



**First-Generation College Graduates (PrimaGen).
Inclusion, Support, Empowerment
A project of the State University of Milan**

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X SEMINAR

“DATA FROM AND FOR THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM: TOOLS FOR RESEARCH AND TEACHING”
ROME, 19 – 20 – 21 NOVEMBER 2025



First-generation students. Inclusion, support, empowerment is a part of the inter-university project, PRO-BEN-University for psychological well-being: from prevention to intervention.

It is an anthropological research aimed at promoting the well-being of first-generation students, i.e. those who are the first in their families to undertake a university course

INCLUSION

how to orient students with different socio-cultural capital to university courses

SUPPORT

how to facilitate access to services, how to support career regulation, how to do teaching in an inclusive way

EMPOWERMENT

how to make the "other" point of view of PrimaGen a resource for the entire academic community, how to regain awareness of the value of the University for mobility and social transformation

Don't target and "create" a new reifying
category

but

to promote an approach capable of including
the point of view of a less familiar population in
university policies



Comparative review
of national and international literature on the subject

Listening (60 in-depth interviews with PrimaGen)

Active involvement of students and their families

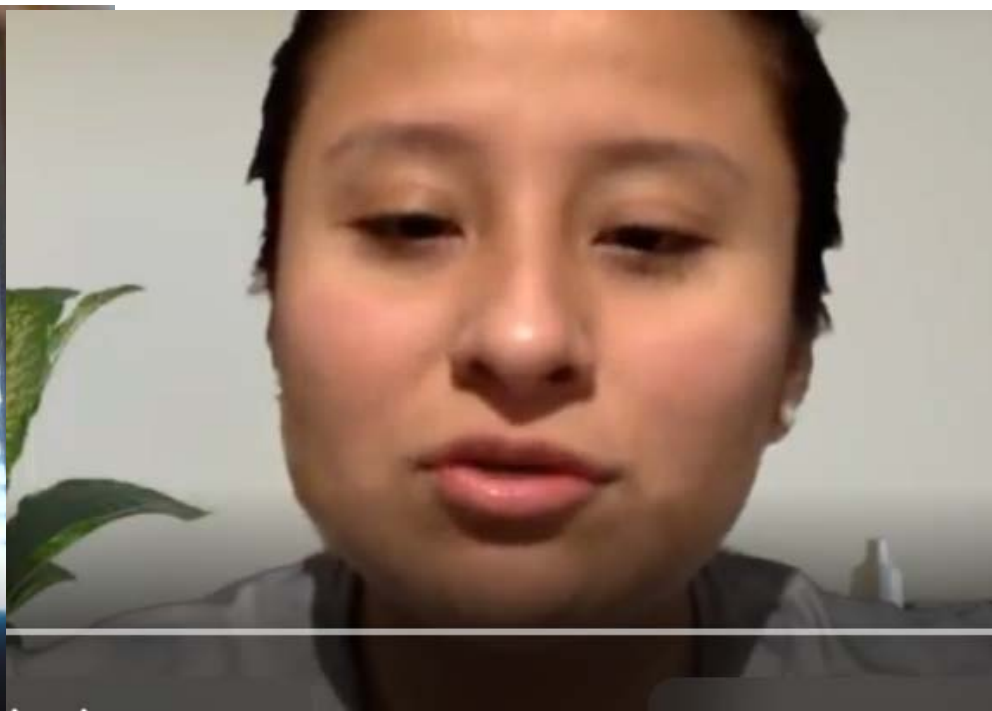
Organization of thematic focus groups and round tables in
dialogue with experts, students, and first-generation students

Dialogue with the social partners

Visual identity to facilitate communication



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Not a minority....

For the year 2023, out of the total of 11,375 graduates of the University of Milan - both bachelor's and master's degrees - 63.4% have no parents graduate.

(AlmaLaurea data)



So many ways to be First in Family

Students 23

Female students 37

Migratory Background 12

Bachelor's Degree 25

Master's Degree 29

PhD students 6



Areas investigated

- 1. Orientation and access to the university world**
- 2. Relations with the family**
- 3. Regularity of careers**
- 4. Representation of the future**

1. Orientation and access to the university world

"Honestly, I had no idea how to get to university. I had to look for everything on my own, make mistakes, bang my head on it. My parents didn't even know that you had to register for the tests, they thought a diploma was enough. I felt disoriented, almost as if I had entered a world that was not mine, where everyone already knew what to do except me"

"[...] it is the awareness, [...] of having a gear less, at least a gear less than the others and that therefore I will struggle more in everything, that is, I will find it more difficult to fit into the context, I will find it more difficult once I leave university to draw on some social network on which to then find work, because precisely not having the circle you have to do it from scratch"

"It was all new and it was all a bit of a challenge, because I was there on the front line having to orient myself on all these things. I had no one to ask"

2.Relations with the family

“In June Dad says to me: "now you're on vacation". Instead it's quite the opposite, the session begins, so it's not really a holiday, but there is precisely this mentality of summer, of the holiday, of winter as well and of parties as a holiday. You don't study, you don't do anything. In reality it is quite the opposite»

"My mother cared a lot. He told me: 'You have to prove that you are better than the others'. My father, on the other hand, never pushed me. When I was studying, he kept the TV up and didn't want to turn it down»

"At first, my family's reaction was one of fear and rejection. They told me: 'you are taking a step too big'. Only later, when I signed up on my own, did they start supporting me."

3. Regularity of careers

"I often feel alone, but I can't give up. For me, studying is a chance to change something, not only for me but also for my younger siblings. I try to be an example. Even if it is tiring, every exam passed is a victory. Sometimes I say to myself: 'If I can do it, they can do it too'"



4. Representation of the future

"The university is like a large courtyard where at a certain point you discover doors and these doors open up new perspectives for you, which perhaps you did not know existed before»

"What I dream of is to be able to have a job that allows me to give something back to my family, to prove that it was worth it. I would also like to work in an environment where my story is not seen as an exception, but as something normal. For me, graduating is not just a goal, it is a way to build a different future, even for those who will come after me".



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I'm first!



Implementation of Orientation actions in schools

Awareness raising and training of high school teachers

Raising awareness among unimi staff and teachers on the topic of PrimaGen

PrimaGen Student Career Tracking

Enhancement of PrimaGen stories



Relevance of research

Depth of understanding of the PrimaGen experience guaranteed by the ethnographic method

Intersectional approach (being second generation; being women; being working students, being SLD students...)

Effects on orientation actions and daily teaching practices

Increasing awareness among first-generation students of the specificity of their path

Visibility of the role of the university in promoting social transformation