Carinthia is not EIF-funded. HIPPY Carinthia has another unique feature compared to the other HIPPY Austria initiatives: generally, one requirement for the HIPPY home-visitors is that they share the same socio-cultural background while professional training in pedagogy or otherwise formal qualifications are not expected. On the contrary, they are rather deemed to get in the way of the trusting relationship between mother/family and home-visitor, which is a basis for success of the HIPPY initiative. In the case of Carinthia however, one visitor is highly qualified in early education, and while the HIPPY Vienna team as HIPPY Austria coordinator warned of possible complications, the setting appears to work for the HIPPY families in Carinthia.

The home-visitors go through a pedagogical training as required by HIPPY International before they can start visiting the families. They are however not professional pedagogues or social workers (with the exception of the already mentioned case in Carinthia). On the contrary, the home-visitor should have a similar social background as the target group, a factor that is more important for the success of HIPPY than only a shared *cultural* background. Put simply, HIPPY is based on the idea that if a project is targeted to reach ten women, the implementing institution should look for eleven women, employ one of them, and train her to train the others. While HIPPY was originally designed to target immigrant families, the HIPPY implementing teams in Austria see that the program does not respond to a problem of cultures, but to one of education of the parents and especially the mother. In this sense the project should be targeted to families from lower social strata in general, not only those with immigrant background. In this respect, the problem results from HIPPY Austria being largely dependent on EIF funding, which requires the focus on non EU-citizens. HIPPY Austria's target group therefore largely stems from Islamic countries of origin, and often rural areas, the women have little formal (academic and/or vocational) training, and insufficient German language skills, they are largely not familiar with Austrian norms and institutions, and have child care responsibilities. Due to these reasons, and also due to traditional gender roles in their families, they

hardly enter in contact with public institutions and their social and labor market participation is particularly difficult. (Frankl, Kratky 2007: 4; Alexa 2010: 9ff)

The goals of HIPPY Austria include increasing the social participation and the life-chances of the target group (including those mothers who become home-visitors) via early childhood education and care as well as the strengthening of parental competencies and the support of children within their families. Mothers are supported, not least in terms of language skills and the families are supported in their integration efforts. Finally, it is a goal to enhance the chances of labor market participation of mothers and in the medium term their children, too (*Beratungsgruppe.at* 2011: 2). HIPPY directly offers employment opportunities for the targeted women too, in form of the home-visitor. HIPPY is therefore targeted both at the children and the mothers (or parents, including the home-visitors). Children are to be supported in a holistic approach, i.e. promoting cognitive, social, emotional and motoric skills. At the same time, the mother is empowered to act as a teacher for her child, a role that is still crucial in the Austrian education system and which is a main reason for 'inheriting' educational status. Once a week, she is visited for approximately 1.5 hours by the instructor. During this session the mother is familiarized with the materials; additionally, the home-visitor conducts a short questionnaire each week on the progress of the activities. The materials consist of five units that advance and build on the previous unit. Additionally, a short book is provided once per month, which the mother reads to the child. The learning materials refer to those stories. (ibid; Frankl, Kratky 2007: 4) The materials are intended to be provided to the mothers in German, although, for mothers with very little German skills they are available in Turkish (or other respective languages) too. In the case where German materials are too advanced, the mother obtains them both in German and Turkish. Generally the experience is that after a few weeks the Turkish materials are no longer necessary. In this sense, the program also fosters the language skills of the mother. The mother is now ready to act as her child's teacher and goes through the materials with the child five times a week, for twenty minutes each session.

Additionally, group meetings are organized on a regular basis, where different subjects such as freedom of religion or health are discussed, sometimes with external experts on the respective subject. Excursions or field trips are also offered on a regular basis, for instance to historic sights, to parks, to other institutions such as youth centers, to doctors and clinics, to public events, to museums etc. (*Beratungsgruppe.at* 2011: 3). These extra activities are intended to raise the women's awareness of other facilities but also of possibilities to spend quality leisure time as a family. Furthermore they are a forum for the families to connect and exchange experiences and ideas (Frankl, Kratky 2007: 4).

In terms of quality assurance, national HIPPY programs deliver a yearly report to HIPPY International. Given the long-term character of the extensive network, a large amount of research on HIPPY is available, largely in terms of impact assessment (see HIPPY International 2009 for an overview of studies from the USA, Canada and Germany). HIPPY Austria evaluated its efforts after its first year, focusing on the child's development in 22 areas, including language skills development, creative thinking, hand-eye-coordination, imagination, creative drawing, role-playing and empathy, logics and problem-solving, discipline and structure, familial relationships etc. The three areas with the strongest positive developments were familial relationships, language skills and problem-solving (Frankl, Kratky 2007: 50ff). Long-term evaluations are not available for the case of Austria, but HIPPY Germany has existed since 1991 and long-term studies have been conducted. In Nürnberg, one of the 29 HIPPY Germany projects, 97.6 percent of the participating

children with migratory background were accepted in regular schools and classes; and 34 percent went on to go to a school that qualifies to enroll in university, compared to only 12 percent of the children of the control group (Alexa 2010: 51). In Austria, positive feedback comes from Kindergarten pedagogues, too. Positive developments can also be witnessed for the participating mothers: they are more likely to attend German courses, to start vocational training, and to get a job. Furthermore, HIPPY has decreased the social isolation of the mothers and enhances the communication and the relations between the families and kindergartens and schools, as well as with other families from their community, and also the relations between different immigrant communities. (ibid: 52; Frankl, Kratky 2007: 6)

## **5. The innovative dimension of the initiative**

Moulaert et al. (2005; see also Oosterlynck et al. 2013a/b for the relevance for the ImPRovE project) define three dimensions of social innovation: (a) the satisfaction of basic social needs, the content dimension; (b) the transformation of social relations, or the process dimension; (c) and the empowerment and socio-political mobilization, the political dimension linking process and content dimensions.

In her field research on HIPPY Vienna, Alexa (2010: 11ff) identified five structural quality criteria of HIPPY, that can all be viewed as innovative elements when compared with other programs in early childhood education: the role of paraprofessional home-visitors as compared to highly qualified experts; the practice-oriented learning materials that respond to the level of competences of child and mother as opposed to following a strict curriculum; the triangular approach of targeting children, mothers and home-visitors as part of the target group, thus supporting structures of self-help or a program of the target group for the target group; the focus on women; and the low-threshold approach based on home-visiting and going to the communities, which reaches families who are not reached by center-based programs.

### **5.1. Content dimension**

HIPPY addresses various social needs. It aims at improving the life chances of children from vulnerable and socially excluded families. The children who participate in HIPPY are more likely to enter regular primary schools and to obtain the qualifications to enter tertiary education. HIPPY follows the insight that early childhood education and care are necessarily intertwined and the role of the family is crucial in supporting the life chances of their children. According to the European Commission, early childhood education and care is of prime importance, as it is the foundation for successful lifelong learning, personal development, social integration, and later employability (Europäische Kommission 2011).

HIPPY follows a triangular approach (Alexa 2010: 12) as the target group is threefold: besides the needs of the children, HIPPY also addresses the social needs of the mothers, including those who become home-visitors. The mothers gain competencies in educating their children, as well personal skills and empowerment to participate in society. Via the group based offers, i.e. the excursions and group meetings/discussions, they are introduced to public services and institutions, they are more likely to go to the doctor, use public transport etc. This is supported by their increasing German language skills, which are fostered and strengthened through the German learning materials they go through with their children.

Through the course of HIPPY, the women are more likely to participate in German classes offered by public authorities, enter the second-chance education and get high school diplomas, and also to get a job.

Thirdly, the home-visitors, women who would otherwise be hardly employable on the Austrian labor market and are generally socially excluded, can be part-time employed (usually around 25 hours per week) via HIPPY. They are employed as para-professionals and their skills are developed in compulsory, internal further training measures that are taken twice a year for several days (Alexa 2010: 11).

## **5.2. *Process dimension***

HIPPY contributes to the social inclusion of families from lower social strata, who often have little formal educational experience and mostly have immigrant background. Besides the changes in relations between the target group and mainstream society described above under section a), HIPPY contributes to empowering women and thereby to a change in gender relations. HIPPY International requires female coordinators and the home-visitors are women as well. The targeted mothers also gain independence from their husbands. One individual case told by one of the interviewees illustrates this: through HIPPY, the woman started to save some money every day and after a year used it to buy an annual public transport ticket, this allowed her to feel more free and independent from her husband and to go where he would not take her. HIPPY also offers workshops on identity as part of the group based program, and the experience is that the women undergo a change from viewing themselves through their children ('I am my children') to experiencing their identity and the value connected to it. The women who have largely been socialized to suppress their emotions and needs and often suffer from depressive mental states start to experience their needs and demand they be met. HIPPY furthermore contributes to a change in relations among the different target communities. According to one interviewee, the divides and conflicts that often characterize the relations between immigrant communities from different countries of origin can be diminished via the group based offerings.

## **5.3. *Empowerment dimension***

The paragraphs above already show that empowerment in HIPPY is largely sociopedagogical and connected to increasing individual self-value and confidence, which in turn contributes to societal participation and a change in the roles the women see themselves in. The type of empowerment pursued enables the reached individuals of the target group to (better) participate in the education system and the labor market. Yet, through the group based offers there is also a component of collective empowerment, when for instance questions of identity or of religious freedom are discussed collectively and the women leave the familiar and private environment of their homes to enter a more public sphere and start to perceive themselves as a member of the group. Another aspect of collective empowerment is the home-visitors becoming multipliers and trainers for other HIPPY home-visitors and in general the fact that members of the target group work with the target group (as opposed to trained professionals of mainstream middle-class society). Furthermore, the acquisition of new families is largely based on word of mouth, indicating the role the women take on in their communities as multipliers.

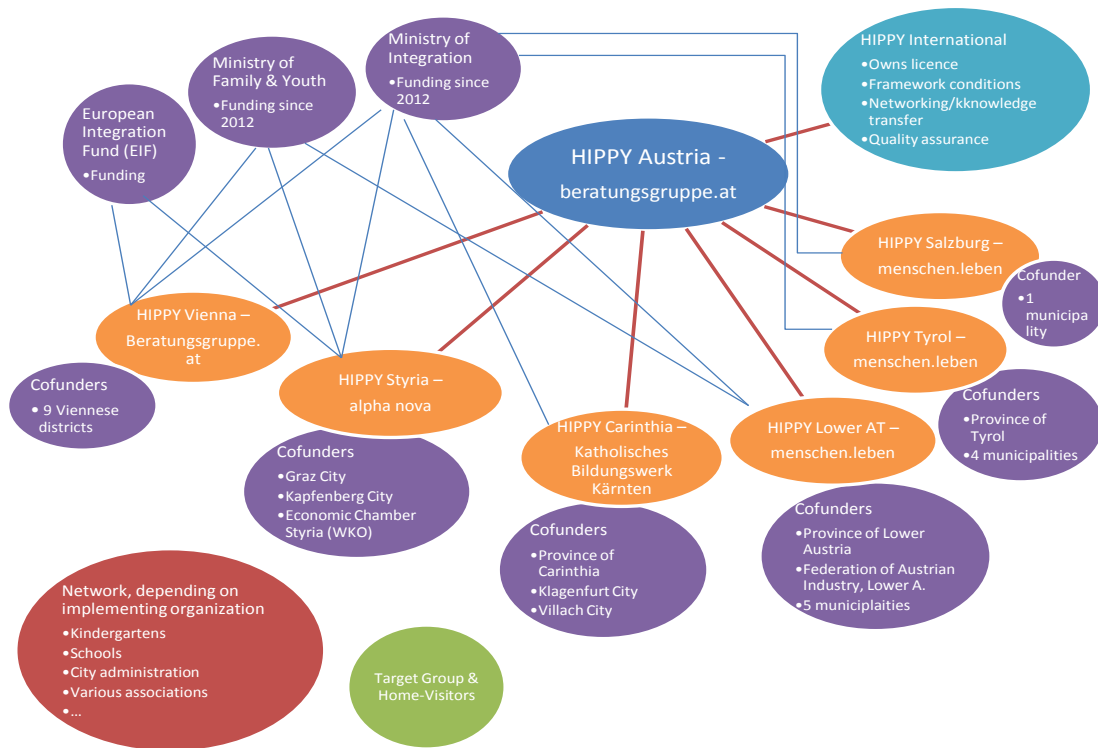
## 6. Institutional mapping and governance relations

Every national and local HIPPY project operates under the auspices of the the umbrella organization HIPPY International. The national HIPPY organization, *beratungsgruppe.at* in the case of Austria, enters into contract with HIPPY International and pays licence fees, which are used to further develop the program. HIPPY Austria is therefore subject to the quality criteria defined by HIPPY International, such as the compulsory further training for project coordinators and guidelines regarding structure, documentation and evaluation of the local HIPPY program. The national HIPPY organizations profit from the networking within HIPPY International, the learning materials are for instance developed, renewed and adapted to local contexts according to academic insights with the help of HIPPY International. In this network setting, HIPPY Austria benefits from the know-how of financially larger HIPPY programs, as for instance HIPPY Australia. However, interviewees state that they often do not have the opportunity to partake in HIPPY International networking meetings due to a lack of funding.

The local HIPPY projects are in turn guided by HIPPY Austria, i.e. by *beratungsgruppe.at* as the national coordinator who has entered into contract with HIPPY International. HIPPY Austria supports the local HIPPY projects in terms of project implementation, obtaining funding, training of coordinators and home-visitors, and regarding quality assurance through a guidance and monitoring process. The experienced home-visitors of HIPPY Vienna for instance helped train the home-visitors of the newly established HIPPY programs in the provinces.

HIPPY is based on the project employees coming to the homes of the participating families. Networking and cooperating with the institutions in the target groups' neighborhoods is therefore crucial to project success. The implementing organizations generally have close contacts to kindergartens, schools, counseling services, immigrants' associations and to a lesser extent also relevant political and administrative actors, in order to gain access to the families. Especially the cooperation with kindergartens is dependent on political will: while the home-visitors of HIPPY Vienna are allowed to enter kindergartens, they have been forbidden to do so in Lower Austria. Ties between the target group and the coordinating team are forged through the constant teamwork with the home-visitors as well as through the families' participation in the group offers.

**Illustration 1: Relations of HIPPY**



Regarding funding, HIPPY Austria is quite vulnerable and dependent on the political will of public authorities. The relations with political and administrative entities at the municipal level differ profoundly. Some departments and districts cooperate intensely, while there are constant tensions with other departments, as HIPPY is a rather expensive program compared to the group-based programs offered for instance in Vienna. The city prefers the program *Mama lernt Deutsch*, which is based on the target group, mothers with migratory background, coming to the kindergarten or school and participating in six hours of low-threshold German lessons per week. This approach is fundamentally different from HIPPY as the mothers are not approached but have to approach the program themselves, it is not targeted at the family but at the mother only, it is group based and not focused on the individual family, and the focus lies on German language skills as perceived to be the main barrier to integration instead of a holistic learning experience and familial support of the child. The local HIPPY projects therefore struggle to obtain funding, and interviewees state that without the EIF such a program could not be implemented in Austria.

However, in 2012 the federal minister of integration supported the project publicly and made funding available. The involvement of the ministry of integration and the ministry of family and youth therefore made the spread of HIPPY to further provinces and municipalities possible. The minister has since been more occupied with foreign affairs than integration affairs and so since 2012 HIPPY Austria has not expanded further. But the network is open to new locations and new partners who are interested, have experience in working with the target group and are well connected on the local level.

HIPPY Vienna is federally and EIF funded and receives support of nine Viennese districts where HIPPY program places are offered. *Beratungsgruppe.at* has close ties with the Viennese kindergartens or more

specifically with the administrative unit responsible for the kindergartens (MA 10), with primary schools and an adult education center in one of the districts, with the administrative unit for youth and family (MA 11), the developmental diagnostic center of the city (MA 15) and various associations and local initiatives.

The other HIPPY programs in Austria all have similar ties. HIPPY Styria for instance, which is offered in and around Graz and in Kapfenberg by *alpha nova*, is connected to local kindergartens and schools as well as local initiatives and communities. In Graz, HIPPY furthermore has ties to the city's health department, the municipal integration fund, youth welfare institutions, the city library and early education services, while in Kapfenberg cooperation partners include the parent-child center, the intercultural association, and the municipalities early education service. Additionally, HIPPY Styria cooperates with a university in Graz. It is funded by the EIF, the ministry of integration and the ministry of family and youth, the cities of Graz and Kapfenberg as well as the Styrian branch of the Austrian Economic Chamber (WKO).

HIPPY Carinthia is implemented by the Catholic educational institute *Katholisches Bildungswerk* Kärnten. The institute is member of the umbrella organization *Katholische Aktion Kärnten*, within which especially the Catholic women's movement has ties to immigrants and refugees. HIPPY Carinthia has a broad cooperation network with both church and non-church cooperation partners due to the long-term experience of the *Katholisches Bildungswerk*. It is funded by the ministry of integration, the province of Carinthia, and the cities of Klagenfurt and Villach, where HIPPY Carinthia is offered. The institute would like to spread HIPPY to further municipalities, but meets a barrier in the dependence on co-funding by local and regional agencies.

The association *menschen.leben* has offered HIPPY in Lower Austria, Salzburg and Tyrol since federal funding became available in 2012. Prior to that, *beratungsgruppe.at* already implemented one HIPPY project in Lower Austria, in the area around Vienna. This was mostly funded by the ministry of family and youth. Program places are available in Korneuburg, Bad Vöslau, Felixdorf, Sollenau and Wiener Neustadt. The places are funded by the ministry of integration, the province of Lower Austria, the Lower Austrian branch of the Federation of Austrian Industry (*Industriellenvereinigung*) and all the municipalities aforementioned. In the province of Salzburg, HIPPY is offered only in one municipality: in Grödig; the ministry of integration and the municipality co-finance it. In Tyrol, the city of Schwaz was already interested in HIPPY in 2009, but the project could only be implemented in 2012 when federal funding became available. HIPPY is now offered in Imst, Schwaz, Telfs and Völs. These municipalities all co-finance the programme, together with the ministry of integration, and the province of Tyrol.

Overall, this shows that HIPPY is more popular with small municipalities, rather than the provincial capitals. This is due to the conflicts or differences in approaching integration as mentioned above in the case of Vienna.

## **7. Governance challenges**

This section presents the results of the interviews and especially the discussion during the focus group on the eight governance challenges for social innovation as elaborated by the ImPRovE team (ImPRovE Social Innovation Team 2013).



## **7.1. Mainstreaming social innovation**

Mainstreaming of the initiative has to some extent already taken place as HIPPY Austria has been spread to include more Viennese districts but also other municipalities in five additional provinces. This was possible due to the efforts of the minister of integration to modernize the conservative integration policies by providing additional federal financial resources. Nonetheless, HIPPY is far from being mainstreamed across Austria. Less than 300 program places are offered all over Austria and the initiative remains limited to a small number of rather small municipalities while larger cities follow cheaper, group-based approaches to integration that are more focused on German language skills rather than holistic education and care (such as *Mama lernt Deutsch*). Early education would correspond to the National Action Plan for Integration, but the federal system poses barriers. The ministry cannot tie the funds it allocates to the provinces under the National Action Plan because early education is a competence of the provinces, i.e. the ministry cannot determine that the funding goes to the implementation of HIPPY. Whether HIPPY is promoted in a province or not depends thus on the political climate in the province. Overall it appears that the conservative party (ÖVP) is more open to HIPPY than the social democratic (SPÖ), which promotes its own well institutionalised programs such as the aforementioned *Mama lernt Deutsch*.

Another barrier to mainstreaming is the way EU funds are allocated. The EIF is seen as exceptionally transparent by the interviewees, while the way ESF funds are allocated poses a hurdle to HIPPY. ESF funds for basic education are administered by the ministry of education and women's affairs, which in turn allocates the money to the provinces. This leaves leeway for the administration to promote the large players. The rather mainstream program *Mama lernt Deutsch* has for instance been funded by the ESF via the City of Vienna. In times of austerity, ESF resources are increasingly used to tamp holes emerging from domestic spending cuts. The interviewees also lament that nobody takes on the responsibility of informing associations of the available funds and it is in general difficult for the teams to get in touch with administrators and obtain relevant information regarding funding.

Another factor hampering mainstreaming is the project logic which induces hyperactivity and ongoing change, due to the need to constantly show the disposition to innovate. Evidence based funding of initiatives that have proven themselves is getting more and more under pressure in such a logic of ongoing newness. The HIPPY interviewees see this as a rather destructive form of cynicism and would require sources of funding that appreciate the fact that HIPPY can never be fully innovative in the sense that it follows academic expertise and the numerous studies that have in recent years proven the importance of early education and familial support. Sometimes, personal contacts seem to be more important than evidence of project success in order to obtain funding. Interviewees also regard it as absurd that, for instance in the case of HIPPY Vienna, the EIF takes on 50 percent of the funding, 30 percent are covered by the ministry and the rest is taken on by the districts – in this logic, also the resources obtained from the large institutions are diminished when the districts' sums fluctuate. Another funding related problem is that many funding authorities are less and less willing to pay for overhead expenses and the project administration, pushing the project teams into precarious and exploitative working arrangements. This undermines any effort to institutionalize programs.

## **7.2. Governing welfare mix – avoiding fragmentation**

The distribution of competences in the field of education and integration is rather complex in the Austrian federal system. Therefore a number of potential funding authorities are active as described in detail in chapter 4, while the allocation of funds is rather incoherent. Critical voices have for a long time demanded more coordinative competences at the federal level (see the referendum mentioned in chapter 2).

The exchange with funding institutions is rather technical and of an administrative nature. Austrian public administration increasingly demands to have a voice in how the money is spent, a development that is rejected by the HIPPY teams as administrators are not deemed to have the relevant expertise and knowledge in early education programs.

A decisive drawback in the governance of HIPPY is the lack of knowledge alliances which could be identified in other case studies. There is a lack of coordinated theory-practice dialogue and public discussion on the adequate policies for early child care and education. The fragmentation of small financing institutions does not allow systematic evidence-based policy making based on public debate, professional know-how and academic research. Contrary to Housing First in Vienna, pros and cons of home-visits as opposed to a center-based approach are not publicly debated.

## **7.3. Governing welfare mix – developing a participatory governance style**

A unique feature of HIPPY is the structure around home-visits as opposed to a center-based approach. This allows HIPPY to reach the most vulnerable target groups, who first need to be introduced to the already existing programs in a very low-threshold setting. The women reached by HIPPY are more excluded than those who participate in *Mama lernt Deutsch* classes or other public offers aimed at integration. The interviewees state this can even be observed within HIPPY, as mothers often are not comfortable to come to the group offers from the beginning on. For these women, the trusting relationship that is built with the home-visitor is often a stepping stone to more societal participation. In terms of participation in decision making processes within HIPPY, much of the structure is based on the standards of HIPPY International, so there is not a lot of room to develop a participatory governance style within HIPPY Austria. However, the experiences of the home-visitors shape the content and format of the group offers.

Overall, participation of the target group is largely understood as the decision to help oneself by asking for help. HIPPY is based on the idea that every mother wants the best for her child, but is often overwhelmed and simply lacks the know-how. Her turning to HIPPY to get help for herself and her family is seen as the kind of participation that is realistic given the target group's social standing and background.

## **7.4. Equality and diversity**

Fostering equity of chances regarding educational careers is a key concern of HIPPY and ideally, nobody should be excluded from individual support where it is needed. In practice, however, funding criteria determine the target group. The EIF-funded HIPPY programs in Austria are required to target non-EU citizens, which for instance explains the focus on Turkish families in Vienna. In Carinthia on the other hand, HIPPY is not required to target third-country nationals and can work with EU and Austrian citizens, as long

as they have migratory background. In general, Austrian native families are rarely addressed, although the HIPPY teams think HIPPY should be targeted at families from low social strata and with low educational attainment rather than at families with migratory background only. The families who are reached overall meet the criteria of educationally disadvantaged people as elaborated in a UNESCO (2006) study, which are low educational attainment, low income, rural background and isolation of the mother (due to psychosocial impairments or socio-economic risk factors) (Frankl, Kratky 2007: 54ff).

### **7.5. Uneven access**

Uneven access across Austria is a given due to the relatively small funding sums compared to the costs of the program (at 2000 Euros per child) and the federal governance structure regarding education. Federal resources could be made available with the engagement of the minister of integration, but funds cannot be tied as the competencies regarding early and basic education lie with the provinces. Additionally, the practice of going to the families instead of a center-based program causes the territorial bundling of offers. HIPPY Austria is, however, eager to spread the program on a national basis.

### **7.6. Avoiding responsibility**

The deficits of the Austrian education system regarding equity of chances have long been known and in recent years there has been some changes in the education system (e.g. the introduction of the New Middle School and a compulsory kindergarten year), but critics see these changes as insufficient. The interviewees and focus group participants also discussed the lack of structural changes. They acknowledge that organisational changes have taken place. But, to take one example, they had the impression that the millions of Euros spent on the early language development in kindergartens in recent years can not compensate for the lack of training and adequate remuneration of pedagogues as well as the missing changes and quality problems in the everyday practices in the kindergartens. Similarly, critics say the reforms pursued with the introduction of the New Middle School are half-hearted. The existing examples of all-day schools are rather based on intensive morning classes and afternoon supervision. The best results in improving the educational achievements of pupils from weak social backgrounds are, however, achieved in fully integrated school types with mixed forms of teaching, learning and leisure time and strong involvement of parents.

The HIPPY teams lament that nobody appears to feel responsible for them at the ministries and especially the administration. When questions arise regarding funding, they continue to be referred to different authorities and in general they are never contacted, leading to the feeling that 'nobody talks to the HIPPY teams'. Frustration also stems from authorities and politicians stating support for HIPPY and referring children to the HIPPY teams, without making funding available. Additionally, the HIPPY teams feel the state does not live up to its responsibilities when precarious work arrangements are not merely accepted but voluntary engagement is even expected by the authorities.

### **7.7. Managing intra-organizational tensions**

There are differences in the HIPPY-teams with respect to formal qualifications, and there seem to be informal hierarchies within HIPPY, due to the long-standing experiences of the founders of the initiative. The teams are multi-professional where everyone involved brings different but valuable experiences to the table and everyone learns from one another. Given this understanding of the HIPPY employees, no conflicts appear to arise within the HIPPY teams. Also across the teams no conflicts were mentioned and the hierarchy with *beratungsgruppe.at* as the coordinating team of HIPPY Austria is predetermined by HIPPY International structures.

Tensions characterize the relations between the project teams and provincial funding authorities and city administration. The HIPPY teams feel that administrators lack interest, but what is more important is that funding criteria are perceived to be highly intransparent. Conflicts also arise from the administration's standpoint that precarious work conditions are to be accepted by the project teams, including the home-visitors. Tensions also include the HIPPY teams feeling muzzled by administrators, a result of projects being dependent on political good will in order to obtain funding.

There are no conflicts with the target group on the other hand. At most, problems arise but they are generally solvable: HIPPY is required to visit the homes, but in one case this was not possible simply because the home was overcrowded and there was no room for the mother and the home-visitor to effectively go through the materials. In this situation an exception could be made from the otherwise rather strict HIPPY procedures and they met outside the families home. Such situations are regarded as problems that one necessarily encounters, but not as conflicts. Also within the families HIPPY does not cause tensions, on the contrary, familial ties are strengthened and the fathers in general become proud both of their wives and their children. Stories were mentioned where fathers would defend the program to critical family members in their country of origin.

### **7.8. Enabling legal framework**

Project-funding causes severe problems for sustainable cooperation and professional support. As has already been mentioned, overheads are generally not paid, funds are partially transferred after project completion. Project preparation requires own funds, which privileges larger organizations, as smaller organisations do not dispose of proper resources. Often administrative tasks connected to obtaining funding and accounting modalities are deemed inefficient.

Over the last years, austerity policies have increased competition in the social sector and funding criteria are often intransparent. This negatively impacts HIPPY as for instance the meeting of qualitative standards (e.g. in terms of supervision and the partaking in international meetings) would require larger funding sums than more taylorized offers with respect to care and early education, like *Mama lernt deutsch*.

Another set of problems is caused by the formal qualification criteria, which work against the idea of encounters among equals. Many women of the target group are dependent on social transfers. As these transfers are reduced when the beneficiary begins even only marginal employment, potential home-visitors get discouraged to start working with HIPPY.

Another factor hindering HIPPY is the already mentioned reliance on the political good will of individuals. Where the cooperation with kindergartens is welcomed in Vienna, the responsible provincial councilor (*Landesrätin*) in Lower Austria has not allowed such cooperation by kindergartens.

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### **Interviews**

- project leader/managing director (*Beratungsgruppe.at*)  
project leader/secretary general (*Beratungsgruppe.at*)
  - o 25 March 2014, 9h30-13h30
- project leader/education consultant (*Katholisches Bildungswerk*)
  - o 03 July 2014, 16h30-18h00
- project leader/department head early education & family support (*alpha nova*)
  - o 03 July 2014, 10h45-12h15

### **Focus Group**

- Participants
  - o project leader/managing director (*Beratungsgruppe*)
  - o project leader/secretary general (*Beratungsgruppe*)
  - o project leader/department head early education & family support (*alpha nova*)
  - o project leader/education consultant (*Katholisches Bildungswerk Kärnten*)
  - o home visitor (*Katholisches Bildungswerk Kärnten*)
  - o home visitor (*Katholisches Bildungswerk Kärnten*)
  - o Novy, Andreas (*ImPRovE*)
  - o Wukovitsch, Florian (*IMPRovE*)
- 30 July 2014, 12.40 – 16h00

### **Feedback to draft version by focus group participants & interviewees**

- June 2015



## ImPRovE: Poverty Reduction in Europe.

### Social Policy and Innovation

Poverty Reduction in Europe: Social Policy and Innovation (ImPRovE) is an international research project that brings together ten outstanding research institutes and a broad network of researchers in a concerted effort to study poverty, social policy and social innovation in Europe. The ImPRovE project aims to improve the basis for evidence-based policy making in Europe, both in the short and in the long term. In the short term, this is done by carrying out research that is directly relevant for policymakers. At the same time however, ImPRovE invests in improving the long-term capacity for evidence-based policy making by upgrading the available research infrastructure, by combining both applied and fundamental research, and by optimising the information flow of research results to relevant policy makers and the civil society at large.

The two central questions driving the ImPRovE project are:

How can social cohesion be achieved in Europe?

How can social innovation complement, reinforce and modify macro-level policies and vice versa?

The project runs from March 2012 till February 2016 and receives EU research support to the amount of Euro 2.7 million under the 7<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme. The output of ImPRovE will include over 55 research papers, about 16 policy briefs and at least 3 scientific books. The ImPRovE Consortium will organise two international conferences (Spring 2014 and Winter 2015). In addition, ImPRovE will develop a new database of local projects of social innovation in Europe, cross-national comparable reference budgets for 6 countries (Belgium, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Italy and Spain) and will strongly expand the available policy scenarios in the European microsimulation model EUROMOD.

More detailed information is available on the website <http://improve-research.eu>.

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