

DIVERSITY

DIVERSITY INCLUSION IN ECEC DIVERSITY+ CHARTER



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

FIRST STEPS TOWARDS DIVERSITY
POSITIVE (DIVERSITY+) SERVICES

INTRODUCTION

The Diversity+ Charter represents a minimum requirement that Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) services and institutions have to meet to accommodate different types of diversity and be classed as inclusive and diversity positive (Diversity+). It is based on the Council Recommendations on High Quality ECEC¹ and is organised around its five key themes: access, workforce, curriculum, monitoring and evaluation, and governance. It also includes the transversal issues fundamental to the development and maintenance of high-quality ECEC: image and voice of the child, partnerships, shared understanding of a quality and competent system, and reference to ten EU ECEC Quality Framework statements.

The Diversity+ Charter is informed by desk and field research into current best practices and emerging trends across Europe (Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia and the UK), completed as a part of the Diversity+ project.

DIVERSITY+ ECEC

Diversity+ ECEC services, public or private, formal, non formal or informal, are accessible to all children and organised in a democratic way that promotes and supports inclusion, equity, fairness, respect for all identities, and sensitivity to the individual needs of each child, professional, and family. In Diversity+ settings, everybody is welcome, and everybody thrives. To provide high-quality ECEC to all children, services and institutions take a progressive, universalistic approach which ensures that targeted services are provided to specific groups and individuals within the universal and inclusive ECEC environment.

High quality ECEC, which should be diversity positive, plays a crucial role in child development by ensuring that children's rights are respected and that children are provided with the best conditions and support to reach their unique potential, regardless of their background, socio-economic status, religion, gender, language, ethnicity, skin colour or level of ability.

¹ https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CONSIL:ST_9014_2019_INIT&from=EN

CORE VALUES OF DIVERSITY+ ECEC

Rights-based approach: All children have rights and should be treated without biases regardless of their background, language, social status, ethnicity, skin colour, level of ability, or other characteristics.

Participation: Participation of all key actors is crucial. Children, parents and professionals are seen as competent, and their voices are respected and included in the decision-making processes.

Holistic approach: Addressing children's, parents', practitioners', and community's needs, strengths, and capacities holistically. When introducing change and transformative practices in service, the whole ECEC setting is involved.

Partnerships and enriching relationships in the best interest of the child: ECEC is deeply embedded in the local community with vital connections and networking with other local services such as schools, child and family services, health and social services, and other community services to meet the complex needs of children and families, especially the most vulnerable ones. Additionally, different partnerships and respectful relationships between professionals within ECEC, professionals, parents, and local communities are fostered and nurtured.

Diversity, fairness, and equity: Acknowledging and respecting diversity among children, parents, professionals, and communities. Openness to institutional change is present, and everybody feels seen, heard, welcomed, and appreciated.

Systemic approach: Services and settings function as learning communities within the competent system. The team and leadership support individual professionals; ECEC services are supported by the local government and community. Responsibility for quality is shared and created on the level of the ECEC setting.



DIVERSITY+ ECEC SERVICES

Access

Create a socially mixed (diverse) environment in ECEC by enrolling children of different socioeconomic backgrounds, languages, ethnic backgrounds, religions, levels of ability, gender, etc., and making them all feel welcomed **TO** and **IN** ECEC.

Have policies and procedures (waiting lists, flexible working hours reflecting individual circumstances of families, culturally and linguistically appropriate communication methods with families, etc.), and adapted facilities and resources that prevent segregation and exclusion of certain groups of children and families.

Proactively approach and promote customised support and opportunities to encourage all children and families to use ECEC and feel included and welcomed.

Support families to exercise their rights (e.g., family support grants, etc.).

The composition of children in the entire ECEC and within each group in the setting reflects the diversity that exists in the local community (to avoid so called 'special groups' or segregated groups of children who are viewed as different).

Workforce

The workforce is diversified, and professionals and practitioners in the setting mirror the social groups that children and parents belong to (e.g., minority and vulnerable groups, men etc.).

The staff has access to diverse and more democratic forms of continuous professional development (CPD) such as action research, coaching, professional learning communities, and collegial learning. Staff is encouraged to critically reflect and co-reflect on practice, engage in a dialogue with colleagues, children, and parents, and introduce change and innovation.

CPD is relevant for the diversity and inclusion challenges encountered in practice and responds to practitioners' needs. Therefore, funds are allocated explicitly for CPD in the field of diversity and inclusion.

The workforce has access to diverse materials, resources, and information addressing issues of diversity and inclusion.

Additional and tailored support in this area is provided to the staff by pedagogical coaches, mentors, and supervisors.

Curriculum

The curriculum and setting's pedagogical vision promote a whole child approach, valuing, acknowledging, and respecting all aspects of a child's identity (s) such as language, gender, religion, ethnic background, individuality, values, abilities, talents, learning styles, etc.

The curriculum is culturally sensitive.

The curriculum recognises the growing challenges that increasing diversity among children and families creates in daily practice and is flexible in responding to this complexity.

Equal importance is given to cognitive intellectual and socio-emotional learning and development. Special attention is paid to transversal skills such as teamwork, conflict resolution, communication and negotiation, critical thinking, etc.

Learning content, materials, space, and learning and/or teaching strategies mirror diversity among children (level of ability, learning styles etc.), and enable all children for meaningful participation.

Diversity and inclusion are an integral part of everyday living and learning in ECEC setting, and not add-on content to the curriculum.

High expectations are set for all children, families, and staff.

Monitoring and evaluation

ECEC centre regularly carries out both external and internal monitoring and evaluation of diversity and inclusion practices as a part of quality assurance.

Monitoring and evaluation are done in a participative way. Children, families, staff, leadership, and the local community have a say in these processes.

Primary functions of monitoring and evaluation are to provide support to staff, improve practices and guide development and organisational learning.

Governance for diversity inclusion

ECEC develops democratic leadership for inclusion and diversity that encourages and empowers children, staff, families, and the local community to contribute to decision making, improvement of ECEC quality, curriculum, workforce working conditions, enrolment policies, and so on.

In ECEC, everybody, including children, is supported to speak out, name, and address any biased, discriminatory, or hurtful event, and every event is adequately addressed.

Children's perspective is taken into account on all essential matters that impact their development, learning and wellbeing.

ECEC develops and implements institutional policies and procedures focusing on inclusion, respect for diversity and differences, equal opportunities, and allocates sufficient financial resources to achieve this.

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