

SETTING UP A SYSTEM OF BENCHMARKING TO MEASURE THE SUCCESS OF INTEGRATION POLICIES IN EUROPE

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Thomas Huddleston, Policy Analyst with the Migration Policy Group (Brussels), presented the study for the European Parliament co-authored with Dr. Jan Niessen, Setting up a system of benchmarking to measure the success of integration policies in Europe. Huddleston discussed the process of developing methodologies for benchmarking in integration, particularly as concerns policy improvement. Huddleston drew on the British Council and the Migration Policy Group's *Migrant Integration Policy Index* as a model of a benchmarking community (see www.integrationindex.eu).

Benchmarking serves as a strategic management tool to systematically and continuously improve methods, standards and the quality of goods and services. Benchmarking should become a key tool for all levels of governance and civil society stakeholders to form benchmarking communities together, identify strong integration policies and learn from and with each other. Given sufficient resources, benchmarking communities can strive for superior levels of excellence in the formation and implementation of policies and practices, which set the conditions for successful integration.

Benchmarking breaks down into four basic stages: planning, mapping, analysis and implementation. The key elements include the identification of key areas of improvement, setting standards, the search for and study of "good" practice that best meet those standards and the adaptation of lessons learned from best practices to meet and exceed these standards.

SINGLE PARENTS DESCRIBE PARENTING NEEDS

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Single parent problems arise in part, from negative social attitudes and punitive social policies that provide meager and grudging support (Pelton, 1989). Single parents are multiply disadvantaged in that they are more likely to be poor, to be on income assistance, and to come to the attention of child protection services than two-parent families (Brooks-Gunn, 1997). Single parents with inadequate incomes, not surprisingly suffer from increased social isolation and depression (Minty, 2005). Children from single parent families suffer from poorer health, lower educational attainment, increased social exclusion and a higher likelihood of out-of-home care (Drunkers, 1994; Kerr & Beaujot, 2002). Analysis of child outcomes indicates that the primary predictor of poor outcomes is poverty, rather than parenting deficits or family structure (Spenser, 2005). However, the parenting burden and resultant stress is clearly augmented when parenting responsibility rests with a sole parent.

A further factor responsible for inadequate family policies has been the lack of parent voices in the discourse of requirements for adequate parenting. Child protection services, in particular, have been remiss in ascertaining parent views regarding their child rearing needs (Marsh, 2002).

The present study sought to give voice to single parents who had been identified as "high-risk" by child protection. Parents were asked to describe what they required to adequately care