

DIVERSITY

DIVERSITY INCLUSION IN ECEC EBOOK OF INSPIRING PRACTICES



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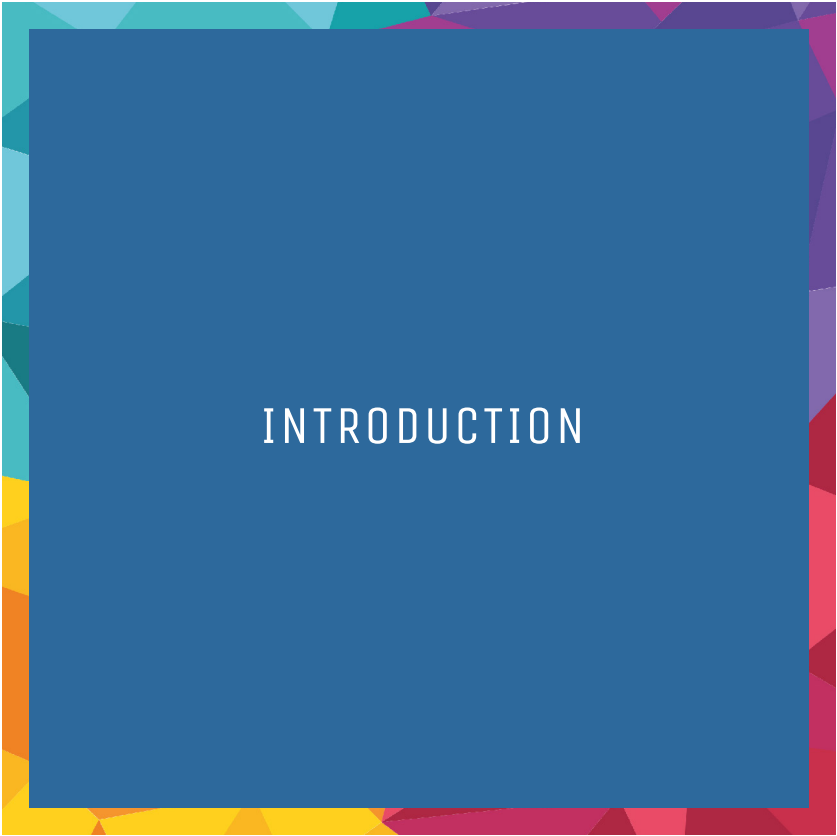
DIVERSITY+ Governance, Benchmarking and Training tools for Diversity positive ECEC provision
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INTRODUCTION

SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH INTO DIVERSITY INCLUSION APPROACHES, COMMONALITIES, DIFFERENCES, NEEDS AND AREAS OF INNOVATION FOUND ACROSS EUROPE

The Eurydice Report released by the European Commission in 2019¹ brings to attention that one of the main concerns of the decision makers for the European Union, regarding the development of policies for young children and their families, is to ensure access to Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC). 'The right to affordable early childhood education and care of good quality' for all children is embedded in The European Pillar of Social Rights, underlining the fact that 'specific measures should be targeted at children from disadvantaged backgrounds to help them improve their life chances'.

Furthermore, the EU Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care states that 'access to quality provision for all children contributes to their healthy development and educational success' by also helping to 'reduce social inequalities and narrows the competence gap between children from different socio-economic backgrounds. Equitable access is also essential to ensure that parents, especially women, have the flexibility to (re)integrate into the labour market'. Thus, the European Council Recommendation on High Quality Early Childhood Education and Care Systems urges EU member states to ensure that ECEC services are 'accessible, affordable, and inclusive'.²

According to a 2017 review of Inclusive Early Childhood Education conducted by the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 'one in four children under the age of six in Europe is at risk of poverty or social exclusion'.³ The children from disadvantaged backgrounds are the ones that most need support for their educational development, as they have lower participation rates in ECEC across Europe.

¹ European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2019. Key Data on Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe – 2019 Edition. Eurydice Report. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

² Part of the Council Recommendation of 22 May 2019 on High Quality Early Childhood Education and Care Systems (OJ C 189, 5.6.2019).

³ F. Bellour, P. Bartolo, M. Kyriazopoulou (2017) European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education. Inclusive Early Childhood Education: Literature Review. Odense, Denmark.

The European Commission has stressed the fact that 'tackling disadvantage in the early years is an important means of increasing efforts to address poverty and social exclusion'. Improving the low rates of participation and providing high-quality ECEC for children belonging to at-risk groups such as socio-economically challenged, migrant or Roma background or children with SEN, including disabilities, is at present one of the main priorities of EU education policies. As of 2011, EU Education Ministers have brought to attention the fact that ECEC can lay out a background for the early detection of learning difficulties in children and can thus provide quicker integration into mainstream schools. Exclusion is also very high in the case of Roma children who usually have considerably lower rates of participation in ECEC throughout Europe. Finding suitable ways to integrate these children into the mainstream system is also a priority for EU Member States. ECEC can pave the way and help overcome the educational disadvantage that Roma children face.

Even though in recent years the importance of ECEC, acknowledged as the 'foundation of children's learning and development'⁴ is growing throughout Europe, there are still issues that need to be addressed.

Some of the challenges include:

A big gap exists between Member States in the way they implement measures for disadvantaged children, such as children with disabilities, children from migrant backgrounds or ethnic minorities.

- ECEC is often regarded as a tool to promote female employment; however, when ECEC is prioritised for working parents, children from unemployed families are discriminated against.
- ECEC for the youngest children is scarcer and, consequently, has longer waiting lists as entitlements are limited to preschool and the oldest children.
- ECEC for the youngest children is not considered as a valuable educational milieu and, consequently, the workforce is less qualified and working conditions are poor, compared to preschool.

⁴ European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2019. Key Data on Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe – 2019 Edition. Eurydice Report. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

The main barrier for accessing high quality ECEC for vulnerable groups is a shortage of places, particularly for the youngest children. Moreover, the shortage in places is unequally distributed. Earlier studies argue that unequal figures in use of childcare cannot be interpreted as a result of parental choice. Rather, they need to be viewed as being influenced by environmental constraints, such as the unequal distribution of places (there are more places available in more affluent neighbourhoods and fewer places in neighbourhoods with lower incomes) and the priority criteria set by the management of individual provisions, which favour double-income majority families.⁵ The fact that childcare centres are more accessible to higher income groups reproduces the existing social inequalities. Therefore, when additional funding is made available to increase the places in childcare, careful consideration is to be given to the geographical mapping of the most urgent needs.⁶ Much more awareness raising and policy advocacy is needed to influence regional and policy makers in this matter within all Member States.

FINDINGS FROM THE RESEARCH IN PARTNER COUNTRIES

The main challenges identified in the study analysis and the interviews with professionals include: lack of a comprehensive, unified and clear strategic approach and unitary governance in the field of ECEC, combined with inaccessibility of ECEC provision, inadequate funding and shortage of staff. Additionally, there are different related issues, such as the needs for more adequate training of ECEC personnel, for building trust in communication and awareness and acceptance about the topic of diversity in society.

Across all Diversity+ partner countries, there is a lack of a clearly communicated vision, focused strategic approach and unitary governance related to ECEC diversity inclusion, supported with adequate funding. In the Netherlands, which has probably one of the best daycare services, the ECEC system is very complex, private, expensive and still favours working parents. Although the topic is communicated as a priority, fully inclusive

5 Ghysels & Van Lancker, 2010; Lohmander, Vandenbroeck, Pirard, Peeters, & Alvestad, 2009; W. Van Lancker & Ghysels, 2016; Vandenbroeck, De Visscher, Van Nuffel, & Ferla, 2008; Vandenbroeck et al., 2014; Vandenbroeck & Van Nuffel, 2006.

6 W. Van Lancker & Vandenbroeck, 2019.

policies remain on paper and innovation in the sector is led by NGOs and separate pilot bottom-up initiatives.

Varying from over-centralised systems with only limited examples of alternative services (in Bulgaria) to very hybrid, fragmented approaches and regulations (in Italy, Netherlands, Slovakia), the ECEC sector in partner countries suffers from similar issues related to the inability to provide access to ECEC services to all children due to lack of services (SK, NL), geographical unavailability (BG, IT, SK) or a shortage of kindergarten places (BG, SK). Private services are not affordable (BG, NL), application red tape and criteria in state establishments are too complicated (BG, CZ, NL) resulting in segregated provision. Additionally, in Bulgaria the alternative services such as child daycare play centres and parent cooperatives are practically limited to larger towns.

Another common issue shared across all countries is the lack of adequate funding in ECEC, which leads to low salaries, shortage of qualified personnel and inability to offer additional services for children with special needs/disabilities (BG, CZ, IT, SK, UK). There is a lack of qualified personnel, teaching assistants and specialised staff - special pedagogues, social pedagogues, speech therapists, psychologists (BG, CZ, IT, SK). In some countries (BG, CZ), this is related to the fact that the education system is underfinanced, and also to the low prestige of working in ECEC in the public's eyes.

The training professionals in ECEC receive for dealing with the topics of diversity, discrimination and exclusion is insufficient or mostly theoretical (BG, IT, NL, SK) and they are not prepared to work in a culturally diverse environment. Moreover, due to the heavy workloads, teachers cannot participate in other activities (such as further training or networking).

There are also many social and cultural issues observed, such as stereotypes and biases regarding some aspects related to inclusion or colour blindness in a "tolerant" society (BG, CZ, IT, SK, NL, UK). The inclusion of children from the Roma community is impeded by specific cultural values (BG, CZ, SK). Inclusion is a controversial topic - a section of the public, as well as some parents and even teachers, have a negative attitude and campaigns towards inclusion and diversity (BG, CZ) also lead to distrust in institutions on the part of Roma parents and lack of cooperation between kindergartens and parents (BG, SK). In many cases, it is difficult to approach and work with families to support them and help them un-

derstand norms and rules (BG, UK), and there is a lack of cooperation between kindergartens and parents (SK)

Last but not least, there are many practical problems, such as too many children in kindergarten classes, which makes it difficult to apply an individualised approach to childcare (BG, CZ, SK). In most buildings, there are physical barriers and limitations, which make them inaccessible for children with disabilities (BG, CZ, IT, SK) and lack of appropriate materials and environment for work with children with specific needs (BG, SK).

Despite this, there are many good practices in the sector which prove that change is underway. There is general public understanding about the importance of diversity inclusion and its long-term benefits for individuals and for society, and the role early childhood education and care plays in it. Also, there is a political will to drive this change forward.

OBJECTIVES OF THE EBOOK

This Ebook aims to present the variety of approaches found across different European countries, and to provide examples of inspiring practices and solutions to existing problems. For further details about the research results and to deepen the point of view of the experts interviewed, an extended version of the Ebook is available via the Diversity+ website <http://diversity-plus.eu/> > "Toolkit" section.

The Diversity+ Charter aims to provide practical guidelines and recommendations on how to make the ECEC environment more inclusive.

A teal square is centered on the page, surrounded by a border of colorful geometric shapes in shades of blue, purple, yellow, and red. The text is centered within the teal square in a white, uppercase, sans-serif font.

STATE OF DIVERSITY
INITIATIVES IN PROJECT
PARTNER COUNTRIES
BULGARIA, CZECH REPUBLIC
ITALY, SLOVAKIA, THE
NETHERLANDS, AND UNITED
KINGDOM: A SUMMARY

Bulgaria

KEY FACTS¹

Children aged between 3 months and 3 years may attend centre-based settings known as *detska yasla*, falling under the responsibility of the Ministry of Health. From age 3, early childhood education is available in *detska gradina*, where the Ministry of Education and Science is responsible for the education process. Children may also attend, as from 10 months, *detska gradina* with nursery groups. These groups are under the joint responsibility of the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education and Science.

The last two years of pre-primary education (i.e. between the ages 5 and 7), known as preparatory groups (*podgotvitelni grupi*), are compulsory and children may attend them either in *detska gradina* or in primary school (*uchiliste*).

In addition to the separate settings for younger and older children, some *detska gradina* include nursery groups. The provision in these settings is structured according to the above phases (i.e. up to 3 years, between 3 and 5 years, and between 5 and 7 years of age).

Primary education starts at age 7. A child who is ready for school may start at the age of 6 if the parents so wish.

Educational guidelines from top-level authorities apply only to centre-based settings for children aged 3 and over. The guidelines are binding.

¹ Key Data on Early Education and Care in Europe - 2019 edition - Eurydice Report

MAIN CHALLENGES FOR ECEC DIVERSITY INCLUSION

Type of issues	Challenges	What needs to be done?
Management and leadership issues	■ Lack of strategic government approach - only pilot initiatives ■ Inadequate funding	■ Single-hearted approach and shared vision about the value of diversity inclusion ■ Overall staff training - how to establish an inclusive model at ECEC
Staff-related issues	■ Low paid teachers and specialists - lack of staff ■ Staff not prepared to address diversity issues and meet specific needs of children ■ Inadequate qualifications	■ Adequate payment of ECEC staff ■ Budget for involving specialised professionals (resource teacher, speech therapist, psychologist, etc.); ■ Cooperation with HEIs - internships of young professionals at ECEC; ■ More practical in cultural issues and specifics of different target groups (migrant, refugees, Roma, special needs, victims of violence)

Type of issues	Challenges	What needs to be done?
Social and cultural issues	- Target groups specifics - Unaddressed needs of families - Stereotypes and biases in society	- Adequate funding for creating involvement of mediators - Early diagnostics of children's needs - Family-oriented approach - School for parents - Cooperation with special schools - opportunity for children to meet and accept diversity - Practical workshops and field visits for teachers (inclusion, design of environment, materials, games) - Training of children in empathy, emotional intelligence
Practical issues	- Lack of access to ECEC (limited number of places, many kindergartens closed due to demographic changes) - Inflexibility in relation to opening hours and enrolment procedures - Physical barriers (stairs) - Lack of materials and environment for work with children with specific needs - Admission taxes - Low incomes of vulnerable families	- Adequate funding for ECEC staff, materials and environment - Early diagnostics - EU projects for ECEC staff capacity development - Removing admission taxes for all children or at least for the vulnerable ones

SWOT ANALYSIS OF DIVERSITY INCLUSION IN ECEC ON NATIONAL LEVEL

Strengths:	Opportunities:
■ Increased debate in society ■ Awareness of the importance of the topic of diversity inclusion in ECEC ■ Will to change ■ Legislation framework ■ Good supporting specialists ■ Relatively good traditions in ECEC provision ■ Existing good practices and models	■ Cooperation with stakeholders ■ EU projects ■ Mediators ■ Advocates ■ Existing good practices abroad ■ Increased training offers
Weaknesses:	Threats:
■ Lack of strategic vision and support ■ Low-paid teachers ■ Lack of specialists in ECEC ■ Lack of access to services (shortage) ■ Parents' lack of awareness and support ■ Financial difficulties ■ Social and cultural differences ■ Biases and prejudice ■ Lack of adequate training of teachers ■ Lack of early child assessment ■ Unmet needs of children ■ Lack of trust and communication ECEC - families ■ Lack of adequate funding - materials and equipment	■ Volatility due to unpredictable situation with coronavirus ■ Economic crisis, producing negative effects on companies, parents and kindergartens ■ Brain drain of teachers and specialists ■ Lack of specialists ■ Political changes, as lack of support from nationalist parties could stop the reform ■ Negative speech and campaigns in society ("government supports only Roma")

Czech Republic

KEY FACTS

ECEC for younger children is fragmented and characterised by low participation rates. A children's group (dětská skupina) was introduced in 2014 and the number of participating children is gradually increasing. Although it is designed for children from one year of age until the start of compulsory schooling (6 years old), there are few 5-year-olds attending; children aged 1 or 2 predominate. Children's groups are regulated by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. Settings for children under 3 years of age (zařízení pro péči o děti do 3 let) fall under the responsibility of the Ministry of Industry and Trade. These settings are excluded from the scope of this report as there is little information on them.

Nursery schools (mateřské školy), which fall under the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, provide pre-primary education (ISCED 020) for children usually aged between 3 and 6, at the earliest for 2 year-olds. It is the most common form of ECEC for children in this age group. Nursery schools are mostly established by municipalities and other public authorities, but private schools also exist.

Preparatory classes (přípravné třídy) are intended for children for whom primary education is postponed. They are organised in basic schools (základní školy).

From age 3, children are legally entitled to a place in public mateřské školy. The last year of ECEC is compulsory and free of charge in public nursery schools. Under certain conditions, home schooling is possible.

Primary education starts at age 6.

Educational guidelines from top-level authorities apply only to nursery schools (mateřské školy). The guidelines are binding.

MAIN CHALLENGES FOR ECEC DIVERSITY INCLUSION

Type of issues	Challenges	What needs to be done?
Administrative issues	■ Heavy administrative load ■ Lack of unified and clear government approach	■ Simplify the administrative process
Staff-related issues	■ Lack of qualified personnel ■ Lack of specialised staff (e.g. speech therapists, psychologists etc.) ■ Lack of qualified teaching assistants ■ Teachers have such heavy workloads that they don't have the capacity to participate in other activities (such as further training or networking) ■ There are too many children in one class, making individual approach impossible	■ Secure more finances for education and work on increasing the prestige of the teacher's profession ■ Reform of the teacher training curriculum - more emphasis on working with children with SEN and more practical training

Type of issues	Challenges	What needs to be done?
Social and cultural issues	■ The Roma community is systematically discriminated against ■ Inclusion is a controversial topic - a part of the public, as well as some parents and even teachers, have a negative attitude towards inclusion ■ Some prominent politicians are actively campaigning against inclusion - creates controversy among the public ■ Some preschools (for various reasons) do not want to admit children with SEN, although they are obliged to by law	■ Sharing successful examples of inclusion
Practical issues	■ The education system as a whole is underfinanced ■ Many schools are not wheelchair-accessible (for some it is technically impossible)	■ Devise strategies for investing in education (other than raising teachers' salaries)

SWOT ANALYSIS OF DIVERSITY INCLUSION IN ECEC ON NATIONAL LEVEL

Strengths:	Opportunities:
■ Developed school infrastructure ■ Dense network of diversity inclusion focused NGOs ■ Diversity of pedagogical approaches	■ Improving communication between parents, teachers and the public ■ Support for further education in the field of inclusion
Weaknesses:	Threats:
■ Insufficient financing ■ Lack of systemic support ■ High number of children per teacher	■ Public distrust towards inclusion ■ Lack of funding for inclusive measures (adjustment of facilities, hiring specialised staff and professionals etc.) ■ Uncertainty about the extent to which legislative reform will support inclusion

Italy

KEY FACTS

Educational services (*servizi educativi*) for children under the age of 3 are mostly centre-based (*nido d'infanzia*). A tiny proportion of children attend home-based provision and playgroups (*servizi educativi integrativi*). ECEC for under-3s is managed by regional and local authorities, according to their own regulations. At the regional level, the responsible authorities for the 0-3 level may be the educational or the social administration. The Ministry of Education is responsible for the promotion and the development of the newly introduced '0-6 integrated system' as well as for the direct allocation of funds to local authorities. Settings for children between 3 and 6 years (*scuola dell'infanzia*) fall under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and provide full-time and free-of-charge provision. In order to meet the demand of families, some pre-primary schools (*scuole dell'infanzia*) are able to accommodate children aged 24 to 36 months in a special 'spring section' (*sezione primavera*). In addition, and under specific conditions, children who reach 3 years of age by April can be admitted to the main groups in *scuole dell'infanzia*.

Primary education starts at age 6.

Educational guidelines from top-level authorities apply only to centre-based settings for children aged 3 and over. The guidelines are binding. There are no educational guidelines for home-based provision from top-level authorities.

MAIN CHALLENGES FOR ECEC DIVERSITY INCLUSION

Type of issues	Challenges	What needs to be done?
Administrative issues	■ Lack of unitary governance of the pre-school phase (IT) ■ Lack of national legal framework ensuring universal access to ECEC ■ Existing regulation barriers - admission criteria, taxes, etc. ■ Lack of ECEC services among territories, especially in Southern regions, or places within ECEC settings	■ Centralise whole ECEC phase management (one Ministry + sub-national authorities) as for the educational plans' definition ■ Improve legislation as for universality of access to ECEC services
Staff-related issues	■ Lack of ad hoc preparation in pre-service education and in-service training curricula ■ Lack of specialised personnel ■ Lack of specialised scouting during initial in-service experiences ■ Stereotypes regarding some aspects related to inclusion	■ Integrate educational curricula with specific modules ■ Improve Work-Based Learning

Type of issues	Challenges	What needs to be done?
Social and cultural issues	■ Stereotypes and biases of general public and families not easing the access to ECEC services ■ Fragmented approach to diversity inclusion	■ Sensitise families and people through ad hoc campaigns and processes
Practical issues	■ Financial obstacles ■ Physical barriers and limitations ■ Digital divide	■ Tailored settings, free of physical barriers ■ Free access or more incentives for households at risk at socio-economic exclusion

SWOT ANALYSIS OF DIVERSITY INCLUSION IN ECEC ON NATIONAL LEVEL

Strengths:	Opportunities:
▪ General sensitivity to the topic of diversity inclusion within ECE ▪ Multifunctional conception – mainly educational – of ECEC services	▪ Sectoral legislation likely to produce cultural shift within the educational community/society ▪ Existence of an Annual Plan for Inclusion ▪ Parental contribution to ECEC services' planning
Weaknesses:	Threats:
▪ Lack of ad hoc preparation in pre-service education and in-service training curricula ▪ Fragmented approach to diversity inclusion topics ▪ No legal framework to ensure a place in ECEC ▪ Dual authority model as for the ECEC governance/organisation ▪ No operational guidelines ("Charters") or minimum recommendations on how to shape the educational path or improve the specific situation within ECEC settings	▪ Public distrust towards inclusion ▪ Lack of funding for inclusive measures (adjustment of facilities, hiring specialised staff and professionals etc.) ▪ Uncertainty about the extent to which legislative reform will support inclusion

Slovakia

KEY FACTS

The ECEC system for children under 3 is currently being developed. Young children may attend nurseries (detské jasle, officially called zariadenia starostlivosti o deti do troch rokov veku dieťaťa) or they may stay with childminders (opatrovatel' detí).

This provision is governed by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family. Between 3 and 6 years, children attend centre-based materské školy, which fall under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport. If capacity permits, 2-year-olds might on occasion be accepted into materská škola.

Public materské školy provide full-time education and care for children one year before compulsory school attendance free of charge. The fees in private materské školy for the last year are reduced by the amount of the state contribution.

Compulsory kindergarten attendance for children from the age of 5 will be introduced in September 2021.

Participation rates for children one year before compulsory school reach 92 %.

Primary education starts on the 1st of September after the child has reached age 6.

Educational guidelines from top-level authorities apply only to centre-based settings for children aged 3 and over. The guidelines are binding. There are no educational guidelines for home-based provision from top-level authorities.

MAIN CHALLENGES FOR ECEC DIVERSITY INCLUSION

Type of issues	Challenges	What needs to be done?
Administrative issues	- Fragmentation of ECEC services and interventions - Lack of vision - Lack of services for children aged 0 to 3 - Lack of comprehensive approach and coordination - Inability to provide access to ECEC services to all children - The strong position of special education	- Improve cooperation between actors responsible for ECEC provision to better tackle complex problems of children at risk - Create a common vision of inclusive education in the legislation - Centralise ECEC management - Set up more services for children aged 0-3 - Transform the special stream of education
Staff-related issues	- Lack of personnel and too many children in kindergarten classes - Lack of professional employees (special pedagogues, social pedagogues, teacher assistants, psychologists) - Inability to apply individualised approach to children - Lack of adequate in-service training offers - The unpreparedness of ECEC practitioners to work in a culturally diverse environment - Lack of cooperation between teachers and professional employees	- Increase the kindergarten capacities and have fewer children in the classes - Employ more professional employees - Provide practical and adequate in-service training - provide training to enhance the cooperation between pedagogical and professional employees to benefit all children.

Type of issues	Challenges	What needs to be done?
Social and cultural issues	- Target groups specifics - Stereotypes and biases - Lack of cooperation between kindergartens and parents - Distrust of institutions on the part of Roma parents - Divide between mainstream education and special education	- Sensitise children and teachers through specific programmes to enhance respect for diversity - Strengthen cooperation between parents and kindergartens - Build trust between parents and institutions through enlightenment and outreach programmes - Stimulate public interest in inclusive education
Practical issues	- Financial obstacles - Physical barriers and limitations - Geographical unavailability of ECEC services in some regions - Lack of places in the ECEC setting	- Free state-provided ECEC services for families in need - More funds invested in debarrierisation - Increased capacity of existing ECEC services - New facilities built in specific locations
Other	Lack of teaching materials in Romani language	- Create teaching materials in Romani - Employ Roma assistant teachers

SWOT ANALYSIS OF DIVERSITY INCLUSION IN ECEC ON NATIONAL LEVEL

Strengths:	Opportunities:
▪ Progressive leadership in several state institutions ▪ The growing interest of the responsible institutions and the general public in the topic of ECEC and inclusive education	▪ New pro-inclusive legislation ▪ Creation of a shared pro-inclusive vision for the education system in Slovakia ▪ Better cooperation with parents ▪ More professional employees in kindergartens
Weaknesses:	Threats:
▪ Low ECEC attendance rate ▪ Lack of places in kindergartens and nurseries ▪ Fragmentation of the ECEC system ▪ The uncoordinated approach of the responsible bodies and subsequent inability to tackle complex problems	▪ Generally negative attitudes towards people living in extreme poverty ▪ Prejudices with racist, xenophobic and discriminatory traits in the school environment ▪ Covid crisis

The Netherlands

KEY FACTS

Up until the age of 4, children can attend centre-based private provision (kinderdagverblijf) or regulated home-based care delivered by child-minders (gastouders). This provision comes under the remit of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment.

Children from a disadvantaged background aged 2-and-a-half to 4 are offered support through targeted early childhood education programmes (voorschoolse educatie), which reach around 45 000 children.

The last two years of pre-primary education (kleuterklas) for 4- and 5-year-olds are offered free of charge in schools (basisschool). This provision comes under the remit of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science.

Primary education (ISCED 1) starts at age 6, education is compulsory from age 5.

Educational guidelines from top-level authorities apply only to centre-based settings for children aged 3 and over. The guidelines are binding. For children under 3, top-level educational guidelines only apply to children from a disadvantaged background in voorschoolse educatie (aged 2-and-a-half to 4).

There are no educational guidelines for home-based provision from top-level authorities.

Since 2020, paternity leave has been extended to a maximum of five weeks (70 % pay).

Higher investment and a better financial distribution system is envisaged for improving education opportunities for disadvantaged children. The investment is mainly meant to benefit ECEC programmes and is used to improve the quality and increase the intensity (from 10 to 16 hours a week for children from age 2-and-a-half up to 4).

MAIN CHALLENGES FOR ECEC DIVERSITY INCLUSION

Type of issues	Challenges	What needs to be done?
Administrative issues	- ECEC provision - a largely split system between care and education - Differences between the sectors are evident in split financial structures, different pedagogical approaches and priorities, different 'rules' for access resulting in segregated provision largely along lines of SES and ethnicity - There is no statutory right to ECEC services for children under 4 years/ - Different regulations in the care system for children of working parents on the one hand and in the education system for children in playgroups and preschool classes for 2- and 3-year olds on the other - Privatised system (more for profit than for non profit providers) - Initiatives for change are usually coming from the level of non profit providers and grassroots	- A greater push towards integration of the systems (some results are becoming visible) - A strong political will and significant investments in a unified education system for young children are needed to overcome bureaucratic obstacles - ECEC should be under the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science - More common vision for ECEC is needed, as well as understanding of appropriate pedagogy for young children; and agreement regarding what constitutes quality ECEC and how to measure it
Staff-related issues	Caregivers and teachers are theoretically prepared but not to deal with discrimination, exclusion, structural inequalities	Focus on continuous professional development approach which gives greater agency to educators (caregivers)

Type of issues	Challenges	What needs to be done?
Staff-related issues	■ Difference between qualifications of caregivers and teachers ■ There is a lot of training offers, but no interest in comprehensive approach to respect for diversity, inclusion and social justice issues ■ Lack of understanding what diversity and inclusion mean/too much focus on academic achievements ■ More programmes focusing on diversity for older children and schools	■ Pre-service preparation should be improved - more people skills are needed ■ Changing understanding of the purpose of ECEC - more focus on social function (building social cohesion) and supporting child development
Social and cultural issues	■ Too much focus on language learning and citizenship/ Voor-en Vroegschool Educatie (VVE), structured programmes, for 2 to 6 year-old children viewed most at risk for educational disadvantage ■ Colour blindness in the "tolerant" society	■ Use the broader political momentum (BLM, Zwarte Piet discussion) to push national Government to make a change
Practical issues	■ Daycare programmes are usually not affordable and accessible ■ There is no organisation or governmental agency that has a leading role in innovation and supervision. Innovation and quality assurance are steered by market forces	■ Better understanding of the main function of ECEC - towards more child development and social function and not bringing women into the labour market

Type of issues	Challenges	What needs to be done?
Other	■ There is no national curriculum for childcare centres. The government only provides a broad framework that has to be followed by the service providers ■ Hyperdiversity, and challenges connected with that	■ More structured approach is needed/ curriculum and quality framework should be in place, not only pedagogical goals ■ Different entry points for addressing diversity should be found, and more comprehensive, whole centre/school/ community approach is needed (complex challenges require complex solutions) ■ More diversification of the workforce

SWOT ANALYSIS OF DIVERSITY INCLUSION IN ECEC ON NATIONAL LEVEL

Strengths:	Opportunities:
▪ Willingness to make a change/ sufficient autonomy on the Municipality level ▪ Strong body of professionals, academia, and a lot of research ▪ Pedagogical coaches are mandatory by law since 1st January 2019 to actually help build a bridge between practice and policy or pedagogical subjects, and diversity and inclusion are on their agenda, because these concepts and the concept of quality are intertwined. Some organisations have pedagogical policy officers	▪ Political momentum - Dutch society is debating about structural discrimination, how to work with children to prevent racism - BLM, CORONA, Zwarte Piet discussions are making society more aware of challenges ▪ Data showing educational gap between native Dutch and migrant children and roots of that in early childhood inequalities ▪ Initiatives coming from the level of providers, municipalities and different groups that need to be coordinated ▪ Not for profit daycare providers and their motivation ▪ Emerging initiatives of forming networks of daycare providers, schools and other institutions
Weaknesses:	Threats:
▪ Fragmentation in care and education services (daycare, pre-school playgroups) and schools leading to some kind of segregation ▪ No curriculum and quality framework ▪ Professional skills of the workforce do not meet the challenges of hyperdiversity ▪ Too narrow focus on what diversity means (children with disabilities and language)	▪ Parents are not aware of what quality in ECEC means ▪ Market driven private sector (economic values are above pedagogical values) ▪ Hyperdiversity ▪ National policy level is reactive and not proactive/ at the moment attitude towards inclusion is mostly passive and about promoting diversity ▪ Issues related to inclusion and diversity are implicit in the documents

United Kingdom

KEY FACTS

The entire ECEC phase falls under the responsibility of the Department for Education. Younger children may attend private and voluntary nurseries (also known as day nurseries or daycare) or be looked after by childminders.

From age 3, all children are legally entitled to 15 hours per week of ECEC provision free of charge. Children of working parents are entitled to 30 hours per week. Disadvantaged 2-year-olds are also entitled to 15 hours of ECEC free of charge. These hours may be provided in a publicly funded setting (school or nursery school) or with a registered private or voluntary provider including childminders. Private and voluntary nurseries may be either unitary (catering for ages 0-5) or separate (catering for part of the age range). Nurseries providing sessional care (not full daycare) for children from age 3 may also be known as pre-schools.

From the academic year after their 4th birthday, all children are entitled to a full-time (32 hours) place at a publicly funded school (in the reception class).

Primary education (Year 1) starts at age 5.

Educational guidelines from top-level authorities apply to centre-based settings across the whole ECEC phase. The guidelines are binding.

Educational guidelines from top-level authorities for centre-based settings also apply to home-based provision.

MAIN CHALLENGES FOR ECEC DIVERSITY INCLUSION

Type of issues	Challenges	What needs to be done?
Administrative issues	- Interviewee stated that diversity inclusion is not a priority for UK government - More tokenistic than fully inclusive policies	ECEC staff continue to work hard to campaign to show government the importance of this topic
Staff-related issues	- Difficult to approach and work with families to support them and help them understand what is and what is not acceptable in the UK - A laissez faire attitude towards diversity	- More diverse recruitment process - Recognition of diversity in its many forms, not just generalisations
Social and cultural issues	- White middle class views dominate - Sometimes parents have different attitudes to bringing up their children than that used in ECEC settings	- Embedding true diversity in ECEC provision - Cultural sensitivity training
Practical issues	Challenging for local ECEC providers with no additional funding for special needs/disabilities	Campaign for more fiscal support from government

SWOT ANALYSIS OF DIVERSITY INCLUSION IN ECEC ON NATIONAL LEVEL

Strengths:	Opportunities:
▪ Nursery school teachers tend to have a child-centred approach to learning ▪ Legal commitment to Equality/ Diversity ▪ Good provision overall for children with special needs and disabilities	▪ Early Years is far more focused on the child rather than the curriculum - easier to make changes/adaptations to provision ▪ It is easier for ECEC professionals to work together with families – parents are more involved in Early Years education of their children
Weaknesses:	Threats:
▪ Parents can have different attitudes to bringing up their children ▪ Low expectations of what young children can do and understand ▪ In light of the Black Lives Matter campaign, improvements in this area are needed	▪ How can we teach young children about certain issues? ▪ Pushback from some communities (e.g. LGBTQ issues)

INSPIRING PRACTICES
FOR PROJECT
PARTNERS COUNTRIES

BULGARIA

MULTISENSORY GARDEN OF KARIN DOM FOUNDATION

The organised open educational space is an opportunity to develop all the senses of children and to carry out integration activities; it fosters communication and it can be created anywhere - in a small area or in a larger open space.

Target groups	Children with various developmental disorders, children with typical development, parents, teachers / trainers working in ECEC, therapists, students.
Focus	Innovative services, facilities and approach - connecting children with nature; the multisensory garden as an opportunity to support the process of "sensory integration" and as an accessible, structured supportive environment for both children with special educational needs and children with typical development; teacher training.

Objectives	Building and implementing an organised outdoor educational space aimed at "sensory integration" in the education and upbringing of children, in line with the principles and practice of classical Montessori pedagogy.
Methodology	In the multisensory garden there are 30 zones, marked with the letters of the Bulgarian alphabet. Children and parents visiting the centre have free access to each of them. At the discretion of the specialists working with the children in this open educational space, both individual and group sessions can be held, supporting a more tailored work. A number of integration activities are also carried out, in which children with special educational needs very often participate together with their peers with typical development. SOME OF THE AREAS: Montessori Circle Zone An ellipse is depicted on a flat part of the ground, and bags filled with different seeds and in different quantities are placed in a box. The goal is for the child, with their arms outstretched and holding a randomly selected bag, to move along the outline.

Methodology

The exercise is to maintain balance and equilibrium. Sensory sensation, baric sense and kinesthetic sense are developed and stimulated. If the child has a motor impairment or has difficulty moving their hands to the side, holding bags, they may be asked to hold different bags in their lap or just touch them.

Writing Preparation Zone

The area is a sandbox with different models and sticks for writing exercises. Hand-eye coordination, force of pressure when writing on sand and orientation in space are practised. For children on strollers or verticalisers, a raised module from the sandbox is designed, on which an additional tray with sand can be placed and the child can practise writing elements. The sense of sight, the sense of touch, the baric sense and the stereognostic sense are stimulated. The adult organises and supports the children's activities.

Magic House Zone

The room in the house is dark and is practically a sensory room, which is equipped with various stimuli - lights, lanterns of various sizes, colours, music, aromas, boards with different types of material to engage the senses. An adult is always present in the house with the child, who supports the sensory stimulation. This area can serve for relaxation and soothing after a series of active activities. The house is accessible for children in strollers and uprigths.

Self-expression Zone

In this area is a tripod with blackboards and coloured chalks. In addition to self-expression, in this area three-finger grip and the ability to orient in space are practised, the muscles of the hand and the force of pressure when writing are trained. The chromatic sense (perception of colours) is stimulated. The area is easily accessible for children with mobility impairments.

Listening area

Children's reading of books by an adult makes it possible for children to retell the text. This is a good stimulus for the formation of a child's desire to speak clearly and consistently. The zone is a good opportunity to train the skill of listening in a noisy environment and develop patience. It is accessible for children with movement disorders.

Methodology**Tasty Geometry Zone**

Garden with raised pots in the shape of a rectangle, triangle and circle. With the help of an adult, the children plant and care for the vegetables in the garden. Here they learn to grow ecologically clean food and can perform their favourite activities - to move, touch, discover, observe and explore, to study the different colours, shapes and flavours, to care, to communicate and experience. Children are taught care and patience, responsibility and good social behaviour. The foundations for healthy eating and ecological thinking are being laid and strengthened. Tactile gnosis develops. This stimulus is useful both for visually impaired people and for children who are familiar with nature.

Theatre area

The area is a separate outdoor space with a stage and seats for spectators. Here the children are artists. The development of children's speech is supported by the participation of children in the reproduction of plots of fairy tales and dialogue games.

Impact

About 300 children benefit from the services annually. The results that can be observed in meeting the sensory needs of children are:

- In children, the "need" for self-stimulation and self-harm decreases; the quality of attention is improved and aspiration for participation in activities and learning is generated; independence in functional activities is achieved; spontaneous manifestations of new skills and abilities are stimulated; social interactions and communication are improved; fear and anxiety are reduced; gives resilience to the ability to cope with distractions and adapt to change; conditions are created for spontaneous expression of emotions - joy, fun.
- Parents and adults working with children help understand the child's behaviour and needs, reduce anxiety, stress and train patience.

Conclusion

The team periodically improves its qualifications through internal and external training and shares its experience with teachers, students and professionals working in ECEC and offering social and special services.

Contact

Karin dom, Sofia, Bulgaria
 Website: <https://karindom.org/>
 Contact person: Svetla Todorova, Educator
 email: stodorova@karindom.org

ACTIVE INCLUSION IN PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION NATIONAL PROJECT

Project "Active inclusion in the system of preschool education" under the Operational Programme "Science and Education for Smart Growth" 2014-2020 Priority Axis 3: "Educational among active social inclusion".

Target groups	Children from vulnerable groups, parents; teachers.
Focus	The project aims to expand access to preschool education for children from vulnerable groups and those living in poverty with the understanding that preschool education is an important period in the child's life in order to form a positive attitude towards school and create motivation to learn.
Objectives	The main objective of the project is the early inclusion and educational inclusion of children from vulnerable groups in preschool education, support for their access to quality education, integration and successful professional, social and personal realisation.
Methodology	The project envisages a set of measures - providing additional training in Bulgarian for children with different mother tongues as an effective means of social inclusion in the peer group, payment of fees for attending all-day kindergarten as overcoming economic barriers to inclusion and remove one of the most significant reasons for non-participation in preschool education, motivation of parents for active cooperation between the family and the kindergarten. The project is implemented by the Ministry of Education and Science in partnership with the Centre for Educational Integration of Children and Students from Ethnic Minorities.

Impact	So far: ■ a total of 18,545 children have been included in additional training in Bulgarian, and 2,868 teachers are conducting the activities of this training as leaders of the formed groups. ■ 207 pedagogical specialists are employed in the kindergartens, incl. speech therapists, psychologists and resource teachers, as well as 514 non-pedagogical specialists - educational mediators, assistant educators, teacher assistants and social workers in education. ■ 1640 teachers have completed a 32-hour training course for conducting a screening test of 3-years old children, which is a key condition for early detection of learning difficulties and the need for personal development support.
Conclusion	The implementation of the project activities is in response to the identified challenges to inclusion and inclusion in the preschool education system. The project is still in the process of implementation and it is not yet possible to assess the impact.
Contact	Ministry of Education and Science, Bulgaria Website: mon.bg Contact person: Vania Georgieva, Vice-manager of the project email: v.stoianova@mon.bg

INTEGRATION OF ROMA CHILDREN

Supporting Roma children and integration through innovative tools, approaches and care.

Target groups	Roma children and parents.
Focus	Integration of Roma children into society. Assisting parents in raising their children. Involvement of staff in training campaigns for working with children from vulnerable groups. Use of innovative tools, approaches and care for children and parents.
Objectives	Supporting the integration of children from vulnerable groups into society. Work with parents and field work is carried out with the help of an educational mediator.
Methodology	The service is applied locally in Stara Zagora municipality in the beautiful area of Sredna Gora, where sanatorium care is offered to children in need.
Impact	Their capacity is 150 children, they currently work with one hundred children. Each child is provided with specialised care, individual meetings with parents and assistance with social institutions if necessary.
Conclusion	The main advantages of diversity and inclusion for their organisation are: ■ High professionalism of the team of staff working in the kindergarten. ■ Involvement in projects for inclusion of children from vulnerable groups. ■ Individual approach to each family. ■ Providing guidelines for improving the quality of life and integrating families into society. The key for success is the love for the profession and acceptance of the different strata of society.
Contact	"Gorski kat" Kindergarten, Starozagorski bani village, Bulgaria Website: https://dg16sz.com/ Contact person: Maria Gospodinova, Director email: sdg16sz@abv.bg

INCLUSIVE EARLY EDUCATION AND CARE OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Inclusive education and upbringing of children with SEN.

Target groups	Children with special educational needs.
Focus	Inclusive services and environment.
Objectives	Supporting the integrated education and upbringing of children with special educational needs.
Methodology	The initiative is of the kindergarten and is implemented jointly with the Regional Centre for Support of the Inclusive Education Process. The material base is equipped to meet the challenges they face. A resource room and an art therapy room are provided, the space of the group is equipped with a corner with a house, where the children who wish can be alone, there is a library in a suitcase, art materials for activities. In the conditions of Covid, they provide access to the service online, without endangering the health of the participants in the support team. The support team meets online. The child is with their parents in a protected environment.
Impact	Each school year has a different number of participants. They have children with SEN and children from vulnerable groups.
Conclusion	The main factors for success are: a well-trained team, good interaction with professionals and parents, providing an optimal environment for development.
Contact	DG №33 "Lilac", Stara Zagora, Bulgaria Contact person: Lilyana Georgieva, Director email: cdg33sz@abv.bg

PROMOTING ACCESS THROUGH REMOVING TAXES

Advocacy for municipality incentives for vulnerable families.

Target groups	Children from vulnerable groups, Roma children.
Focus	Kindergarten fees and financial incentives for children and families in need.

Objectives	Long-term ultimate goal: Sustainable strategy at the level of the EU OP and at national and municipal level to remove financial barriers to early education and care for children from vulnerable social groups in Bulgaria, with predominant attention paid to the Roma population. Specific objectives of the project: ■ Increasing the funding from the national budget for the removal of financial barriers for early education by BGN 25 million per year by 2019, which creates an opportunity to eliminate the need for co-financing of early education for children aged between 2 and 6 years ■ Persuading 3 municipalities in Bulgaria with a significant Roma population to use their own resources for early education in order to remove the financial barrier by reducing the financial participation of parents by 25%. ■ Building skills and knowledge in parents from poor communities to defend their priorities and needs in front of local authorities. ■ Building skills and knowledge for advocacy in the members of the GI network for changes in social inclusion policies at national and municipal level.
Methodology	Implemented by the World Without Borders Association in its capacity as elected representative of the informal network "Ready for School" (GU) together with 17 other NGOs.

Impact

Thanks in part to the advocacy efforts of the project, kindergarten fees have been included as an eligible activity in a new funding procedure under the Science and Education for Smart Growth Operational Programme. At the end of October 2018, the EEA grant launched the programme "Local Development, Poverty Reduction and Enhanced Involvement of Vulnerable Groups". Kindergarten fees are an eligible expenditure under this programme and BGN 16 million have been set aside to support integrated measures to improve access to education, health and social services for Roma children.

Challenges for the realisation

- The lack of places in kindergartens in big cities;
- There is still no formal and clearly stated support on behalf of the Ministry of Finance for the abolition of fees for all children or even only for 5-6 year olds;
- According to unofficial information, the new funding procedure under the Operational Programme "Science and Education for Smart Growth" is intended for funding based on a child who is not a kindergarten or municipality. They assume that this will leave the small settlements and the poorest children out of the scope of the programme.

Contact

World Without Borders, Stara Zagora, Bulgaria
 Website: <https://www.sviatbezgranici.org/>
 Contact person: Gancho Iliev, Chairman of the board
 email: veselrom@abv.bg

MODEL OF PRESCHOOL INTEGRATION OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Model of preschool integration of children with special needs.

Target groups	Children with Special Educational Needs.
Focus	Creating a working model of educational integration of children with special needs in the mass groups of the kindergarten.

Methodology	In 2006, a special group for adaptation, motivation and socialisation of children with SEN was opened in the kindergarten, and in 2009 a Second Special Group for Educational Integration of Children with SEN was opened based on the idea of the Diagnostic Team of the Kindergarten. This is a Model of educational integration / based on trial and error / by specialists and educators. However, this is on the initiative and personal desire of pedagogical professionals in their kindergarten, and is not regulated. This is the apotheosis of their efforts to make more meaningful the work of pedagogues and the experience of children in kindergarten. With these achievements, they gave a chance to all children with SEN who have passed through the kindergarten to be one of all children raised, educated, trained and treated, to feel significant, loved and cared for. To experience their happy childhood days. They support them hourly and daily with care, giving advice to parents and sharing in special closed groups of their achievements and strengths with their parents. They have become a big family, in which everyone helps the other according to their abilities and capabilities, and pedagogical specialists stimulate, assist and support with advice and links on pressing issues and positive assessments of the good achievements shared for children.
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Contact	Kindergarten № 59 "Elhitsa" - Sofia Website: http://www.odz59.com/ Contact person: Violeta Kotseva, Director email: odz59@abv.bg
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CZECH REPUBLIC

ADAPTATION DAYS

Adaptation Days help children with a different mother tongue and their parents adapt to the preschool environment.

Target groups	Newly arrived children with a different mother tongue. Parents of these children.
Focus	For children: adaptation in a new environment. For parents: learning about the preschool and its processes.

Objectives	Smooth transition to preschool in September. Parents' understanding of how the preschool works, getting to know the environment.
Methodology	This activity takes place in the preparatory week (the last week in August), when there is enough space and time for that in kindergarten. An external teacher of adaptation activities is present in the kindergarten together with an interpreter (in the K Lukám Kindergarten, there is a high proportion of children who are of Vietnamese origin). This activity lasts a total of 3 days, when the children get used to the environment in the kindergarten and to the classic daily routine. Everything is translated into their native language. On the first day of these adaptation activities, a meeting for parents (also with an interpreter) is convened, where the principal will present how the kindergarten works, what supplies the children need and other organisational information. At the same time, there are also representatives of the city district (Prague 12), which, with the help of an interpreter, will introduce parents to events that are organised in the vicinity for parents with children. The whole event is financed by the city district due to the fact that 50% of the total number of children attending the K Lukám kindergarten are children with a different mother tongue.

Methodology

Strengths of this activity:

- children get used to the environment of the kindergarten in a safe environment and the process of adaptation is thus supported
- parents learn about the functioning of the preschool

Weaknesses:

- the event takes place only once a year, so children who come during the year cannot participate
- the kindergarten needs resources from the city district

Impact

Children and parents feel safe in the kindergarten environment. They feel that the management of the kindergarten is interested in them and tries to alleviate the difficult situation they are in. At the same time, it also helps the kindergarten teachers, because children adapt faster and partially know the environment in kindergarten right from the beginning of the school year. This allows teachers to focus on the needs of all children who are undergoing an adaptation period in September.

Contact

META, o.p.s., Praha, ČR

Website: www.meta-ops.cz, www.inkluzivniskola.cz

Contact person: Kristýna Chmelíková, Odborná pracovnice pro MŠ

email: chmelikova@meta-ops.cz

MŠ SLUNÍČKO - SAFETY AND GROWTH FOR ALL CHILDREN

'An example of good practice, I dare say, is in our school. The school has been open to inclusion since 2004. A three-year Good Start project, which included an internship in Wales, has helped our school educators grow professionally.'

Kindergarten Sluníčko Roudnice n. L., Školní 1805.

Target groups	Children 3-6 years old; parents; teachers, school assistants, experts on inclusion, the public, school providers.
Focus	Staff training; financial incentives, using the Good Start methodology, methodological support.
Objectives	They adjust the conditions to all groups of children who come to the school, including children with combined disabilities, special educational needs, children with a different mother tongue, and children from disadvantaged backgrounds, in order to provide quality education for all.
Methodology	The method of inclusion is reflected in the educational work and in the shift in development of children with special educational needs. It takes place at the school level, children from the entire authorised municipality of Roudnice nad Labem come to them. Children of other nationalities also take part in education in the country in a large percentage. They help them to overcome language barriers so that they can enrol in primary education. The above groups find a friendly environment and security. They help them overcome their specific problems. Parents of children who have attended the school recommend it to their friends with confidence. The most needed resource for this job is strong staffing and enough resources for the staff.

Impact

The best result is independence, a decrease in insecurity and shyness, and children gaining self-confidence. Approximately 15% of children are integrated in the school, and they become significantly more independent with their care. This care affects mentioned children (including children from the majority group who learn tolerance), their families, teachers in schools these children attend etc. Quality manifests by improving children's social skills, speech skills (initially some do not speak at all) and all cognitive processes. Children also improve in movement, overcome fear, overcome obstacles.

Conclusion

The benefit of an inclusive approach is the socialisation and independence of children, a great shift in development among peers and teachers, which these children would not achieve in the family alone. They have been practising an inclusive approach since 2004. The practice has brought them a lot of experience, they have helped many children and their families. Initially, the staffing conditions were very poor and they did not have much experience. Looking back, they don't know how they could have done it without teaching assistants. Their team includes an excellent Romani teacher, who was rejected by many other schools. They are proud of our work and relationships with people.

Contact

Mateřská škola Sluníčko Roudnice n. L., Školní 1805, 413 01 Roudnice n. L., Czech Republic.
 Website: www.slunickoroudnice.cz
 Contact person: Mgr., Bc. Věnceslava Koubová, Headmistress
 email: ms.skolniroudnice@tiscali.cz

THE GOOD START METHODOLOGY

“Good Start” methodology aims to develop the social and emotional competencies of pre-school children.

Target groups	Children; parents; teachers/ trainers.
Focus	Staff training; methodology.

Objectives

The Good Start methodology:

- Is inclusive. It involves all children in class which includes children from different cultural backgrounds, disadvantaged social environments, and children with behavioural difficulties.
- Provides guidance for teachers and parents. It presents methods and strategies of how to support the social and emotional development of children and how to deal with problematic situations.
- Is evidence based. This methodology has been tested worldwide for over 30 years and has been shown to have a positive influence on communication between children and teachers and within the family.
- Based on the cooperation with parents. The Good Start methodology is being developed for parents and social workers.

Main topics:

- Building positive relationships between teachers and parents.
- Building positive relationships with children.
- Support for positive behaviour: praising and cooperative learning.
- Strategies to deal with negative behaviour.
- Methods to manage negative emotions.
- Teaching anger management.
- Learning to problem solve.

Methodology

The Good Start methodology is implemented on a local level (specific preschools and schools can apply to use it). The methodology uses puppets, pictures; methodological materials for parents and teachers have been published. Schola Empirica organises training and provides support to teachers who adopt this methodology.

Impact

The Good Start methodology is evidence-based. Schola Empirica introduced the Good Start methodology in Czech pre-schools in 2011. Since then, over 300 teachers have been trained and methods are being implemented in over 100 pre-schools across the Czech Republic.

Contact

Schola Empirica, Prague, Czech Republic
 Website: <http://www.scholaempirica.org/>
 Contact person: Egle Havrdová, Director
 email: havrdova@scholaempirica.org

ITALY

PRIMA INFANZIA SOCIAL CLUB

“Not looking for favours, but possibilities for all children” (quoting F.V.).

Target groups	Fragile households with 0-6 year-olds excluded from school and social assistance and to single women without family networks, victims of violence, trafficking, residents in occupied buildings and migrants.
Focus	Non-formal educational paths for 0-6 years old children to combat educational, social and economic poverty of fragile households, with the active participation of mothers, and support in accessing formal schooling.
Objectives	The project has been funded by the social enterprise CON I BAMBINI, was launched in 2018 and is currently run by a private-public partnership (universities, social economy organisations, public schools etc.). The goal is to combat educational, social and economic poverty of fragile households with 0-6 year-olds excluded from school and social assistance. The intervention also intends to support mothers to facilitate their inclusion in a social and working context and offer them training opportunities. In addition, spaces will be offered for children's play and educational, sporting and cultural activities.
Methodology	The initiative is located in the Esquilino district of Roma Capitale. The project created a Club for children 0-6 years old, the establishment of a psycho-pedagogical team aimed at activating self-empowerment paths for mothers, the establishment of a social theatre company and the creation of a path of scholastic inclusion for children. Finally, a training course on parenting and the strengthening of soft skills and pre-school and post-school reconciliation actions has been activated for children aged 3-6.

Main challenges faced	Educational poverty and ignorance of children' rights by families; bureaucracy; digital divide (e.g. while registering for accessing public educational services).
Impact	The recipients of the intervention are to date about 180 minors (0-6 years) and 105 women, mainly single women, without family networks, victims of violence, inhabitants of occupied buildings and migrants. One of the project partners has been entrusted with the monitoring of the project's impact.
Conclusion	Suggestion: activation of community welfare processes, involving formal and non-formal actors and stakeholders, including parents, in the definition and implementation of the activities.
Contact	Organisation, Town, Country: Associazione "Genitori Scuola Di Donato", Rome (IT) Website: http://www.genitorididonato.it/, https://www.facebook.com/primainfanziasocialclub/ and https://percorsiconibambini.it/primainfanziasc/scheda-progetto/ Contact person: Francesca Valenza, President email: valenza.francesca@gmail.com; primainfanziasc@gmail.com

S.P.E.R.A. PROJECT – OPEN EDUCATIONAL AND RECREATIONAL SPACES

SPERA intends to respond to the need for help of families who, living in fragile and vulnerable areas, show clear difficulties in guaranteeing adequate care for the psycho-affective development of young children.

Target groups	Direct recipients: children aged 0-6 who live in fragile Campania Region contexts - Mercato San Severino (Sa), Ponticelli (Na), Forcella (Na) and Scampia (Na). Indirect recipients: adults and the community; so the interventions are also aimed at strengthening parental empowerment and the informal network around them.
Focus	Listening to complex territories, promoting opportunities for empowerment of parenting skills and psycho-affective well-being for children.

Objectives	The project is the result of an approach and educational strategies shared between several third sector entities, oriented to act in a widespread manner and in a logic of greater proximity to citizens. It intends to respond to the needs of those families who, living in fragile and vulnerable areas, show clear difficulties in guaranteeing adequate care for the psycho-affective development of young children, both because they lack parenting tools and because of the difficulty in accessing services.
Methodology	The project is carried out at the regional level, and involves 4 different realities and 2 different provinces (Naples and Salerno). It offers 3 macro-types of services, thanks to the collaboration between private social entities and institutions (in particular schools, prisons, parishes): 1. Support for parenting by providing spaces for sharing and training (formal and informal) that favour the harmonious growth of the child; 2. Different educational and recreational spaces and experiences in contact with nature to be lived even with significant parents / adults; 3. The interventions have been conceived in a community care logic for which convivial and community initiatives are promoted.

Impact

The project is still active today and uses:

- activity monitoring cards recording type of activity and number of participants;
- evaluation questionnaires.

A video testimony has been produced and tells the project according to the experience of operators and parents and an operational notebook is being produced with a summary of the quantitative and qualitative data of the proposal.

Conclusion

With a view of taking global responsibility for families and their children, forms of participation are promoted to create shared identities and responsibilities, strengthening the relational fabric and leveraging the social capital inherent in the network.

Contact

Organisation, Town, Country:
Istituto Suore delle Poverelle
Largo Aldo Capitini, 16
80145 (Napoli)
Tel. 338.6486071
Website: <https://percorsiconibambini.it/spera/>
Contact person: Mariapaola Ramaglia, Communication manager S.P.E.R.A. project
email: spera@istitutopalazzolo.it

ARTLUDIK

Hands-on activities towards the accessibility of pre-primary learning.

Target groups	Children from 3 to 10 years old.
Focus	Design services to promote social inclusion and the accessibility of ECEC services for all children through playing methodologies.

Objectives	Artludik is a Social Promotion Association, launched about 3 years ago by ECEC professionals and artists, specialised in disabilities. The founders' aim was and continues to be bringing children closer to the world of art and culture through the reading of stories, manual skills and sensory experimentation with materials. It is an everyday practice for them to address the needs of all children.
Methodology	The Association organises creative, informal educational workshops for children. The public comes from the neighbourhood but the future goal is to work more and more with schools. A key resource is to be able, through play, to educate children while overcoming any cultural or psycho-physical barrier. The toolkit includes: manual skills and a Montessori approach, active pedagogy, "Reggio-Emilia" pedagogical model. The major challenges are: dealing with the Covid-19 emergency and experiencing the public school with a different pedagogical approach, being the synthesis of the various experiences of the territory and beyond.
Impact	With respect to the objective of the schools' involvement, there have not yet been appreciable results; but by participating in national tenders, several have been won. The Association's Facebook page is quite active https://www.facebook.com/ArtLudik .

Conclusion

More networking between like-minded organisations is a must towards the Association's growth!

Contact

Organisation, Town, Country: ARTLUDIK, Rome, IT
Website: <https://artludik.altervista.org/?fbclid=IwAR-2t6u3Km2qzAk3g0gEn4jC5eQXdht2cSbc8NoSjNG5li-bApEbPkxDmtEZI>
Contact person: Cristiana Bolognesi, Co-founder
email: artludiklab@gmail.com

LIBELÀ

"LIBELÀ is a way of existing, we experience 360° inclusion through art therapy, which is itself transversal and contributes to create what we call a 'social womb'" (quoting F.C.).

Target groups	Children 0-5 and parents, so to implement paths that can offer a space for relationships.
Focus	▪ adaptation / professional / organisational improvement of teachers for the management of disabilities; ▪ services to promote social inclusion and accessibility of ECEC services.
Objectives	LIBELÀ is an association founded with the aim of promoting the integration of differences as a pivotal value in which diversity becomes a value for oneself and for others. It is an organisation that aims to enhance and recognise personal and community resources.
Methodology	Art therapy is associated with music therapy, dance-movement and all the arts as instruments/means and not as an end. Focus is currently local-regional and the association offers courses in agreement with social services and social policy departments. Important is the integration between the community of able-bodied and disabled children. Resources are: dedication and care of others, and attention in daily life, and networking and building relationships with other realities to enhance territorial strength with public-private partnerships.
Impact	Precise forms of monitoring are being defined; however, a general increase in the request to participate. On a qualitative level: new synergies and new directions and perspectives. Testimonials from participants through direct parental feedback.

Conclusion

The suggestion to other like-minded organisations is to remain open to new methodologies, which must remain tools and not become ends, and give space even to hybrid forms of experimentation.

Contact

Organisation, Town, Country: Libelà APS, Rome, Italy
Website: <http://www.libela.it/>
Contact person: Fabiana Colajorni, Co-funder of Libelà
email: info@libela.it

ASSOCIAZIONE GENITORI SCUOLA "DI DONATO"

"The association is intercultural; it is not about mere inclusion but real integration of all children and their families. We live of the richness given by diversity also thanks to the parents' active role in the educational planning." (quoting M.Z.).

Target groups	■ 0-3 nursery ■ 3-6 scuola dell'infanzia, internal to "Manin Institute"
Focus	Professional development; services to promote social inclusion and accessibility of ECEC services - all courses are almost free throughout the day. However, the paid courses also foresee some free entries.
Objectives	Association founded 17 years ago by an enlightened school head, Professor Bruno Cacco, who called parents of the time to fix the school's basement. From that moment, the association was born, and today counts over 300 members and is still based in the basement of the Istituto Comprensivo Manin. The goal is the recovery of common areas, involving children and families together, guaranteeing a territorial presence with spaces and rooms open until 10pm for the territory. It is a protected, welcoming place.
Methodology	For children aged 3 and over they also organise dance, motor skills and choir courses. The activities take place at the neighbourhood level, and the beneficiaries also come from other schools. Families come to courses from all over Rome (e.g. Nigerians, Filipinos, Bengalis). Possibility to stay and play in the courtyard and playroom with specialised operators. On Saturdays, a popular Arabic course is held for families from the Arab community who want to learn Italian, while their children learn Arabic. However, it is a course open to the whole territory.

Impact	300 families are currently registered; the courses involve about 500 people per year.
Conclusion	The suggestion to like-minded organisations is to give more importance to the common spaces, to be more present within territories, and richer also in furnishings. Key factor is to ensure training and upskilling for the staff involved in the activities.
Contact	Organisation, Town, Country: ASSOCIAZIONE GENITORI SCUOLA DI DONATO, Rome, Italy Website: www.genitorididonato.it Contact person: Maura Zacchi

BAMBINI: DALLA PERIFERIA AL CENTRO

"The initiative created a capillary network among families, the educating community and the territory for the benefit of children 0-6, through the support of a sound public-private partnership." (Sara Funaro - Councilor of the Municipality of Florence (Tuscany Region, IT and member of the Education Commission, Educational Policies and School Building of ANCI – National Association of Italian Municipalities).

Target groups	Vulnerable children 0-6 and their families, namely single parents.
Focus	Strengthening the accessibility to ECEC services by vulnerable children and their families; professional development of ECEC staff; high-quality services' provision and calibration; community welfare.
Objectives	Funded by the social enterprise Con I Bambini and implemented by a public-private partnership, the project aims to create and strengthen generative relationships by promoting an alliance between families and the territory, considered as the basis of a true educating community.
Methodology	The project involves the implementation of 10 different activities that intervene on support for maternity and parenthood, on the activation of experimental services to ensure greater accessibility to educational services, on the enhancement of educational services through the qualification of the skills of educators with experimental training courses, on the involvement of families (not only by offering experimental services and awareness of well-being but also by offering opportunities for aggregation and socialisation).

Impact

The project involves 67 ECEC settings (30 for children aged 0-3 and 37 for children aged 3-6) from 20 small, medium and metropolitan cities covering 8 different Italian regions. 10 different services have been proposed in the ECEC settings involved, with a view to enhance the opportunities for targeted and innovative interventions dedicated to about 1.500 children, 380 parents (namely mothers) and the territory.

Conclusion

The public-private partnership and the involvement of a varied panel of territorial actors (from families to private actors and public authorities) represent the added values of the initiative. Also, sound ongoing and ex-post monitoring of its effectiveness and relevance allowed it to calibrate, strengthen and widen the impact of the services proposed, contributing to provide a solid basis for its sustainability and scalability potential over time. In particular, the consortium is currently looking for additional funding to maintain the activities of the Neo-Mamme ("new mothers") space.

Contact

Organisation, Town, Country: Con.Opera Social Coop, Florence, Italy
 Website: <https://percorsiconibambini.it/bambinialcentro/scheda-progetto/>
 Contact person: Alfonso Dell'Orso, Project manager
 email: bambinidallaperiferiaalcentro@conopera.it

SLOVAKIA

TOY FOR INCLUSION

Toy for Inclusion Play Hubs are well-furnished spaces that provide a safe environment for children to play and learn, and for their parents to socialise and learn about relevant topics whilst at the same time building their trust in the institutional environment.

Target groups	Roma children (0-8) from socially disadvantaged and culturally diverse environments, their parents, local stakeholders (mayors, councillors, community leaders, elderly community members), professionals and paraprofessionals working with Roma children.
Focus	The overall goal is to combat segregation of young Roma children and families and enhance social cohesion through inclusive community-based ECEC services. The project promotes active involvement of Roma and non-Roma communities in ECEC services through the development of ECEC Play Hubs that provide access to quality non-formal ECEC service.
Objectives	The initiative strives to improve the responsiveness and accountability of local authorities towards marginalised Roma communities, build the capacity of local authorities and Roma community representatives to develop and implement inclusive policies and public services, strengthen Roma families by supporting Roma parents in their efforts at raising children in a safe and caring family environment. It provides parents with information, social skills and knowledge on early childhood development and effective parenting techniques, helps improve communication and understanding between parents and children, and promotes positive parental attitudes towards education. It aims to increase the level of enrolment of Roma children in kindergartens, improve mutual tolerance between Roma and non-Roma parents, broaden the range of educational materials for children from marginalised Roma communities, build trust between all the involved stakeholders, teaches children to meaningfully spend their leisure time, helps Roma parents prepare their children for school, and improves social skills of Roma children and their results, behaviour and school attendance.

Methodology	The project uses stakeholder mapping, analyses of local needs and challenges, formation of Local Action Teams, training of trainers, training of practitioners, implementation of community-based non-formal educational activities, and a home-visiting programme all realised from the 4 existing Play hubs.
Impact	200 Roma children (aged 0 – 8 years) and their families (80 families); 100 non-Roma children (aged 0 – 8 years) and their families (60 families); 10 ECEC trainers; 80 educators, ECEC practitioners, volunteers.
Conclusion	The project activities have led to increased self-esteem and pride of children and their families, parents and grandparents have become more confident in their parenting skills and their participation in ECEC services and local community life increased. They helped create better conditions for learning and development in inclusive and welcoming ECEC environments and facilitated better cooperation with families and communities. They reduced segregation of Roma, helped local and national stakeholders to gain knowledge, understanding and skills to be able to enhance social cohesion and combat segregation, led to increased parental and multi-generational involvement through joint activities between Roma and non-Roma families in formal and non-formal ECEC settings, and improved transition experience of children. ECEC professionals acquired new skills and tools to build bridges between different cultures. At the same time, the agency and visibility of members of the Roma community have increased and their voice and needs are now better represented.
Contact	Skola dokoran – Wide Open School n. o. Website: www.skoladokoran.sk Contact person: Denisa Sklenkova email: info@skoladokoran.sk

AFLATOT

AFLATOT methodology helps children become socially and economically empowered and inspires them to become active agents in creating a more equitable world. It involves parents and educators in the use of innovative and child-centred teaching methods.

Target groups	Children aged 3-6, parents, teachers/ECEC practitioners/trainers.
Focus	Social and financial education - innovative teaching methods. This project combines high-quality educational materials with learning through play and active learning methods, helps children develop proactive attitudes, practical skills and values. It builds positive attitudes towards the environment and encourages respect to the diversity of genders, religions and cultures. It supports the role of parents and families.
Objectives	The Aflatot programme for toddlers/3-6-year-olds started in 2015 in Slovakia and is a part of a wider Aflatoun programme. Aflatoun International uses a social franchise model to connect and collaborate with organisations and governmental institutions all over the world. The mission of the programme is to ensure access to high quality, inclusive, child-centred social and financial education for all children and young people, especially the most vulnerable ones.
Methodology	The programme is intended for all children regardless of their educational needs. The methodology can be adapted to different environments and ages. The programme involves whole families through tasks that children work on with parents at home. It supports parents' engagement in the education of children, strengthens communication, and helps create an emotional bond between them. This form of involvement increases the family's interest in co-operating with the ECEC facilities. It removes the barriers that exist between the child's home environment and the ECEC professionals, and creates an alliance that is beneficial for the child.

Methodology	The programme promotes the use of child-centred methods. It is implemented in kindergartens, primary schools and community centres and has been recognised by the Slovak Ministry of Education as a positive innovation in the area of social and financial literacy.
Strengths: the use of child-centred methods	The programme helps develop the interests of children by allowing them to share ideas and initiate projects; it promotes playful learning that stimulates creativity and problem solving. It recognises the importance of relationships : the method is based on relationships with peers, teachers and families - the children learn how to treat others, appreciate others and show them empathy. It supports family involvement : due to the unique connection between social and financial education, the programme can influence the social and emotional development of children.
Impact	In 2019/20, 10 facilities implemented the Aflatot programme and approx. 700 children and parents took part in the activities. Similar figures are expected in 2020/21, while at the same time strengthening active work with the families. In 2020/21, Open Society Foundation is conducting a re-evaluation of the Aflatot programme on a sample of approximately 300 children.
Conclusion	The children are able to better express their emotions and manage their behaviour in a healthy way, cooperate and be more respectful. They learn to think and act independently, are more responsible and able to follow their dreams.
Contact	Nadácia otvorenej spoločnosti Bratislava / Open Society Foundation / NOS-OSF, Bratislava, Slovakia Website: www.osf.sk Contact person: Erika Szabóová, Project manager email: erika.szaboova@osf.sk

DETSTVO DEŤOM

The Detstvo deťom parental centre in Dobšiná is a unique project and an example of a comprehensive approach to ECEC.

Target groups	Babies and young children aged 0 - 3 years, preschoolers aged 4 - 6, zero graders, younger pupils; girls at risk aged 11 - 15 years (future mothers), young parents (Roma from the socially disadvantaged community), pregnant women, experienced mothers from the community who work as peer-activists and mentors of early intervention in the community and in the home environment of the families.
Focus	Domček family centre provides early intervention for Roma children (who speak Romani) from socially disadvantaged backgrounds trapped in the cycle of poverty. It focuses on children, their parents, and the whole family. It helps parents provide an optimal environment for the development of their children and prepares children to start compulsory schooling at the age of 6 and thrive in the school environment.
Objectives	Detstvo deťom civic association was founded by two local teachers - Norika Liptáková and Erika Polgáriová. They opened the Domček parental centre in December 2013. The association strives to ensure that children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds stand a real chance of having a dignified and carefree childhood and acquire the basic skills and habits necessary to lead a successful life.
Methodology	The employees work directly and regularly with children, mothers/parents, and the whole families from the community in both the family centre and their homes. The work is implemented by experts but women from the local Roma community are actively involved as peer activists and mentors working in the home environment of the families.

Methodology

The family centre offers a whole range of activities:

- Amalky - direct work with babies, toddlers and preschool children and their mothers in their homes, carried out by "Amalky"- peer activists and mentors from the community
- Mothers' Club - direct work with babies and children up to 3 years of age and their mothers in the family centre, led by a social work student involving mentors from the community
- Montessori club - direct work with children aged 1-4 and their mothers in the family centre
- Montessori activities are led by a certified lecturer, mentors from the community are involved
- Creative Montessori workshops - where mothers make simple toys and teaching aids from commonly available and waste material based on Montessori principles
- Preschoolers' Club - direct work with preschoolers aged 3-5 (6) years and their mothers focusing on the school readiness of children led by a social work student. Mothers from the community are involved
- Counselling for mothers/families with newborns in the family centre and their home environment, with the involvement of mentors from the community
- Guidance for minor and teenage first-time mothers with the involvement of more experienced mothers from the community
- Babinec club - direct work with girls at risk aged 11 - 15 years, led by a teacher and a school psychologist; meetings of the club focus on relationships, planned motherhood, and other topics like early care, pregnancy, hygiene, nutrition, building a relationship with the baby.
- Toy for Inclusion Play hub
- Educational activities
- Preparation of methodological materials
- Cooperation with different actors including Early Intervention Centres in Košice and Rožňava, cultural centres in the surrounding towns, the kindergarten and primary school in Dobšiná, field social workers, health educators, and other organisations

Impact

230 people/140 children

Quality is measured through regular interventions and testing of the children involved in the long-term activities in cooperation with the Centre for special educational counselling.

Outcomes

The children show progress in all areas, they become more confident preschoolers and successful and confident schoolchildren with better knowledge of the language of instruction. The parents become more independent, confident, competent, responsible, and able to efficiently manage their households and family finances. Women are more empowered, the quality of their life is better and they show growing interest in the activities, counselling and information about early childcare.

Conclusion

More positive examples in the community lead to elimination of prejudice, gradual positive changes, respect and acceptance of otherness and diversity in the society.

Contact

Detstvo deťom, Dobšiná, Slovakia
 Website: www.dede.sk; <https://www.facebook.com/DetstvoDetom>
 Contact person: Eleonóra Liptáková, Director
 email: detstvodetom@gmail.com

THE NETHERLANDS

THE LANGUAGE FRIENDLY SCHOOLS

The Language Friendly School welcomes and values all languages spoken by students, staff and parents.

Target groups	The Language Friendly School (LFS) is a bottom-up, whole school approach, involving the entire school community.
Focus	Innovative practice aiming to improve diversity and equity. The LFS is a label and a global network of international, private, and public primary and secondary schools.
Objectives	The LFS was co-founded by Ellen-Rose Kambel (director of Rutu Foundation) and Emmanuelle Le Pichon-Vorstman (associate professor, OISE, University of Toronto). The LFS is an initiative of the Rutu Foundation for Inter-cultural Multilingual Education, a non-profit organisation based in Amsterdam. The LFS envisions a world in which all children have access to a language friendly-learning environment where they feel accepted and valued for who they are, and where children can speak their mother tongue.
Methodology	LFSs schools have a flexible and realistic language plan developed by all school members, and adapted to the school's own needs with the focus on creating an inclusive and language friendly-learning environment for all students. LFSs commit in writing that children will not be punished or discouraged from using their own languages in school. Schools have two years to develop a plan by testing it and modifying when needed. Teachers are open to using home languages in the classroom and when students demonstrate their skills or knowledge in their home language, it is valued just as highly as skills or knowledge in English (school language). By joining the LFS network, schools have access to the global network of schools, and like-minded teachers and experts where they can share ideas, videos, and the latest research findings. Teachers and staff also meet during LFS's Conferences. Focus is on peer learning.

Impact	More than 3,000 students are enrolled in the 12 certified LFSs. Internal evaluation is in progress and will be finalised by mid-2021. Children, teachers, other school staff and parents are part of the process.
Testimonies	School principal: Parental involvement increased. The students seem happier and more enthusiastic. A clear plan helped teachers to develop a unified vision. School: Children exude more confidence when they are allowed to use their own language, become more curious towards other languages and aware that other students also speak different languages at home. Students are also more confident when their first language(s) is acknowledged.
Conclusion	The main benefit for schools to become LFS is working on a concrete plan for including all the languages, cultural backgrounds and identities of their students as well as their parents/caregivers. As there is no blueprint of what schools must do, schools develop their own plan according to their own needs. This means that even small steps (such as inviting parents to write a wish for their children in their home languages, or making a welcome door) immediately create a sense of belonging and unity. And, a tip for success from one of LFSs: "Start with small steps and it will start to grow on its own! Eventually everyone is aware of how they can empower all children."
Contact	Website: https://languagefriendllyschool.org/ Contact person: Dr. Ellen-Rose Kambel, Director of Rutu Foundation email: info@languagefriendllyschool.org

KindeRdam - BUILDING A DEMOCRATIC COMMUNITY

It is not great deeds that allow us to live in a democracy - small, "ordinary" things ensure that a democratic society can thrive.

Target groups	Children (0-12 years) and their families; childcare educators, pedagogical coaches, managers, parents, external parties (schools, expertise centres, etc.).
Focus	This innovative intervention, initiated by KindeRdam management and staff, focuses on creating democratic and inclusive childcare in five steps: 1. Making an inventory of what is needed in the daily practice for children and professionals to feel and perform better; 2. Conducting practical in-house research of the practice with support from different academic institutions and other experts; 3. Making an inventory of already available materials; 4. Collaboration with external expert parties; 5. Develop materials for educators, other professionals and parents.
Objectives	This intervention aims at building a community where people feel connected to each other regardless of their background, culture, colour or religion; to encourage young children to practice democratic values (responsibility, caring for themselves and others, and using dialogue to find solutions); motivating children to get to know each other, to be curious about each other and to learn to deal with differences; and to make parents feel welcome and involved in their child's daycare.
Methodology/ Starting points	Intervention is based on beliefs where childcare is a place where children meet, attention to their needs and talents is paid, and that positive interactions give children more self-confidence and contribute to community building. When dealing with problems that require continued effort, it is good to start as a project in line with the policy of the municipality. Key feature of the intervention is a strength-based approach echoed in reflections on the daily practices by asking selected managers the following questions: What are good practices that already exist? What seems to be the areas for improvement concerning democratic behaviour of children and educators?

Methodology/ Starting points	Another important success factor is conducting research on this topic, and collaborating with academia and experts. KindeRdam is participating in research on diversity in childcare with Elly Singer and Anke van Keulen. Childcare educators research their practice, discuss the outcomes in teams and make adjustments. The greatest challenge is to persevere and understand that building a democratic community requires trial and error, and time.
Impact	KindeRdam evaluates pedagogical quality by using the 'Pedagogische praktijk in Beeld (PiB)', developed by KindeRdam and the Dutch Youth Institute based on a validated instrument used by the inspection of childcare in the Netherlands. The main outcome so far is the awareness among childcare educators, professionals and parents of the importance of a more democratic community and involving children, and how even small adjustments in practice can lead to more connectedness and justice.
Conclusion	Although only halfway through the project, the benefits of discussions on democratic interactions and environment are visible. Their advice is: when introducing change, start from what is already there (strength-based approach), take a proactive approach (action research) and involve all actors, including children, in a dialogue.
Contact	KindeRdam childcare organisation, Rotterdam, The Netherlands Website: www.kinderdam.nl Contact person: Simon Hay, Pedagogue email: s.hay@kinderdam.nl

ZAASTAD, THE FIRST LANGUAGE FRIENDLY MUNICIPALITY IN THE NETHERLANDS

Research-informed policy that recognises multilingual background of migrant children, access to ECEC and multisectoral collaboration.

Target groups	Parents, professionals, municipality institutions.
Focus	Policy: Bilingualism as a norm for children with migrant backgrounds

Objectives	In 2020, the Municipality of Zaanstad (north of Amsterdam) developed and adopted a policy (together with a budget) on bilingualism focusing on children with a migrant background. In this way, Zaanstad became the first language friendly municipality in the Netherlands. This policy aims to facilitate the learning of Dutch language by creating the best possibilities for acquiring it. It seeks to inform parents on how to promote their child's language development, and to unify and align the messages on language development that different professionals are giving to parents.
Methodology	In the Netherlands, it is strongly recommended to use Dutch as the main language. In ECEC, Dutch is the language of instruction, and children who do not speak it well fall behind. For that purpose, different agencies came together (public health, college, daycare centres, local library etc.) and agreed that they had a problem with messages sent to parents with migrant backgrounds. Although the problem was identified in two districts, the Municipality decided to introduce the policy on its whole territory. The Municipality set the following vision: 'We recognise the multilingual identity of the multilingual child and welcome every child in its entirety,' (official translation). 'We recognise and appreciate the basic language and culture of the child.'

Methodology	The policy is based on the results of the research and scientific findings related to second language learning. Besides motivating parents to speak with their children in their home language, all the parties are required to motivate parents to enrol their children in ECEC programmes. In parallel with this new policy, the Municipality will work on a wider scale on a shared vision of pedagogical quality in ECEC and schools.
Impact	The process is at the beginning. Everything depends on the political will and the decisions made by the Municipality Council. However, this is a valuable initiative because it shows that there is a way to balance the need to promote Dutch language learning, while preserving the home language. It also showcases the importance of different sectors working together.
Conclusion	To be able to address the problem, to acknowledge it is needed. Making well informed decisions should be based on data collection and literature review. It is also important that different agencies join forces, and work towards the same goal across sectors, roles and age range. This kind of approach and policies will also support the work of ECEC centres and give them more opportunities to include diverse children and cater to their needs.
Contact	Municipality of Zaanstad Website: Tweetaligheid wordt de norm voor kinderen met migratieachtergrond - Zaanstad https://zaanstad.raadsinformatie.nl/document/9201762/1/Bijlage_Begroting_2021-2024

LUDENS DAY CARE CENTER

In LUDENS daycare centres, staff are committed to give all children the space to be themselves. Children grow up with confidence in each other and in themselves. Through play, children develop into fully-fledged individuals who are part of Dutch society.

Target groups	Children, the whole institution, families and local community are addressed and involved.
Focus	Inspirational practice of a whole day care approach: At Ludens, the focus is on creating an exciting and supportive environment in which children can discover the world and develop themselves through play, in their own way and at their own pace, so they grow up with confidence in each other and in themselves. Through play, children develop into fully-fledged individuals who are part of Dutch society.
Objectives	LUDENS's pedagogical vision is based on the trust in children and belief that they are the agents of their development, which happens when their wellbeing and involvement in play are high. Its main goals are to educate pedagogical staff to provide emotional safety to children, empower children to develop personal and social competences, and support children to live up to the values and norms of Dutch society.
Methodology	LUDENS' General Pedagogical Policy Plan describes how to deal with inclusion and diversity, and concrete inclusive practices are included. This helps pedagogical staff and daycare educators to give "hands and feet" to sometimes abstract concepts. The general plan is translated into a Growth Meter (partly inspired by Peaceable Preschool-programme) that includes 10 items based on the 6 interaction skills, divided into themes: citizenship education, playful development, and wellbeing.

Methodology

Although ideas and values of respect for diversity, inclusion and democratic peaceful dialogue are embedded in all practices and pedagogical philosophy of LUDENS, the second item of the Growth Meter is specifically devoted to "We are all different", stressing everyone's own way of being and learning. Children are given the space to participate, speak out and express their opinions. LUDENS acknowledges that children are interested in differences and similarities and that they need encouragement to address them in a respectful way. In daily activities, they name and discuss differences between children and their families; talk about how everyone has unique behavioural characteristics, talents and character traits that deserve respect; also make sure that for children with special needs there is a place in the group for as long as possible; solve disputes and conflicts in a peaceful and constructive way; and provide diversity in materials and toys, music, play and parties which represent children of all shapes/ sizes/ colours / cultures/ backgrounds, so that every child can identify with the material and activities in the group, and recognise themselves. Pedagogical staff are expected to search for a respectful way of dealing with each child's individuality, pay attention to differences and similarities among children, providing materials that all children can identify with, and ensure that children with special needs or challenging behaviour have a place in the group, accepting others without judgement or biases. Special attention is paid to pedagogical coaching of the educators.

Impact

Evaluation of the practice was done under the ISOTIS project, and the findings are showing that children see differences between languages, culture etc., but for them it doesn't matter, because they value positive relationships with peers, teachers and family more! Regular monitoring and evaluation is done in teams and through engagement with policy pedagogical officers. Parents and parents' councils also have a say.

Contact

LUDENS, Utrecht, The Netherlands
 Website: www.ludens.nl
 Contact person: Jitske Rienstra, Pedagogical policy officer (pedagogisch beleidsmedewerker)
 email: j.rienstra@ludens.nl (+31)6 57 22 14 44

UNITED KINGDOM

MEN IN THE EARLY YEARS

MITEY is a nationwide network and campaign, funded by the Department of Education and developed by the Fatherhood Institute, to produce resources that will attract more men into ECEC and support them once they are recruited.

It is a leader in promoting gender equality in ECEC within the UK. Its steering group is composed of gender advocacy and educational organisations, and its resources have been endorsed by multiple groups.

Target groups	Men who want to work in ECEC, ECEC leaders and staff, HR.
Focus	Improving male representation in ECEC.

Objectives

The MITEY website and resources were produced in 2019. The Fatherhood Institute has been focused on the issue of men in ECEC for over 20 years, and although many discussions were held around increasing the involvement of men in this sector, not many concrete changes had taken place. After delivering a project focused on increasing the involvement of men in ECEC within London, key findings highlighted a need for a national campaign to build a space for men in the sector to keep them motivated, comfortable with their career choice and welcome (as numbers are so low), as well as to provide a space where employers could gain ideas about how to employ more men in their workforce and support those that they do employ. Around this time, the Department for Education released their Early Years Workforce Strategy, which included a section on gender diversity. Further research led to the development of the MITEY project which addressed the key needs in gender inclusion in ECEC as well as the requirements of the Early Years Workforce Strategy.

The main aim and vision of MITEY is to develop a "mixed-gender early years workforce where well-rewarded, highly trained practitioners provide, in gender-flexible ways, the best quality, gender-sensitive education and care to the children in their setting". This was achieved by developing resources to support ECEC organisations in attracting men into their sector and understanding the importance of and commitment to creating a mixed-gender workforce.

Methodology

The campaign has produced information and resources based on best practice and evidence, in a clear and thoughtful way with a rationale focused on representation. They also delivered a conference in 2019. The website includes information, case studies, a jobs board for men and information and training for employers, as well as the following resources:

- The MITEY Charter
- Ten MITEY Myths
- The MITEY guide to recruiting men
- The MITEY guide to communicating with parents around male staff
- The MITEY guide for careers advisors

Impact

This has been difficult to measure due to limits in funding. However, 50 people have signed up for the Charter so far, and estimates suggest this represents around 1000 ECEC settings in the UK. Those that sign up for the Charter usually represent large organisations instead of individuals. Consequently, the extent to which the Charter has been implemented is difficult to measure. However, MITEY will be conducting a survey into how the Charter is implemented in each of these organisations. A further 500 people have accessed online resources and are included in the MITEY email database. Resources are now available to access without the need to sign up, but this does limit the ability to measure uptake.

In September 2019, a national conference was held in London with 140 delegates and 13 speakers. 98% of attendees stated that they were either highly satisfied or satisfied: "It was a wonderful combination of fresh thinking about gender, practice and policy, voices from men working in their field and really constructive dialogues among men and women". This event also enabled those at MITEY to network with other organisations - one key contact was Gender Action which is an award programme that supports the development of a whole school approach to challenge gender stereotypes. A Twitter profile has also been created which has 723 followers, and MITEY has been mentioned in 40 press releases across the UK between April 2019 and March 2020.

Impact

Attitudes towards men in ECEC have improved and those working in the sector are much more aware of the importance of promoting gender equality. Many people now recognise the MITEY name and understand its concept. Over the course of the campaign, fewer critical attitudes and stereotypical statements have been experienced and more understanding has been gained. As a result of MITEY, a pilot apprenticeship project in Greater Manchester has now been funded, which will help to break down barriers to ECEC by supporting 12 male apprentices through their Level 2 training with Kids Planet Day Nurseries - the UK's third largest private nursery provider.

Contact

Fatherhood Institute/MITEY, UK
Website: <https://miteyuk.org/>
Contact person: Jeremy Davies
email: J.Davies@fatherhoodinstitute.org

RIGHTS RESPECTING SCHOOLS

The Rights Respecting Schools Award (UNICEF UK) works with ECEC providers to create safe and inspiring places to learn, where children are respected, their talents are nurtured, and they can thrive.

Target groups	Children, teachers, ECEC leaders.
Focus	Special provisions for improving diversity equality in ECEC – campaigns, innovative services/ tools launched, course design, measures to improve service delivery.

Objectives	This programme started in 2006 and awards education providers, including those within ECEC, who recognise the rights of children and foster awareness of these rights in those they teach and care for. ECEC providers should work to embed these rights in their daily practice in order to give children the best chance to lead happy, healthy lives and become responsible, active citizens.
Methodology	The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is used as a guide, with the Rights Respecting Schools Award recognising an education provider that puts these rights into practice. In terms of adapting this strategy for the ECEC sector, Programme Director Frances Bestley states that “it looks slightly different, but the things [educators] work through are very similar. ECEC is far more focused on the child rather than the curriculum, so some things are actually easier”. Within this sector, there is more of an emphasis on adults understanding the Convention and children being able to talk about things in age-appropriate ways. For example, ‘I have the right to be safe, I have the right to learn, the right to play, the right to a name’ etc. Award assessors observe ECEC employees as they interact with the younger children in their care, as well as reviewing their lesson planning. Education providers are accredited with a Bronze, Silver, or Gold Award based on the degree to which the UNCRC is embedded in their provision. Educators work to make improvements over time and once received, their Award is valid for three years and then the centre must be reaccredited.

Impact

As of 2021, over 1.6 million children in the UK go to a Rights Respecting School and nearly 5,000 schools across the UK are working through the Award from Bronze to Gold accreditation. As the Programme Director points out, "there is a lot of evidence that awareness of difference starts off quite early [in children], so you do need to focus on it in ECEC". Therefore, the Award enables ECEC leaders to ensure that they are creating an environment in which everyone's rights are respected, regardless of any initial perceived differences.

Conclusion

Children are happier, healthier, feel safer, have better relationships, and are more active when their rights are respected. ECEC providers tend to have a child-centred approach to learning. The UNCRC is focused on putting children first and seeing things from a child's perspective. ECEC providers are, therefore, in a good position to influence the children attending their centres and encourage them to recognise and respect each other's rights. However, some rights are very complicated and may seem difficult to convey to younger children. However, ECEC providers are advised to focus on topics that will make most sense for children at that age of development. Different issues can be tackled at different times. As stated by a teacher featured on the Award's website, "rights are the context for all our work – they provide a framework for the whole jigsaw".

Contact

Rights Respecting Schools (UNICEF UK), London, United Kingdom
 Website: <https://www.unicef.org.uk/rights-respecting-schools/the-rrsa/>
 Contact person: Frances Bestley, Programme Director
 email: francesb@unicef.org.uk

Schools OUT UK

Schools OUT UK, working alongside the Proud Trust, has produced a series of lesson plans which introduce LGBTQ themes in an age-appropriate way for children attending ECEC provision.

Target groups	Children; parents; teachers/ trainers; ECEC leaders.
Focus	Staff training, special provisions for improving diversity equality in ECEC - campaigns, innovative services/ tools launched, course design, measures to improve service delivery.
Objectives	Schools OUT UK has been working towards equality, safety, and visibility for all lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people since 1974. Currently, there are no other organisations in the UK which support this broad and varied community in achieving such a wide, yet simple key goal.
Methodology	Classroom resources have been produced which enable ECEC providers to easily integrate diversity-related topics into their daily provision. One lesson plan ostensibly focuses on colours but importantly, acts as a foundation for breaking gender stereotypes, e.g. blue for boys and pink for girls. Another lesson plan introduces young children to different kinds of families and family structures. This resource similarly aims to address stereotypes and misconceptions, but also tackles discrimination and fosters acceptance and understanding towards a variety of families regardless of culture or belief, sexual orientation/ same sex parents, ethnicity, fostering/adoption, etc.
Impact	Schools OUT UK takes part in research, debate, and curriculum development relating to LGBTQ issues. They work with the Department for Education, OFSTED, the Equality and Human Rights Commission, local authorities and academies, teaching and other trade unions and any other relevant stakeholders in the education system. The classroom resources featured here, therefore, have a large platform and potential to transform ECEC provision across the UK.

Conclusion

These lesson plans encourage ECEC providers to reconsider their existing methods of embedding equality and diversity in their practice. Sue Sanders, Chair of Schools OUT UK and founder of LGBTQ History Month, coined the term 'usualising' as the "the [mainstream] concept of normal and normalising is massively problematic. 'Normal' normally means white, heterosexual, able bodied etc. The lesson plans featured on the classroom resources website are about usualising, that is, seamlessly embedding LGBTQ themes within something else you're looking at".

Contact

Schools OUT UK, London, United Kingdom
Website: <http://www.schools-out.org.uk/>
Contact person: Sue Sanders, Chair
email: chairs@schools-out.org.uk

The image features a central pink rectangle with the text "INSPIRING PRACTICES FROM OTHER EUROPEAN COUNTRIES" in white, uppercase, sans-serif font. The rectangle is set against a background of abstract, colorful geometric shapes in shades of teal, purple, yellow, and orange, creating a modern, low-poly aesthetic.

INSPIRING PRACTICES
FROM OTHER
EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

BELGIUM

ELMER, BRUSSELS - OPEN DOORS AND OPEN MINDS

Elmer offers high quality and accessible childcare to diverse vulnerable families. It does so, proposing training and employment opportunities for parents and building a diverse ECEC workforce that takes ownership of the service and acts as a bridge with families.

Target groups	Children from 0 - 3.5 years and their parents with diverse backgrounds (53 different countries of origin); Teachers and teachers in training with diverse backgrounds (26 different origins) and a plurality of spoken languages.
Focus	Accessible and flexible ECEC services of high pedagogical quality in 4 neighbourhoods in Brussels, with a focus on active pluralism in dealing with diversity.

Objectives	Elmer, a group of childcare centres that operates in disadvantaged areas of Brussels, started 25 years ago as a project of EVA, an NGO organising neighbourhood services combining employment and training of target groups and services for the local community. In the case of Elmer, the service is high quality and accessible childcare with a focus on parents in difficult situations, at the same time aiming to reach a mixed group of families, both socio-culturally and economically. The main reason for establishing services was to reach out to parents who planned to complete schooling (training) but did not have access to childcare, parents who suddenly found a job, or parents in crisis-situations. Elmer specialises in flexible and short-term childcare, as opposed to the more common childcare for middle class families.
Methodology	Elmer has four centres in the 19th century belt of the Brussels region. This area is known to be populated by families of lower SES. All centres share the common vision and values that define the daily work with families and children.

Methodology

The childcare practitioner formulates it this way: 'I am proud of our pedagogical vision, pleasure and experimentation of children is central and it gives opportunities to disadvantaged children. It helps them to enlarge their experience and this can help them later in life. Parents find in this way a second family here, just like me'.¹

Elmer is providing parents with the opportunity to receive training as childcare workers and find employment. Often, the employees are recruited out of the group of parents. The "teachers in training" follow a 2-year training programme to become a qualified daycare worker, combining 1 day a week in class and the others in service. Some continue on to obtain a bachelor's degree and become a staff member, guiding other co-workers. This training programme is certainly a success factor, and so is the diversity of the team, consequently. Due to this combination, Elmer has employees with a plurality of languages spoken and different backgrounds. This diversity helps in narrowing the gap towards families who live in difficult situations.

The staff at Elmer is engaged and proactive with a clear focus on respect for diversity, in the non-judgemental atmosphere which enhances free exchange and collaborative relationships between staff, parents and neighbourhoods. To replicate this approach, it is necessary to be supported by the department of work and of the social economy of the government. They provide the required means to be able to recruit and employ parents as real employees, with a salary and other benefits which guarantee income security for families.

Elmer centres use the quality circle (PDCA) for evaluation. Internal evaluation is constantly a part of their work. The evaluation is done formally and more informally. Elmer is continuously looking for ways to improve. Parents, co-workers, and children are all involved in the process. Since the children are young (0-3.5 years) and often have a mother tongue that is different from "the language of instruction", observations of children's wellbeing and involvement is done and used to formulate actions for improvement. External evaluation is being executed by the inspection service of the government.

¹ Sharmahd, N., Peeters, J., Van Laere, K., Vonta, T., De Kimpe, C., Brajković, S., Contini, L., Giovannini, D., & Vanblaere, B. (2017). Transforming European ECEC services and schools into professional learning communities: drivers, barriers and ways forward NESSETII. Luxemburg, Publication Office of European Union . Doi 10 .2766/74332.

Methodology

Each year, Elmer produces a report where testimonies of parents and teachers play a large part. Parents stress that they feel welcomed, respected, supported and motivated to participate in the life of the centre in many different ways. Some also mention that being in one of the Elmer centres makes them change their attitude towards day-care. They see teachers and leaders in the centre as caring, open and competent.

Teachers feel the same. Their voices are heard and ideas taken into consideration.

Conclusion

Working in a diverse team for a diversity of parents and children is unique and enormously enriching. Every day, everyone can learn new ways of looking at things, nothing is ever the only truth. They are searching, wondering and questioning all the time.

Contact

Elmer vzw, Brussels, Belgium

Website: www.elmer.be

Contact person: Anne Lambrechts, Director

email: anne.lambrechts@elmer.be

FAMILY SUPPORT WORKERS

Family support workers, being experts by experience, are a meaningful resource to build trust and bridges between vulnerable families and ECEC services and bring in new perspectives and openness towards diversity in ECEC organisations.

Target groups	Vulnerable families with children 0-3 (living in poverty and/or from migrant backgrounds) and ECEC centres.
Focus	Family support in the first 1000 days of life.

Objectives	The practice has been initiated and is currently still run by Child and Family (Kind en Gezin), the Flemish agency in charge of welfare, public health, and family. It started as a pilot project from an idea of mothers who were in the service and were vulnerable, living in poverty or migration. The idea was to invite these mothers to work with the team of professionals taking care of vulnerable families. It started with 10 mothers who were trained about how to overcome their own situation and recognise exclusion to be able to support other families. As experts by experience, these mothers were able to support nursery nurses in approaching parents, showing them how to talk with vulnerable families and advising them. At that time, they constituted a kind of bridging figure between nursery nurses and families.
Methodology	Family support workers support families being experts by experience on vulnerability, poverty and migration. The fact that they belong to the same vulnerable groups they support makes them stronger to bring that perspective in the family, the team, in working with nursery nurses, social workers and within the organisation. They also represent a useful resource for policymakers to look at the needs of vulnerable groups. One of the major successes of this practice relies on the fact that over the years, the attitude of nursery nurses visiting the families has changed a lot, they have become more open to diversity and to the needs of families, more able to listen how families feel, what it means to be a father and a mother, etc.

Methodology

The practice has broadened the perspective of lots of people. Especially when professionals feel stuck and not at ease dealing with vulnerable families, they can rely on family support workers and work together in the family. This is done slowly, following the rhythm of the family.

It is important that family support workers themselves as a group have opportunities to exchange. Family support workers who do not feel competent enough are usually offered in-service training, so they can reflect on their own processes and experiences and how they can use them in the service. Every family support worker who is working now has had this trajectory and is evaluated on this basis. The practice has been implemented for 25 years so far and several evaluations were carried out to improve the service and define who the family support worker is. It is a continuous evaluation and not just for the family support workers but for them in combination with other roles inside the agency. In the past, there were cases where the wrong people were hired to do this job. Therefore, now there is an internal evaluation going on to agree with HR the criteria to use while recruiting new family support workers and explain more clearly the role of this function inside Child and Family.

Impact

Currently, there are 75/80 family support workers working at Child and Family. Every multi-disciplinary local team has a family support worker (at least one, sometimes 3-4). Initially, family support workers were experts by experience of poverty and mainly of Belgian nationality or they were intercultural mediators coming mainly from Morocco and Turkey. Now with rising diversity, there are also Croatian, Montenegrin, Italian, Argentinian, and other nationalities. There are also family supporters with a Roma background. All of them have personal experiences of social exclusion.

Since 2004, the experts by experience of poverty were combined with intercultural mediators in the function of 'family support workers' who make connections with families, with supporters of the families and within the organisation. Their function has changed over time. At the beginning, they were working in tandem with nurses. Now they have acquired an equal position in the multi-expertise teams and are more independent in their work, so they can follow the family in autonomy.

Impact

In the last few years, every family has been assigned a "companion" for a period of 3 years who focuses on the family and supports it. The family support worker can also be a companion.

On average, a local team has about 1000 new-borns in the region to support for a period of 3 years. Family support workers work directly with the family and they hold a role of advisor on poverty and migration for the colleagues who oversee the families. Thanks to this practice, families and children feel better understood and not judged because it is easier for them to build trust with a family support worker who understands their situation. In this way, trust between Child and Family (which for some vulnerable families is seen with mistrust due to its controlling and preventative role concerning child abuse) and the families is built. Families begin to identify the family supporter workers with Child and Family and so they better rely on the agency's services.

Conclusion

There are lots of organisations already working with experts by experience (people of the target groups) and the issue of participation is high on the agenda. "But I think that the position of the family support worker as a member of the team, hired and paid for his/her work just as the other team members, is very important".

If the aim is to include people from vulnerable groups, you have to offer them good positions because they are still in very vulnerable situations. For example, they might become sick more often than others and for a longer period because of their vulnerable situation. So, it is important to offer them a good position in the organisation and organise structural support they can rely on. This means embracing diversity in a broader sense, welcoming people in vulnerable situations by offering them the opportunity to participate, be agents of change and feel cared for.

For these reasons, at Child and Family, family support workers are hired by the agency with a full member contract and they have a network of professionals around them who value their work enormously.

Contact

Kind en Gezin (Child and Family), Belgium
 Website: <https://www.kindengezin.be/over-kind-en-gezin/organogram/lokale-teams/default.jsp>
 Contact person: Kathy Jacobs, Policy Officer
 email: kathy.jacobs@kindengezin.be

NEIGHBOURHOODS AS MIRRORS TO CREATE DIVERSITY POSITIVE SERVICES

Innovative practice: Innovative ways to promote, include, and implement diversity in local ECEC facilities - place-based, interdisciplinary approach.

Target groups	Everybody: children, parents, professionals, communities
Focus	The whole neighbourhood approach New Chances in ECEC

Objectives

The programme was introduced two years ago by the Municipality of Ghent with financial support from the King Baudouin Foundation and the European Social Funds (ESF).

The programme's main idea is to make ECEC accessible to everyone and transform ECEC facilities into places where the local community is welcomed and valued.

Ghent's Municipality began with an analysis of the situation in its 25 neighbourhoods, reflecting on existing accessibility and inclusion and trying to find solutions to develop increased respect and attention to diversity. It has focused on the neighbourhoods as a mirror to look at and as a potential ally where the people who live there can make diversity positive actions.

To achieve diversity, it has used the community as a key criterion in its ECEC system. It has created a competent system, where four levels have been taken into account: children, parents, teams, and the neighbourhood. In a way, the system mirrors the community it aims to address and serve.

The programme is implemented at the local level, being the neighbourhood selected environment and the key element of the approach. The Municipality of Ghent has transformed local ECEC centres into open-door facilities, accessible anytime during the day to the neighbourhood community. It means that childcare workers are also accessible.

Objectives

Thanks to the ESF-project, people that enter the ECEC centre and might become interested in a job are offered the opportunity to join the team, get financial support, and combine the experience of being a parent and student at the same time. This innovative way of looking at parents as potential co-workers is a shift in the paradigm and creates chances for segregated groups to enter the workforce in a very supportive manner and for ECEC facilities to become a mirror of the environment they are located in. Thanks to the support provided by King Baudoin Foundation, parents who engage in the training programme get additional financial support (enrolment is free, study materials are free of charge, childcare fees are waived, social benefits and employment status are maintained) and mentorship. There are childcare workers who are trained and fully appointed to support parents to enter this career. Mentors are coaches and advisors who help parents reorganise their lives and households and create opportunities to study and get a job.

Impact

So far, the programme has created benefits for the families involved (more job opportunities, increased inclusion, and ownership, etc.) as well as for the community in the neighbourhood. In the children, it has fostered a strong sense of belonging. Parents who participate in the programme become active protagonists in the ECEC centres, and this nurtures mutual respect among them and the professionals who work in the centres. Children experience this cooperation, communal understanding, and connections and feel they belong to a community of people who care for them. Consequently, children's increased participation in ECEC, both quantitative and qualitative, has been witnessed.

The ECEC facilities involved in the programme look like places where it is possible to change the world. The programme has been evaluated. Some parents dropped out of the programme, but not out of the chance to learn. Some of them have chosen to complete alternative training. Even if it could take longer because adjusting to a systematised world could be not easy for some people, successful outcomes have been registered. This is mainly thanks to the brilliant and continuous coaching trajectory implemented.

Impact

Place-based, interdisciplinary approaches are fundamental. To make ECEC truly diverse, one has to look at what exists in the neighbourhood and mirror it. In situations where open, inclusive and accessible ECEC is not an answer, it is necessary to understand how to support families. Developing ways of cooperation with all the local actors in the neighbourhood is key. This also brings fun because it collects groups of people from different organisations who would not be connected otherwise.

Diversity in ECEC means working with the local community, involving it, and creating connections among different services (typical work and intersectoral cooperation). Even if it sometimes seems such a significant effort to make, diversity makes things easier, funnier, more prosperous, and ECEC organisations stronger.

Contact

The Municipality of Ghent, Flanders, Belgium

Website: <https://stad.gent/en>

Contact person: Lieve De Bosscher, Director of the Child-care Department of the City of Ghent

email: lieve.debosscher@stad.gent

CROATIA

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES FOR QUALITY AND DIVERSITY

Changing prevailing understanding of professional development and training by focusing on peer learning through dialogue, individual and group reflections, and asking critical questions around diversity and equity in ECEC.

Target groups	Educators, whole ECEC sector.
Focus	Innovative practice: Continuous professional development - Improving equity within diversity in ECEC through democratic form of professional development, and by learning with and from peers.

Objectives	The main objectives are: ■ to foster reflective teaching and working with children. ■ to encourage group reflection of educators in order to make deep and critical understandings of diversity and equity and how it can be improved in ECEC practice. ■ ECEC practitioners are encouraged to improve their practices and to implement practices which are innovative.
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Methodology	Gathering educators in teams does not by itself guarantee that they will become a professional learning community (PLC). In order for this to happen, educators should share beliefs and attitudes, a high level of trust in open communication, mutual respect for people and different perspectives and opinions, and willingness to participate. In addition, it is necessary that they share a belief that they have the authority and power to make important decisions and create change. The Open Academy Step by Step (OA SbS) in Croatia has developed PLCs of educational professionals in primary schools and kindergartens. OA SbS has trained over one hundred facilitators, ECEC and primary schools professionals, who then organised PLCs in their schools and kindergartens. Existing forms of professional development opportunities for educators in Croatia have been transformed into PLCs by focusing more on the strength of educators, their cooperation, a shared vision and reflection. The framework for discussion about quality and space for improvement of practices are International Step by Step Association's (ISSA) Quality Principles 'Competent Educators of the 21st Century'.
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Methodology

OA SbS has coordinated the realisation of PLCs. PLC meetings are organised at least once a month with a stable group of educators and last around two hours. During the meetings, members of the PLC use the document 'Competent educators of 21st Century' as an incentive for conversations which aim to develop a shared understanding of quality ECEC practice. At each meeting, PLC members plan next steps in their practices. These steps are presented during the next meeting by each member while others ask for additional clarification and pose probing questions. This process of PLC meetings enable educators to build their practice on critical thinking, and mutual learning.

PLCs enable educators to replace routine teaching with the reflective teaching necessary for a diversity inclusive approach. Routine practice or routine teaching is led primarily by impulsive reactions, traditions, and authorities. This means that educators try to solve problems or work with children based on the 'collective code' ('This is how WE do it'). In reflective teaching, in contrast, the educator actively, persistently, and attentively reflects upon each belief or practice, recognises a fair and just approach to their own classroom or on institutional or policy levels and reacts.

Additionally, when engaged in PLCs educators are developing skills and knowledge crucial for working on issues of diversity, equity and social justice. Participating in PLCs empowers educators to walk the talk and model to children, parents, families and communities values they want to teach the others. They are: developing democratic values such as equality, respect of diversity and the right to participation; learning how to work with others in a respectful ways; feeling empowered to become actors of change and step out from the traditional role of an educator (they advocate for marginalised and excluded children and give them voice); they develop and exercise the culture of listening, valuing questions and critical reflection. This makes it possible to explore different values and perspectives; and they learn the value of different perspectives.

Impact

Since 2012, OA SbS trained more than 150 PLC leaders who reached out to more than 750 practitioners/teachers (for example, preschool, elementary school, subject teachers, psychologists, and pedagogical coaches). Most of them are still involved in this kind of work.

Internal evaluation has shown that according to preschool teachers (NESET II report):

- PLCs have a positive influence on children's wellbeing and learning by improving educators' competences. This occurs by building a common understanding of quality practice, exchange of ideas, reflection and improvement of everyday practice.
- PLCs positively influence practitioners'/teachers' motivation by granting them autonomy to plan their own professional development, which gives them the ability to introduce changes to their own practice and improves their perception of their competences and self-efficacy.
- PLCs have a positive influence on an institutional (preschool/school) level by improving the institutional atmosphere, and by building a shared vision of quality and unity.

Conclusion

Promoting diversity positive services is the crucial value of their organisation. The belief that there is no quality without equity enables them to advocate for each child. Time is needed in order to develop PLCs and to actually experience change in practice. A positive influence is visible and sustainable after several years of PLC implementation. At least two to three years are needed to ensure quality improvement.

Contact

Open Academy Step by Step, Zagreb, Croatia
 Website: www.korakpokorak.hr
 Contact person: Sanja Brajković, Director
 email: sanja@korakpokorak.hr

SMOOTH TRANSITION TO PRIMARY SCHOOL FOR ROMA CHILDREN

Providing Roma children with opportunities for an easier transition to primary school system.

By including them in ECEC one year before primary school, this intervention prepares them for schooling.

Target groups	Roma and Croatian children, six years old, one year before primary school starts.
Focus	Innovative practice: One year before starting schooling, free of charge preparatory programme, organised by Municipality.

Objectives	By the Law in Croatia, Municipalities should organise a preschool programme one year before compulsory schooling starts. They should organise it in primary schools and mobilise primarily children from vulnerable and excluded groups to participate in the programme, learn the language and gain knowledge and skills necessary for schooling. However, Municipalities are not obliged to do this, and children do not have to attend this programme. In the Municipality of Orehovica, besides the goals mentioned above, the main focus is on fostering inclusion of all children, working against discrimination and promoting non-discrimination, while encouraging social cohesion and prevention of the social marginalisation of the Roma community. The goal of the programme derives from the humanistic development concept and the National Strategy for Roma integration, which are ensuring equal opportunities for Roma children in education and encouraging the social integration of Roma while respecting minority rights and the right to equality.
Methodology	A very small percentage of Roma children attend preschool education in Croatia, lacking the opportunity to get prepared for schooling, and get to know their Croatian peers. The gap in achievements between Roma and non-Roma children is substantial from the very beginning and it is growing over time.

Methodology

To support Roma children and close this gap, the Ministry of Education introduced the opportunity to Municipalities to organise preschool programmes, one year before school.

In Primary school Orehovica, this measure per se will not give expected results if the approach to inclusion and preparation of children is not done in a respectful and well taught manner. In their work, they are focused on the quality of the practice and mobilisation of the local community. They are working closely with local NGOs, local and regional governments. Implementation of the programme is also closely connected with other activities in the local community, e.g., ECEC Play Hub, workshops with parents and various other activities.

Due to the high quality of the programme, they managed to attract Croatian children from private kindergartens to join their group, so they are carrying out this programme in mixed groups of Roma and Croatian children. In that way, an added value is provided, and the efficiency of work has increased.

In line with the National Programme for Roma and the Decade of Roma Inclusion Action Plan for Međimurje County, the pre-school programme has been implemented occasionally since 2005, and since 2010 a 5.5-hour programme is implemented throughout the school year. It is funded by the Ministry of Education and Science and Međimurje County and is free for all participants.

Unfortunately, this is a project-type programme (from September to June) so there is no continuity for employed educators. There are no Roma assistants in the project, but in collaboration with the primary school, two Roma assistants are periodically supporting our work in the preschool. To be able to help children learn Croatian language, educators learned the basics of the Bajash language, which is of great importance for children.

Although the involvement of Roma parents in the activities is not financially planned, they are working and cooperating with them, because their involvement is crucial for the process of Roma inclusion. The programme is continuously improving, but they would like it to happen faster.

Impact

The Ministry of Science and Education, Medimurje County and schools are continuously monitoring data on Roma education, and they show great progress in the last ten years. Roma and Croat parents express great satisfaction with the programme and are satisfied with the integration approach. Unfortunately, they encounter administrative obstacles in the integration approach, because statistics require separate figures that are later unprofessionally interpreted.

For several years now, all six-year-old Roma children (approximately thirty children per year) have been enrolled in the preschool programme. Progress in the programme itself is visible, as well as easier mastering of the materials from the first grade. The most accurate indicator is the number of Roma children enrolled in secondary schools. Over 80% of their Roma students enrol in high school after 8th grade, and they also have three students who were their children.

Conclusion

Enrolling Roma children in quality preschool programmes is the most effective way to include them in the educational system. It would be important to have children in preschool for at least three years before starting school, but in practice this is not the case. Even when the county is interested, the national policy level is not responsive. Parental and community involvement is very important, programmes for parents should be designed, as well as continuity - sustainability of all programmes for at least several years.

Contact

Primary school Orehovica, Medjimurje, Croatia

GERMANY

BRIDGING DIVERSITY: AN EARLY YEARS PROGRAMME

'Bridging Diversity' is the official Early Years Programme for the State of Berlin serving some 175,000 children aged 1 to 6 (about 45,000 children do not speak German at home).

Target groups	All children including children with a migration and refugee history, children with special needs); parents; teachers/trainers; ECEC leaders, diversity experts, policy actors.
Focus	Educational as well as organisational policy/standards (here: quality requirements for educational practice); staff training: for initial as well as in-service training; it is binding for all ECEC centres in Berlin (about 2,700 in 2021).
Objectives	It was commissioned by the Berlin State Ministry for Education in 2003 and made the official Early Years Programme in 2004. It was updated in 2014 and the focus on Diversity education was strengthened. Prior to 2004, there was no binding state ECEC programme for the whole city which, in addition, still had to deal with almost 45 years of being divided under two very different political systems. While there was some attention to diversity in the western part of the city, this aspect was by and large neglected in the eastern part. Goals: ■ To provide a common educational and conceptual framework for early education in Berlin ■ To provide all young children attending ECEC services with equal and equitable opportunities for learning, exploring and socialising with their peers ■ To set quality requirements for professionals (2020 around 28,800 FTE) for conducting internal and external evaluation
Methodology	How does the practice/ service/ approach take place? The Programme is implemented through Berlin's Early Years Framework on Quality which obliges each centre to undertake internal evaluation regularly as well as external evaluation once every five years. The Framework was put in place in 2006 and has been vigorous ever since. The adherence to the Framework on Quality is being monitored and evaluated by The Berlin Institute for Quality in the Early Years (BeKi).

Methodology

On what level is it implemented? Regional, i.e., Berlin; Each of the 16 states has responsibility for ECEC.

What kind of provisions have been made? There are no separate services for migrants/refugees or children from other vulnerable communities. In the case of refugee children, as soon as the parents were given refugee status, the children were placed in the regular provision structure. As long as the status was being clarified, NGOs and statutory child welfare services were offering so-called springboard programmes to provide safety and ECEC services.

What are the main strengths, challenges and potential limitations?

STRENGTH: no special services for "special" groups; this pertains to children from different language and cultural communities; inclusive education for children with special needs in the regular service structure; however, there are about 100 places for severely handicapped children that need substantial care in specialised units.

CHALLENGES/LIMITATIONS: Between 2011 and 2020, about 50,500 new places have been created. According to a forecast from October 2020, an additional 26,000 places will be needed by 2026. Shortage of places has been a regular feature for the past five years despite massive financial investments.

What are the key success factors, resources and requirements: It is part of the statutory service structure. It needs political and administrative will at the policy level to provide inclusive and respectful services for all children living in a community.

Impact

Under the Framework for Quality, teams are required to undertake internal evaluations also involving parents once or twice a year. All certified approaches to external evaluation must consult with parents either through focus groups, interviews or questionnaires. As of 2021, the perspectives of children are being considered. This aspect is in a trial period and it is expected that this is made mandatory as of 2026. Materials for conducting internal evaluations are available in English under https://beki-qualitaet.de/images/beki/Materialien_IE/Englische_Version/engl_internal-evaluation_Bridging_Diversity_web_version_sept_2020.pdf

Impact

What are the main outcomes and results? A system by which quality is constantly developed and monitored; changes in the system (more children under the age of three, changing composition of children, more children with a refugee history etc.) can be taken into account continuously.

About 500,000 children since 2004 through being the beneficiaries of the Programme and more than 50,000 professionals by being trained on the basis of the Programme.

How is quality measured and ensured? Through internal and external evaluation and aggregate reports by BeKi: https://beki-qualitaet.de/images/beki/Materialien_EE/BeKi-Gesamtbericht-zur-externen-Evaluation-1.-Zyklus-2010-2015_Web.pdf (German only).

Conclusion

An Early Years Programme without a diversity positive perspective is inconceivable. It may be a long road to diversity positive services, but it is worth the effort. Initial training colleges need to be more actively included in the process.

Contact

The Berlin Institute for Quality in the Early Years (BeKi) at the International Academy Berlin for innovative Pedagogy, Psychology and Economics gGmbH (INA), Berlin, Germany

Website: www.beki-qualitaet.de

Contact person: Henriette Heimgaertner, Former Managing Director (until 2020) (BeKi)

email: heimgaertner@ina-fu.org

PORTUGAL

EMO ACTION PROJECT

The EmoAction won a national prize from the institution BPI Infância – Fundação La Caixa, which provided financial support to the project.

Target groups	Children (aged 6 to 10 years old); youngsters (from 10 to 14 years old); parents; teachers; technicians (social workers, psychologists, youth technicians and other school collaborators etc.); stakeholders.
Focus	Training in the five pillars of emotional intelligence for children, youngsters, parents, and school staff to promote self-regulation, adaptability and socioemotional competences.

Objectives

It was initiated in 2016 by Psientifica with children in primary school. The main objectives are to develop socioemotional competences in children and youngsters by promoting self-consciousness, self-control, motivation, empathy and social competences through non formal education.

What kind of provisions have been made? They use the funding from the prize to prepare the intervention and the Municipality contributes with additional funding to support the technicians.

What are the main strengths, challenges and potential limitations of the service/ approach?

In their opinion, it is very easy to replicate this intervention because the only thing needed is to train technicians and teachers at school to reply to it.

What are the key success factors, resources and requirements needed to replicate this service / approach in other organisations?

The intervention is already prepared (all manuals, activities and necessary resources), so as said before, they only need to train the staff (non-formal education and activities in the manual).

Impact

It is still in progress, so that data is not available yet. However, it is addressed directly to 1192 individuals. Quality is measured by a pre prepared impact assessment based on the Theory of Change (by Peter Rossi, Carol Weiss, Michael Quinn Patton e Huey Chen). Testimonies will be available by the end of the school year.

Conclusion

It is on course and feedback will be received by the end of the school year. However, an improvement in self-consciousness, self-control, motivation, empathy and social competences in children, youngsters, parents and school staff are expected, allowing for greater social and diversity inclusion.

Contact

Psientífica – Associação para a Promoção e Desenvolvimento Social; Águeda, Portugal
 Website: www.psientifica.org
 Contact person: Ana Isabel Moutas Ribeiro, Director
 email: ana.moutas@psientifica.org

SLOVENIA

PUBLIC KINDERGARTEN RINGERAJA

Appreciating the uniqueness of each child and family beyond social and cultural backgrounds.

Target groups	Children from 11 months up to 6 years old, families, staff, management.
Focus	Innovative practices.

Objectives

Public Kindergarten Ringaraja in the municipality Dobropolje, Slovenia, operates under the Public educational institution Osnovna Šola Dobropolje and enrolls children from 11 months up to 6 years old. According to the available data, 94% of all 3-6 years and 70% of all 1-3 years old children within the municipality Dobropolje are enrolled/included in kindergarten.

Diversity in kindergarten is represented through children, parents, and professionals from different social and cultural backgrounds. Diversity within the kindergarten is not limited only to social and cultural backgrounds but instead goes beyond this general definition and in its programmes, addresses, appreciates, and acknowledges the uniqueness of each family by building the partnership on the values and beliefs each of them is bringing into the process. Among plenty of nuances of diversity, the kindergarten has in past years mastered inclusion of different types of families (single parent families, extended families, foster families, culturally mixed families, etc.), refugee and migrant children, Roma children, children with special needs, children at risk of poverty, multilingual children, etc.

In its vision, the kindergarten commits itself to provide and enable children's well-being and coexistence with and in nature, encouraging young children's creativity, empathy, and early learning in a supportive, nurturing, and engaging environment.

Methodology

The Kindergarten Ringaraja follows the national curriculum, which is the basis for their work. The national curriculum's flexibility and openness allow kindergartens in Slovenia to adopt elements of alternative pedagogies and methodologies. That is why the Kindergarten Ringaraja started implementing the Step by Step methodology back in 2009. Over the years, the programme was wholly adopted and is now at the heart of their work. Following and responding to children's needs by identifying their strengths and weaknesses, kindergarten staff strive to grow professionally through comprehensive ongoing professional development opportunities in various areas of their work. In the last few years, the focus of professional development for kindergarten staff was on inclusion, democratic values, and respect for diversity. With intense/comprehensive ongoing professional development, monitoring, professional learning communities, coaching, and supervision, the kindergarten nurtures high-quality programmes. The kindergarten is convinced that high-quality programmes can be provided only by ongoing professional growth, reflection, evaluation, participation, and involvement of all relevant actors. An excellent example of how involving various stakeholders that play a crucial role in a child's upbringing, development, and early learning shows the recent action where kindergarten initiated the process of planning the long-term strategy and the vision of the kindergarten in the process of which parents, teachers, local community and experts from the ECD field were equally involved.

Impact

Evaluation of daily practice, programmes, approaches, techniques, and tools represents a basis for planning in the Kindergarten Ringaraja. Throughout the ongoing professional development, professionals in the kindergarten have mastered their skills in assessing their practice and becoming critical professional peers to their colleagues. Through observations, monitoring, and peer to peer professional support and learning, the kindergarten evaluates and reflects on their programmes and approaches in order to improve the practice and reach the high-quality standards of an early childhood setting, which follows the principles of democratic values, diversity, and inclusion. In the process of reflection, evaluation, and planning, besides professionals and experts, parents, families, and the local community are also involved.

Impact

The primary outcome of the diversity positive practice of kindergarten Ringaraja is that children, parents, and families feel appreciated, accepted with all their uniqueness, and receive the support and encouragement they need. At the same time, the variety of diversity within the kindergarten, and each group, allows other children to learn and interact with different languages, cultures, dress, habits and beliefs. They are building an inclusive and democratic society from an early age.

Conclusion

The benefits of a diversity positive service are that the team around the child grows professionally and personally, which contributes that each child, each family can express their needs, contribute, be involved, and participate. Just like the principal has answered the question on how the diversity positive kindergarten should look like: *"... just like ours! Open, positive, warm, respectful, and innovative."*

Contact

Kindergarten Ringaraja, Osnovna šola Dobrepolje
Website: www.osdobrepolje.si/ringaraja/
Contact person: Ms. Cvetka Košir, Principal of the Kindergarten

diversITY

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