

INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCES FOR THE TRAINING OF EDUCATIONAL STAFF IN EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES

The compilation of the qualitative results of an international action-research realized in the context of Erasmus+ KA2 Strategic Partnerships I.ECEC - Intercultural Early Childhood Education and Care Curriculum Design for Professionals

Edited by Drs. Muhammet Safa Goregen, Dr. Nima Sharmahd, Prof. Dr. Clara Silva



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INTRODUCTION

Drs. Muhammet Safa Göregen, Dr. Nima Sharmahd, Prof. Dr. Clara Silva

The aim of this final publication is to summarize the purposes, methods, findings and good practices of the project Intercultural Early Childhood Education and Care Curriculum Design for Professionals (I.ECEC) for educative professionals, practitioners and high school students. This compilation implies several activities covering both national (partner countries) and international (EU) levels, namely: literature review, data collection, analysis and description of the good practices regarding ECEC (Early Childhood Education and Care) in intercultural perspective. In addition, we developed a teacher's manual in particular for the implementation of the good practices in own educational practice.

The European Commission has recommended that Member States (MS) *“Revise and strengthen the professional profile of all teaching professions and prepare teachers for social diversity; de-*

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ploy special cultural mediators and role models to facilitate the integration of Roma and children with an immigrant background” (European Commission, 2013, 2.2). Through this important recommendation, the Commission strengthens the broad consensus that already exists among researchers and international organisations (Children in Europe, 2012; Oberhuemer, 2005; OECD, 2012; UNICEF, 2008) that the quality of ECEC (Early Childhood Education and Care) – and more in general of the broader educational system – depends on well-educated, experienced and competent staff (Urban et al., 2012). The role played by the ECEC workforce in contributing to enhance pedagogical quality of services for young children is also underlined by the European Quality Framework for ECEC, which includes two statements on it (Council of the European Union, 2019). The latter also states the importance of adopting a holistic approach in ECEC. The diverse management-needs in the Member States of the European Union should be taken into account too in this discourse. Perhaps migration is the best-known source of social diversity, but it is only one of them. A significant part of the states is ethnically complex due to globalization and historical reasons: in addition to the dominant group, there are several minorities in their society. The strong social mobility of the 21st century – which is one of the natural consequences of modern labor market – also contributes to the growth of diversity. Varied strategies in

ECEC services can properly handle the multiple sources of diversity and shape them according to the needs of small groups as well as the whole society. These strategies must adapt to the dynamic changes in social plurality and modify ECEC practice according to the variable characteristics of smaller communities.



In this perspective the previous Multicultural Early Childhood Education project (MECEC+) aimed to develop the necessary competences and foster the social inclusion of disadvantaged children in order to grant the same opportunities in (pre-)schooling by reaching good learning results. Furthermore, the formation courses for educators reinforced the competences and knowledge regarding the social inclusion of disadvantaged children in early childhood services. More specifically, the project explored the formation of the educa-

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tors in the partner countries namely Hungary (with Galileo Progetti, Eötvös Loránd University of Budapest and Józsefvárosi Egyesített Bölcsődék); Italy (with University of Florence and ARCA Social Cooperative); and Spain (with ENCÍS Serveis a les persones). Secondly, the norms related to ECEC and integration of the children and of the families of ethnic minorities, or immigrants. This also implies to know the successful experiences, the good practices, the innovations already existing in the EU, especially in the northern Europe (Flemish Belgium and Finland). Another objective was that of sharing the successful experiences of their own Countries (for example Biztos Kezdet – Sure Start in Hungary) for the benefit of the partner, and observe the reality of the early childhood services in the partner Countries (successful experiences, organization, necessities) and the forms of public support to the disadvantaged children. And finally, the MECEC+ project realized a compared sector study about the intercultural educative needs of the educators employed in the early childhood educative services.

Within this framework, it is important to reflect on what kind of competences practitioners need today to work within an inclusive approach focused on valuing diversity (Silva, 2011; Silva et al., 2020). Which competences to increase the accessibility and desirability of the ECEC services? Which ones to accompany the growth of children as active citizens, through the involvement of

families and communities? How can we support the development of these competences within a specific training? These are some of the questions the I.ECEC project focused on, while developing an *intercultural training curriculum* for ECEC practitioners working in contexts of diversity. The training curriculum has been designed with the aim of supporting the achievement of the core competences needed by ECEC staff to work with young children and families in complex and diverse societies. The development of such curriculum takes into account several other international studies focused on these themes. For example, from the study on professionalism conducted within the Department of Social Welfare Studies of Ghent University (Peeters, 2008), among practitioners working with children aged 0 to 3 years, researchers concluded that working with young children and families requires the following categories of competences (Peeters, 2008, 248-255):

- I. The ability to look for solutions in contexts of disagreement;
- II. The focus on meeting with the Other, the one we do not know;
- III. The ability to co-construct knowledge with others (colleagues, parents, children);
- IV. Acting with a focus on social change.

With a similar conclusion, the work pack on professionalism realised by DECET & ISSA (2011), through a survey in Belgium, England,

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France, Ireland, Mexico, Morocco, Scotland, Serbia, Spain and The Netherlands among practitioners working with children aged 0 to 6, points out 5 competences that, from the point of view of the practitioners themselves, are fundamental when working with children and families: (1) The intention and action in order to work towards social change; (2) Open communication towards parents and their children; (3) Critical reflection: exploring complex issues from various angles; (4) Learning from disagreement; and (5) Co-constructing new practices and knowledge with children, parents and colleagues.

The researchers emphasise that this is not a standard list of competences that practitioners need to possess for promoting and providing inclusive environments and practices. Instead, the list should be used for critical discussions and reflections in order to challenge and change pedagogical practice (Peeters & Sharmahd, 2014). Also, the ISSA Principles for Quality Pedagogy are interesting on this matter (www.issa.nl). The principles identify 7 areas (interactions, family and community, inclusion, diversity and values of democracy, assessment and planning, teaching strategies, learning environment, professional development) on which practitioners' competences should be focused, and for each area, principles and indicators have been elaborated. These studies and documents underline similar key competences, which cannot be developed by

ECEC professionals without support. Trainings, exchanges, group and individual reflection moments and other CPD (continuous professional development) strategies are here crucial (Peeters et al, 2015). As a result of the awareness of social phenomena leading to the development of diversity, the intercultural approach becomes part of the everyday thinking and practice of early childhood educators.

This project has both social and scientific relevance. A systematic literature review (as mentioned above) revealed a major gap in the literature regarding social inclusion in intercultural early childhood education. Therefore, it is interesting to concretize the knowledge and good practices about this topical subject in order to contribute to the work field of educators and practice oriented scientific research. The first chapter concerns an introduction regarding the importance of the Intercultural Early Childhood Education and Care project with reference towards its predecessor the Multicultural Early Childhood Education project. Afterwards, we will discuss the research methodology in the second chapter. This project has an exploratory character that aims to understand and foster dealing with social inclusion of disadvantaged children. In order to obtain an answer to this question, action research as a participatory way of doing research were chosen. Both will be explained next to the research design; data collection; respondents; and data analysis. The

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good practices and research findings will be discussed in the four consecutive modules in order to answer the main question, namely Module 1: Complex and Diverse Societies; Module 2: Diversity in ECEC-Services; Module 3: Inclusion and Participation; Module 4: Flexible Practice, Innovation and Transformation. The core of this final project; the initial results and suggestions for further projects will be compiled in the conclusion.

And finally, the project Intercultural Early Childhood Education and Care Curriculum Design for Professionals was accomplished with the following partners:

- Galileo Progetti Nonprofit Organization in Budapest (Hungary), which has taken care of the general coordination and of the administration of the project;
- ARCA Social Cooperative in Firenze (Italy), has gathered the educative needs of its operators in Tuscany;
- Università degli Studi di Firenze (UNIFI) in Florence (Italy), Department of Educational Sciences and Psychology, with the duty of scientific guide (methodology, setting of the survey instrument, reading of the results);
- Erasmus Brussels University of Applied Sciences and Arts (EhB) in Brussels (Belgium), which held the academic coordination regarding the finalization of the final publication, teach-

ers manual and academic articles and the Short-term joint staff training in Belgium;

- Józsefvárosi Egyesített Bölcsődék in Budapest (Hungary), has gathered the educative needs of its operators in Hungary.
- Eötvös Loránd University of Budapest (Hungary), the project leader partner, which has taken care of the scientific side, together with the University of Florence, by setting the criteria for the observation and the comparing between the results emerged in the different realities.

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METHODOLOGY

Drs. Muhammet Safa Göregen, Dr. Nima Sharmahd, Prof. Dr. Clara Silva

Globalisation and migration paved the way for an increased cultural diversity in today's societies. This societal change entails challenges for educators and teachers in (pre)schools. The increasing pluralism -in particular multiculturalism with its linguistic and cultural diversity- is raising the need for a customized curriculum within Early Childhood Education and Care services (ECEC). Especially, new knowledge, evidence informed tools and good practices in order to accommodate and accompany the growth of all children. In order to maintain the development of the Intercultural Early Childhood Education and Care Curriculum Design for Professionals (I.ECEC), we decided to use the method of action research (AR). Action research is most common for data collection tool that allows to involve a large number of participants and gather their knowledge, attitudes and approaches about a certain topic. It allows us to listen to the real

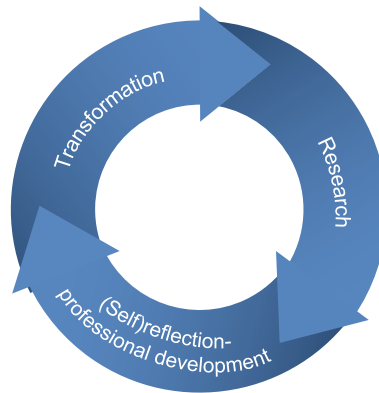
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educational needs of educators: to listen, to understand, to know, to gain awareness (and make it acquire to the research subjects), thus becoming able to make informed decisions to intervene on a reality, and how to improve it (Robasto, 2014).



The characteristics of action research is the combination of research and action in a cyclical process. Certain phases are repeated or sometimes performed simultaneously. The research starts with the observation of a problem, or something that you like and that you would like to have more of. You start thinking about the situation and design a possible action. Then you take that action, evaluate the outcome, and record what you've learned. Then you repeat this cycle. It is of course not the intention that you end up at the same point again, but that you have progressed further in tack-

ling the issue. The steps you take are partly determined by what occurs; on the basis of this you continuously adjust your actions. That means you can't predict the process and results in advance; they gradually take shape. The figure below shows how the different phases follow each other in the research process. You move back and forth between carrying out actions in practice and sharing new knowledge.



The development of the I.ECEC training curriculum followed specific phases, within the framework of an action research (AR) (Mc Naughton, Hughes, 2009). Action research is a participatory way of doing research, which allows to work *with* instead of *on* people. Involving actively ECEC professionals supports them in their (self)reflection processes. In this way AR links research to professional development and to transformation (Bove, 2009; Sharmahd, 2011).

The I.ECEC action research took shape through the phases de-

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scribed here below:

- The training has been ‘tried out’ through its implementation with ECEC professionals in Hungary and Italy during the project. The professionals of the Social Cooperative ARCA (Florence, Italy) and Józsefvárosi Egyesített Bölcsődék (JEB) (Budapest, Hungary) have been involved;
- The professionals have been observed (in experimental and control groups) and questioned with a questionnaire (see attachment Questionnaire) after the training to keep track of the ‘change process’;
- Professionals took part to focus groups aimed at getting insight about their training experience and participation to the project, in order to understand if and how this influenced their way of working with children and families;
- On the basis of these feedback and experience, the training curriculum has been re-adapted and elaborated in this publication.

The I.ECEC training curriculum has been implemented in Italy and in Hungary. The University of Florence, Department of Education, Languages, Intercultures, Literatures and Psychology (identified with the acronym FORLILPSI) coordinated the process in Italy, while the Faculty of Primary and Preschool Education of Budapest

(Elte Tok) guided the path in Hungary. The professionals involved work for the Social Cooperative ARCA (Florence, Italy) and the Józsefvárosi Egyesített Bölcsődék (JEB) (Budapest, Hungary). In Italy 27 professionals (pedagogical coordinators and practitioners) have been involved, and in Hungary 50. Due to COVID19 measures one training module for the educative professionals was conducted in Belgium. The Erasmus Brussels University of Applied Sciences and Arts in Belgium carried out one training module for the ECEC professionals in Hungary and Italy in this project such as the professionals of the Social Cooperative ARCA (Florence, Italy) and Józsefvárosi Egyesített Bölcsődék (JEB) (Budapest, Hungary) have been involved.

The researchers involved in the project based the curriculum on 1) the literature review carried out for the project through the analysis of Belgian (FI), Italian and Hungarian researches. The review underlines a strong need for developing 'intercultural competences' in ECEC (I.ECEC Literature Review, 2019, 11). In attachment the guidelines for the literature review in the form of a grid; 2) the exchange amongst the partners of the project concerning their practice; 3) international studies that focused on the competences needed by ECEC professionals today (as mentioned above).

The curriculum training is divided in 4 Modules with the aim to provide practical methods and tools. Each deepening crucial as-

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pects of intercultural education today. We start from a broad framework on our diverse societies, in order to highlight how the ECEC system should respond to this, considering the relationship with children, families, the community, and the constant reflective attitude needed to work in a context of diversity.

More specifically, the Modules are divided as follows:

1. First Module: Complex and Diverse Societies;
2. Second Module: Relationships with Families and Community in Inclusive ECEC centres;
3. Third Module: Inclusive and Participatory Approaches to Involve all Children;
4. Fourth Module: Flexible Practices, Innovation and Transformation.

In the I.ECEC experience, each module occupied one training day. However, in potential re-adaptations of this training, the duration of each module can be contextualized, as also the contents of the training, which should always be adapted to the local needs.

The modules followed normally a similar 'structure': 1) introduction to core concepts and topics related to the module; 2) participatory problem-centred and activity-oriented sessions (brainstorming, questions, interaction, experience exchange, small group activities, collective discussion and reflection on educational practices), with

the aim of stimulating the active participation of professionals and thus their engagement in transformation and the ownership of their own learning process.

The COVID-19 situation imposed a change in the 'modality' in which the training the observations, the focus group would be carried out (see last paragraph concerning observations and focus group). The training itself had to take place partly online, with a reduction of the 'interaction' possibilities amongst professionals. However, the training has been perceived as successful by the participants, and the pandemic situation, besides the limitations, also offered interesting new aspects and discoveries on which to reflect.

It needs to be underlined that (although here divided for the sake of clarity) these modules touch areas that are interconnected and can (and in some cases should) overlap with each other.

It is also important to note that, although the training represents a crucial support for the development of intercultural competences, in order to have a sustainable long-term impact on practice, staff should be constantly accompanied in its reflection on practice by a structure of pedagogical coaches/coordinators. Improving practice on a regular basis, taking diversity into account, can only happen when there is guided continuous group reflection on daily situations that the team discusses and learns to deal with, in a contextualised non-standardised way (Catarsi, 2011; Schön, 1983). The role of

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pedagogical coaches is crucial in this discourse, since professionals cannot be left alone in dealing with their questions. A facilitating guidance is needed, an 'external eye' that can help staff in putting reflection in practice. The main role of the director/coach in this process is to facilitate the reflection path of the team, by putting the group 'in crisis' (constructive crisis) and questioning ideas and practices in an inductive way, which is always needed in contexts of diversity.

And finally, the Open Educational Resources (OER) as an on-line platform has been developed through a collaboration between the project partners. It includes literature arising from the project outcomes which will be accessible for free towards a wide audience such as students (mainly from the teacher training department and early childhood education), educational professionals and executives in education. The main objective of this online platform is to contribute for the inclusion of disadvantaged children, preventing and reducing early school leaving, improving the quality and inclusiveness of early childhood education and care services, and developing the knowledge and competences of early childhood educators (see attachment Open Educational Resources Grid). Furthermore, this online platform is a compilation of various forms of sources such as books; scientific articles; workshops; practical activities; lectures; videos; artworks; reports; games; and educational tools for practice

oriented as well as academic purposes regarding Intercultural Early Childhood Education and Care. All the sources are divided in modules from this publication in order to use in conjunction, based on the findings of the international literature review and on the exchange with the partners:

- (1) Plural and Complex Societies;
- (2) Diversity, Inclusion and Participation in ECEC Services: Relationship with Families and Community;
- (3) Diversity, Inclusion and Participation in ECEC Services: What Approaches and Methods with Children;
- (4) Flexible Practices, Innovation and Transformation.

Based on these modules and keywords, users can make a search and find relevant sources in conjunction with this publication.

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MODULE 1: COMPLEX AND DIVERSE SOCIETIES

Prof. Dr. Clara Silva, Dr. Nima Sharmahd, Dr. Zoran Lapov and Dr. Angela Bajzáth

Theoretical framework

ECEC professionals need today to have complex competences, especially considering the diverse society we live in. Relational and reflective competences become crucial (Catarsi, 2003) and the ECEC workforce needs to be able to negotiate and deal with uncertainty (Urban, 2008). This is important also considering the relational competences practitioners need to develop towards families (Silva, 2011).

A systematic review conducted for Eurofound (Peeters et al., 2015, ii) points out that 'long term CPD (continuous professional development) interventions integrated into practice, such as ped-

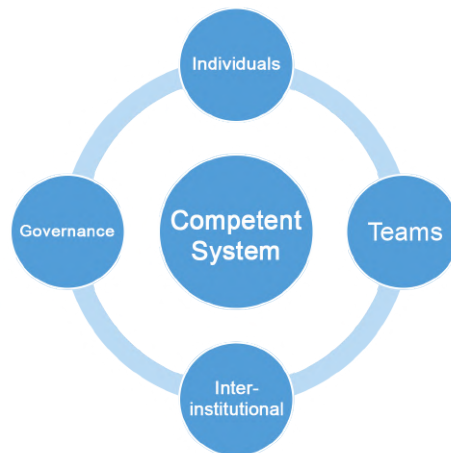
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agogical guidance and coaching in reflection groups, have been proved effective in very different contexts: in countries with a well-established system of ECEC provisions and a high level of qualification requirements for the practitioners, but also in countries with scarcely subsidised ECEC systems and low qualification requirements. [...] By enhancing practitioners' reflectivity both at individual and at team level, CPD activities allow ECEC professionals to strengthen their capacities and address areas for improvement in everyday practices'. The same systematic review (Peeters et al., 2015) states that there are several critical success factors that enable quality continuous professional development initiatives:

- a coherent pedagogical framework or learning curriculum that builds upon research and addresses local needs;
- the active involvement of practitioners in the process of improving educational practice, enacted within their settings;
- a focus on practice-based learning, taking place in constant dialogue with colleagues, parents and local communities;
- the provision of enabling working conditions, such as the availability of paid hours for non-contact time, and the presence of a pedagogical coach who facilitates practitioners' reflection in reference groups.

In this perspective, it is the combination of several components re-

lated to staff working conditions that improves the quality of ECEC services (Council of the European Union, 2019).



As also stated by the CoRe research (Urban et al., 2011; Vandebroek et al., 2016), commissioned by the European Commission DG for Education and Culture and carried out in 15 European Member States by the University of Ghent and the University of East London, ECEC quality is strongly linked to a professionally competent workforce. But a competent workforce has to take shape in a ‘competent system’, which includes collaboration between individuals, teams and institutions, as well as competent governance at policy level. ‘This conceptualisation extends the traditional understanding of competence as an individual property to the institutional and governance domain. Hence, our understanding of competence moves beyond the acquisition of knowledge and training of skills to

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embrace reflectiveness as its core' (Urban et al., 2012, 516). A competent system has to link staff's initial good education to the possibility of constantly reflecting on ideas and practices (Vandenbroeck et al., 2016).

In other words, the concept of quality should reflect the same complexity that lives in our society (Sharmahd, Peeters, Bushati, 2018), as also underlined by the 'ecological' theories of Bronfenbrenner (1986, 1979), which goes beyond the atomized vision of reality conceived as a coexistence between autonomous entities, to arrive instead at that post-modern rationality according to which the dynamics of the relationships in which each context is involved, constitute the very substance of its essence.

This complexity and constant transformation needs a workforce that is capable of dealing with differences and commonalities between people by valorising them. Practitioners/teachers should become able to negotiate, to deal with uncertainty, to reflect on the meaning of what they think and do (Schön, 1983), to question themselves.

This is crucial when taking into account families and children with a vulnerable background. Different studies have indeed underlined how ECEC services can be enriching contexts for everybody, but especially for children and families with disadvantaged background and/or migrants (EU Alliance for investing in Children, 2014; Maiki,

MODULE 1: COMPLEX AND DIVERSE SOCIETIES

Katsiaficas, McHugh, 2018).

Despite this consensus at the policy level, children from ethnic minority and/or low-income families are less often enrolled in ECEC centers and, when enrolled, these children are more often in provisions of poorer quality than their peers (Vandenbroeck, Lazzari, 2013). The main barriers to participation in ECEC are summarised by Lazzari and Vandenbroeck (2012) as follows: Low socio-economic status including a low level of parental education, low family income or parental unemployment; Living in poor neighbourhoods/rural areas/marginalised settlements; And ethnic minority background influenced by the length of time parents have been residing in the host country and their ability to master the host country language. Moreover, prejudice in diverse societies paves the way for ethnic- and cultural segregation.



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We need thus to make our services not just more welcoming for the ones that are already there, but also more accessible and reachable for the ones that are not there at the moment. How can we create services that are useful and desirable for diverse families and children?

As underlined by Lazzari and Vandebroek (2014), this can happen by investing in five aspects:

1. *Availability* (quality services, especially in disadvantaged areas);
2. *Sustainability* (services for everybody);
3. *Accessibility* (working on language and bureaucratic barriers, criteria for waiting lists, etc.);
4. *Utility* (giving voice to families and their needs, time flexibility ecc.);
5. *Comprehensibility* (sharing and negotiating meanings and practices with families).

In order to realise this, we need to invest in competent systems as a whole, and we need to connect the socio-pedagogical and the political levels.

Contents of the first module

The first Module is an introductory one, which aims at exploring the above mentioned themes in order to give a framework to the whole training. While providing a frame of reference related to the above mentioned themes, this Module (through presentations, inspirations and practical experiences) introduces participants to the subjects that will be more thoroughly addressed in the following Modules.

First of all the notion of plural and complex society, and the ensuing crucial role of ECEC services as spaces aimed at promoting diversity, equity and democracy. The focus is here on the importance of services accessible for everyone, with particular reference to families and children with a vulnerable background (Vandenbroeck, Lazzari, 2014). Today more than ever, diversity and complexity characterise the societies we live in. This Module will shed clarity on the multiple meanings of this diversity, and on the need to give it a voice and value it. It is about bringing the notion of diversity back to a 'human' level by emphasizing that it is not a question of meeting/clashing between different 'cultures', but between culturally different people (Rossi, 2004). As for ECEC services themselves, the paradigm suggesting the implementation of intercultural education *only* in presence of children/families of 'other' origins should be overcome in favour of a transversal approach aimed at promoting

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attention to diversities and similarities in daily practice, all the time and with all children/families (Silva, 2011). It is about the so-called 'progressive universalism', which demands inclusion for all diversities and similarities, with a particular attention to children and families coming from a vulnerable background. Working in the perspective of progressive universalism means working towards 'inclusion for all', but without being *'colour blind'*. This approach is certainly cognisant of migration phenomena and social changes occurred in recent decades, as well as of concomitant effects in terms of wealth/poverty gaps, social inequalities, discrimination. At the same time, it invites not to confine ourselves to a 'target' approach, but to embrace a broad inclusion perspective (Murray, Dignan, 2011). As stated in the literature review carried out for the I.ECEC project: 'Intercultural education is not a branch in itself of educational sciences, nor a particular form of education aimed at a specific category of learners. It is rather a critical reflective perspective crossing the fields of educational practice' (I.ECEC Literature Review, 2019, 6). That is why the needed competences are not 'special ones', they are what each practitioner should develop in order to work with 'people'. Nevertheless, it is important today to stress the fact that the growing diversity and the inequalities present in our societies make it particularly urgent to pay specific attention to this domain. Within this perspective, attention should be also given to the inclusion of children

with special needs. For effective education, it is essential that those who are involved in intercultural education also experience the educational and institutional effects of support. Therefore, children and their parents need supportive treatment in all areas for integration, as well as institutional support that is adapted to the physical and mental well-being of the child (Bajzáth, Bereczki, 2017).

ECEC services are confronted today with a bi-directionally oriented challenge: on the one hand, they have to develop strategies aimed at inclusion and participation of children/families with a vulnerable background in order to mitigate the risks of exclusion and discrimination (since research has shown that quality childcare services are important for all children, but particularly for those coming from a vulnerable background, who often attend quality ECEC services less than others) (Bennet, 2012; European Commission, 2013; Vandebroek, Lazzari, 2014). On the other hand, services should try to promote a 'non targetised' approach, far from the stereotypes that could help amplifying the risks of exclusion instead of combating them. In this very sense, it is necessary to invest in strategies capable of promoting and valuing everyone's diversities/similarities, dialogue, negotiation, and active participation of children, families, communities (Bove, Sharmahd, 2020).

Secondly, a broader view of the 'competent system' needed to develop and accompany this type of competences (Urban et al.,

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2011): in order to realise what mentioned above, it is important to be aware that investing in individual competences of ECEC professionals is crucial, but not enough, as highlighted by the CoRe research (Urban et al., 2011). In fact, it is necessary to create 'competent systems' that are capable of orienting the competences of individual workers. A competent system should be able to invest in diverse dimensions of the ECEC system, distributed at individual, team, inter-institutional, and political (governance) levels, paying attention to both initial and in-service trainings for ECEC staff (Urban et al., 2011). In this sense, the I.ECEC training is a 'puzzle piece' that should be able to look at the broader system needed to have a long-term impact on educational practice. In order to promote competent systems, supporting services capable of 'staying' constructively in diversity, it is necessary to invest at both the socio-pedagogical and the political level, with particular reference to:

- ✓ Quality initial and in-service training, particularly focused on developing relational and reflective competences.
- ✓ Creating networks: exchange activities, shared trainings, job shadowing experiences, participation in local and international projects, etc., enabling services not to feel isolated self-referential monads, but a part of a support and exchange network.
- ✓ Linking research and ECEC services: research experiences,

especially the participation-based ones (e.g. participatory action research), should be able to link research with professional development and thus transformation, within a fruitful contamination of theoretical research and practice (Bove, 2009).

- ✓ Reflection during child-free hours (not present in all EU countries): in order to provide quality, it is necessary to learn to negotiate, communicate, transform practices, reflect (individually and in group). Professionals should be able to '*think* children and families' in order to turn their reflection into practice, and re-think it back, in a continuous circular motion. To do so, child-free hours are needed.
- ✓ Pedagogical support: besides in-service trainings, staff should be accompanied by a contextualised and continuous support given by pedagogical coordinators which support reflection on a daily basis (Catarsi, 2011).
- ✓ Attention to fostering availability, sustainability, accessibility, utility, comprehensibility in ECEC centres (Lazzari, Vandebroek, 2014).
- ✓ Promoting policies able to guarantee the presence of cultural and socio-economic diverse families in ECEC services (e.g. critical reflection on criteria for creating waiting lists in ser-

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vices).

- ✓ Promoting policies able to guarantee the presence of cultural and socio-economic diverse staff in ECEC services.
- ✓ Promoting policies able to guarantee gender balance in ECEC services.



And finally, competences needed to work in a plural context: cultural, relational, reflective and methodological competences should be included in a holistic and transformative approach (Catarsi, 2003). Taking into consideration the complexity of ECEC systems

today, ECEC staff needs to be capable of 'staying' in diversity by valuing it'. To do so, professionals should be supported in developing (Catarsi, 2003):

- ✓ Cultural competences linked to the 'knowledge' of the reality characterising contemporary societies and ECEC services;
- ✓ Relational competences based on active listening (Rogers, 2003, 1951), non-judgement, dialogue, negotiation;
- ✓ Reflective competences needed to constantly (re)think upon the adopted educational practices, to improve and transform them by following the needs of the children and families inhabiting ECEC services;
- ✓ Methodological competences in planning, observing, documenting, evaluating, allowing to be both intentional and flexible at the same time.

All together, these competences refer to a holistic approach, capable of valuing all dimensions of a child's life and development. In other words, it is about valuing the aspects related to emotional/affective, cognitive, social development. This means following an *educare* perspective (Broström, 2006; Hayes, 2008; Jensen, 2018), which considers education and care as inextricably linked and not hierarchically against each other, as highlighted by the European Quality Framework for ECEC too (Council of the Eu-

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ropean Union, 2019). Finally, working in a holistic perspective means adopting a democratic co-educative approach (Rayna, Rubio, 2010), able to create enriching partnerships with families and communities.

Within this first Module the above mentioned aspects are illustrated by using also concrete examples and through active exchange amongst the participants on their own experience, with the aim of raising awareness concerning the framework we are working in.

Competences to be developed

By the end of the 1st Module, participants are expected to have a clearer picture of the reference frame in which their professional role takes shape when working in diverse contexts. More specifically, the Module supports ECEC professionals in developing the following competences/knowledge:

- Understanding contemporary European societies, especially in terms of socio-economic, cultural, and linguistic diversities and similarities.
- Perceiving personal and sociocultural identities as fluid and ever-changing phenomena.

MODULE 1: COMPLEX AND DIVERSE SOCIETIES

- Understanding social issues faced by migrant, minority or vulnerable families, along with possible consequences in terms of exclusion and/or discrimination, as well as the role that ECEC services may play in fighting these phenomena.
- Understanding the importance of promoting an *educare* holistic approach with children and families.
- Understanding the importance of adopting an approach able to value diversities and similarities by investing in specific cultural, relational, reflective, and methodological competences as ECEC professionals.
- Valuing a perspective of 'progressive universalism' while working with children and families.
- Reading the role and meaning of ECEC services within a broader competent system which needs to work towards quality on different levels.

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MODULE 2: RELATIONSHIPS WITH FAMILIES AND COMMUNITY in INCLUSIVE ECEC CENTRES

Prof. Dr. Clara Silva, Dr. Giada Prisco and Dr. Sarolta Darvay

Theoretical framework

This second Module aims at supporting professionals' awareness of the fundamental relationship that should link ECEC services to the plurality of families inhabiting them, as well as to the community they are in. While working with children holistically, by respecting their diversities, the relationship with their families and with the territory cannot be ignored.

Although many professionals, researchers, and policy makers concur that family engagement is an important aspect of quality

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ECEC, and that parents should be considered first educators of their children, the goals and the underlying approaches differ quite a lot (Van Laere et al., 2018). Often literature and policy frameworks seem to still view parents (and especially societally disadvantaged families) as incompetent and not involved or interested enough in their child's education (Brougère, 2010, Van Laere et al., 2018). Doucet (2011) for example pointed out that ways to increase parental engagement are often codes or implicit strategies to socialise underprivileged parents into the mainstream white middle-class norms. Indeed, the growth of attention towards 'family education/support' and towards the relationship between ECEC centers and families still reveals gaps concerning a real co-educative (partnership) perspective (Rayna, Rubio, 2010). As Canella (1997) identified over twenty years ago: 'educators and researchers have not yet constructed a language that gives the message that we want to learn from, and with, parents and their children' (Canella, 1997, p.107).

More and more often professionals ask 'what are the borders' of this relationship, or have questions for which they would like to have quick solutions. Knowing that fixed and generalized answers don't exist, it is important to support professionals in 'staying in their questions' in order to find their own specific and contextualized answers. This can happen by supporting the individual and group reflection,

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also through specific methods. Reflection in ECEC centers have a strong connection with observation and pedagogical documentation which can help in contextualizing our questions in order to find specific answers (Malavasi, Zoccatelli, 2011; Galardini, 2003). In this way we can transform a *formal* parent participation (made by meeting moments that are planned but empty in communication) in a *real* one. A 'real' relationship allows authenticity, which also means allowing 'risks' (for example of misunderstandings or disagreements), here seen as potential 'constructive risks'. In Hungary for example, this approach is facilitated by the so called 'own educator system', according to which each child has an educator as reference. This professional takes care of four to six children, and he/she is the first contact point also for their families. In this way,

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trust can be supported and stimulated, by investing in a stable, secure, and privileged relationship (Professional Rules of Education and Care, 2012, Early Childhood Education and Care: Specificities of the Hungarian System, 2012). Also in Italy this practice is present (*educatore di riferimento*), although in the last decades many contexts switched to a 'system of reference' (*sistema di riferimento*) in which there is one professional that takes care of a small group of children/families at the very beginning, but then the relationship is very soon 'expanded' to the rest of the group, and children are invited themselves to 'choose' which peers and adults will be their reference point (Catarsi, Fortunati, 2005).

Within both systems, the crucial point is being able to create a relationship of trust with children and families. Once again, ECEC professionals who are able to negotiate, to deal with uncertainty, to reflect on the meaning of what they think and do (Schön, 1983), to question themselves, are also the ones that can better communicate with families and build fruitful relationships of trust. It is impossible, nowadays, to define a single model of 'the family', 'the child', 'the ECEC centre'. At the same time, as pointed out by the international research *Children Crossing Borders* (Tobin et al., 2010), ECEC services are places where the different beliefs and practices related to these concepts are exchanged in a more or less explicit way. This means that it becomes urgent to reflect on them, in order to become

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aware of ours and other beliefs and practices, and re-negotiate their meanings in a democratic process (Mantovani & Gattico, 1998).

ECEC professionals need, on the one hand, to recognise and value diversities and similarities characterising the families attending ECEC services, and to reflect on what methods and approaches to adopt in order to promote dialogue and collaboration by valuing these diversities/similarities. On the other hand, professionals and services need to make themselves 'reachable' and inclusive for children and families not (yet) attending, with particular reference to those with a vulnerable background. ECEC services become thus 'democratic micro-societies' set in a specific community. They are potentially intercultural spaces, places for dialogue and exchange, contexts where links and exchanges among similar and different parenthoods are to be co-constructed (Dahlberg, Moss, 2005).

ECEC centers can then be a 'first window towards the world', creating what the French ACEPP (*Association des Collectifs Enfants Parents Professionnels*) defines 'transitional space between families and society' (Mony, 1993). In Italy several contexts are working in this direction, especially from the 80ies, when the first 'new typologies' of ECEC initiatives were born, such as *Tempo per le famiglie* in Milan and *Aree Bambini* in Pistoia. These centers were and are seen as 'meeting places' with the socio-pedagogical function of creating a 'community', and thus an answer to the feeling of

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loneliness of many families nowadays. The ECEC centers as well tried to underline their role as relational places for adults and children (Catarsi, Fortunati, 2005).

Family participation can be stimulated just by practitioners who participate themselves in a co-educative perspective (Catarsi, Fortunati, 2005; Rayna, Rubio, 2010).

This co-educative and participatory approach is the one we wish to promote within the I.ECEC training, by considering families as the first educators of their children and as real 'partners' within a democratic perspective (Rayna, Rubio, 2010).

Contents of the module

The contents of this second Module aim to value and enhance the knowledge, the relational and reflective capacities of educators with regard to the abovementioned topics. ECEC professionals are required to: 1) know the context in which the service is located, the types of families attending ECEC services and not, the possible relationships with the community and the territory; 2) be able to 'put themselves in crisis', to 'stay in their own questions', to value their own doubts, in order to constructively co-transform the educational related to their relationship with the families (Urban, 2008); 3) recognise families as 'first educators' of their children, which means

adopting an attitude of respect, acknowledgement, dialogue, negotiation, through non-judgemental communication methods, based on active listening.

Specifically, the Module focuses on:

Contextualisation and social analysis

Exploring ways to get to know the profiles of the families present in the community: who are the families attending and not attending the ECEC service? What are their characteristics (socio-economic status, origins, languages, needs, etc.)? Exploring what it means to consider ECEC services as democratic micro-societies, open, plural places, located in a specific territory. And also, getting knowledge and experiencing ways to work in a 'community perspective' capable of promoting a fruitful relationship with the territory.

Reflexivity

Experiencing ways to get to know one's own potentials, borders, worries, fears towards the relationship with families. This would be a first step to become aware of them, and thus to deal with them, individually and in the group. The aim is to give voice to what professionals think/feel, in order to elaborate it and to negotiate it amongst colleagues. Ultimately, this process should support

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professionals in opening up towards families, not by ignoring one's own fears/worries, but by giving them a place.

Getting knowledge and experiencing ways to recognize a plurality of practices, values, languages, expressions, social structures, attitudes/behaviours (including one's own), that must be valued and brought into dialogue with each other (Silva, 2011).

Getting knowledge and experiencing ways to invest in a way of thinking and acting that is not stereotyped towards families, but oriented towards respect and openness, through awareness of the existence of other behaviours, practices, and values.



Plural relationships with plural families

Exploring how to create a respectful and constructive dialogue with families, regarded as first educators of their children, within a frame-

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work of partnership and co-education able to link home and ECEC services (Raya, Rubio, 2010).

Getting to know communicative strategies to dialogue with families in an open non-judgemental way, through active listening. For example the encouraging communicative strategies proposed by the therapist Carl Rogers (1994, 1951) can be here very fruitful. In this respect, it is important to pay attention also to the multiple languages of families, and find ways to communicate also with the ones that don't speak the dominant language (for example with the support of linguistic mediators). Also translating the documentation and materials in different languages is important as way to show respect and interest in communicating with everybody.

Exploring which meeting moments to create with families and how to organize them in a democratic participative way capable of giving voice to diversities and similarities (individual formal and informal meetings; small and large group meetings; thematic groups; parties, workshops etc.). The role foreseen for the professionals in these occasions should also be explored, in particular by:

- Exploring how to create ECEC centres that are meeting places not just amongst professionals and families, but also amongst families themselves.
- Getting knowledge and exploring ways to invest in: 1) valuing and promoting the multilingualism of families in ECEC cen-

tres; 2) communicate with multilingual children and families (e.g. multilingual documentation, involvement of linguistic and cultural mediators, etc.) (Silva, 2004).

These themes are explored through the module with presentation of the framework, inspirational good practices and exchange/exercises amongst the participants.

Competences to be developed

This second Module should on the one hand contribute to strengthen specific knowledge about the diverse context in which the ECEC centre is; on the other hand, the Module should develop relational and reflective competences needed to work with families and community in a plural and complex context. In particular professionals will be supported in:

- Developing the ability to rethink educational practices with families and community from an intercultural perspective.
- Developing the sensitivity necessary to recognise and value families as first educators.
- Improving communication skills (based on active listening and not judging) to employ with families, bearing their diversities and commonalities in mind.

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- Developing the ability to think ECEC services as meeting places with and between families, as well as the ability to promote working methods that support this.
- Developing awareness on strategies/methods to create/strengthen the relationship between ECEC centre and community.

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MODULE 3: PARTICIPATORY AND INCLUSIVE APPROACHES TO INVOLVE ALL CHILDREN

Drs. Muhammet Safa Göregen, Dr. Nima Sharmahd, Anna Bereczkiné Dr. Záluszkí

Theoretical framework

Though intersecting in various points, Modules 2 and 3 provide two different standpoints, in order to illustrate as comprehensively as possible the multiple dimensions of an inclusive approach. While Module 2 focuses on families, Module 3 proposes a similar participative perspective by focusing on children.

ECEC centres are relational contexts, *in primis*. They are meeting places for adults and for children. It is important to value this identity of ECEC services, and to support professionals' competences in promoting the dialogue with *all* children and amongst

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them.

An ECEC approach based on valuing diversity is a holistic democratic one, based on the concept of *educare*. As already mentioned, the latter is a way of working with children, in which well-being, learning and playing are seen as inseparable and equally important, as the Hungarian paediatrician Emmi Pikler underlined (1979). It is more than the simple assurance that children feel emotionally and physically well within the ECEC setting (Broström, 2006; Jensen, 2018; Hayes, 2008; Noddings, 2005; Van der Mespel et al., 2020). It also represents belonging and creating an inclusive environment for a diversity of children (Van Laere, Vandebroek, 2016). *Educare* concerns addressing the needs of children as well as their rights in a holistic way.

In the last years, the concept of *educare* gained more and more attention in the international debate about ECEC. Also the European Quality Framework (Council of the European Union, 2019) underlines its importance, by focusing on how ECEC quality should be linked to a holistic approach in which education and care are intertwined. However, at the European level, there is a general trend to treat children as ‘academic learners’ at younger ages (Bennet, 2013). This means that, very often, a hierarchy between care and education exists, in line with the concept of ‘schoolification’ (Moss, 2013). In the I.ECEC approach, we advocate for an *edu-*

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care/holistic approach capable of valuing the 100 languages of children (Malaguzzi, 1987), meaning all their ways of being and expressing themselves. This is ultimately the essence of an intercultural inclusive approach willing to value diversity and commonalities.

Within this framework, a review of ECEC/school programmes is needed, by valuing flexible intentional practices with children. Also in this case, like it is for the relationship with families, communicative competences are crucial to create a relationship of respect and dialogue, far from a judgemental attitude. Professionals are required to be able to listen and observe before acting (Galardini, 2003).



Contents of the module

The contents of this Module focus on how to value children's voices, their interests, their stories, their needs, their relationships, within their right to learn, play, care. The Module implies exploring strategies for several topics.

Gaining knowledge and competences concerning valuing an *educare*/holistic perspective of working with children. In this perspective, learning, playing, caring are intertwined, and professionals need to be aware of what this means in practice and how to value it (Broström, 2006; Jensen, 2018; Hayes, 2008, Noddings, 2005). Concretely this implies giving importance to the routines moments as well as to all other moments of the day, being aware of the fact that learning, playing and caring happens continuously for children. Especially for the routine moments, it is important to take the points of views of families into account, in order to support children's well-being, by respecting the diverse ways in which they are taken of at home. Creating a connection ECEC centre-home on these subjects is essential in order to promote a co-educative approach.

Acknowledging and valuing differences/similarities among children in ECEC services. This is linked to the already discussed importance of valuing the diversities of families. Being aware of the diversity and similarities that children carry help professionals in valu-

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ing them instead of proposing standardized methods/approaches. Several practical ways can be found in order to give voice to children in daily practice (Bolognesi et al., 2006). Also in this case we refer to diversity in a broad sense and involving all children.

Focusing on the notion of 'multiple identity': each one of us has an identity, which proves to be multifaceted and in transformation. It is important that adults do not restrict children by recognising only a part of their identity. The identity of each person needs to be seen in its holistic complexity, giving children the opportunity to express their '100 languages' (Malaguzzi, 1987), and the multiple forms of their own personality. It is important to 'recognize' each child, which starts with what can be seen as 'simple things' in practice. For example calling children with their name, trying to pronounce all names correctly, represents an important step for recognition. It can be interesting to start from the meaning and history of the names of the professionals themselves, in order to support them in becoming aware of the importance of it. A name brings stories, similarities and differences with others. On this level, it can be interesting to ask families the same thing about their name, but also about the one they gave to their child. Sharing these 'identity stories' can create relational connections.

'Thinking' children as complex beings, and, being able to communicate with them accordingly, without reductive labelling. It be-

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comes important, for example, to know how to distinguish ‘description’ and ‘interpretation’, when communicating with children (and also with adults), knowing that description opens up to dialogue, whereas interpretation confines events to rather precise meanings that might be negotiated (Di Giandomenico et al., 2011). The words and the language we use reveal our more or less implicit thoughts, so it is important to be aware of what kind of communication we are putting in place.

Communicating with children in an open, dialogic manner, while respecting their stories, interests, needs. Also in this case, specific communication methods/tools can be used. For example the encouraging method of Carl Rogers (with particular reference to mirroring and summarising techniques) who indicates active listening as an effective way to be in dialogue with children and adults (Rogers, 1994, 1951). Such an approach is particularly suitable for a plural context, as it promotes a non-judgemental, respectful interaction, based on listening the others. This way, everyone’s stories/ideas/feelings are being valued.

Giving value to ‘playing’ in a plural way, by supporting creative non standardized games, and by giving children the possibility to express themselves in their ways of playing, without standardizing them. Children live by playing. It is their way to get to know the others and the world. That is why it is crucial to value playing in

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ECEC practice, and to see opportunities in it to give voice at the same time to diversities and similarities (Bolognesi et al., 2006).

Valuing multilingualism amongst children, by giving value to home languages (Silva, 2011). This can be done in many 'small' ways. Professionals can value with non-verbal behaviour (a smile) the fact that a child is saying something in his/her home language; parents can be invited to read stories in their language, songs can be sang in different languages etc. But besides which 'practice' will be implemented, what is important is that professionals work within a non 'folkloristic' approach, able to promote inclusion and value all children's languages.

Supporting communication/interaction between children themselves. Besides being in dialogue with children, professionals support children in their own interactions, which is also a way to learn to be together, amongst differences and commonalities. For example how a professional acts during a conflict amongst children (does she/he intervene immediately? Does she/he let them find their own 'solutions'? Does she/he accompany them?) is crucial in order for children to learn to 'stay' in their relationships and actively participate (Braga et al., 1994). In order to learn to be in relationships with others, it is recommended to give children time and to support them in finding their own solutions, without directly intervening, unless necessary. Professionals are supported in promoting relation-

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ships among children based on mutual respect and dialogue. The training wants to help professionals in reflecting on the importance of supporting children in gaining their relational autonomy (how to intervene or not; how to value everyone's ideas/interventions and put them in dialogue with each other; how to value differences and similarities among children without falling into stereotyping, etc.).

Fostering inclusive approaches for all. Within a progressive universalism perspective, professionals need to support non targeted approaches, which are at the same time making sure that everybody can take part. This also means fostering children's active participation and involvement. For example, the way a professional approaches a child that doesn't speak the dominant language during a circle moment (is he/she left alone? Is he/she involved? In which way?) defines the attitude/knowledge/competence of that professional in dealing with (all) children's participation.

The contents of this Module aim to value and enhance educators' knowledge, their relational and reflective capacities with regard to the aforementioned topics. These themes are explored within this Module through a presentation of the framework, inspirational good practices and exchange/exercises amongst the participants.



Competences to be developed

Through this Module, ECEC professionals are supported in getting to know how to:

- Promote an *educare* holistic approach to children that interconnects learning, caring, playing.
- Relate to children by using respectful and encouraging communication methods, able to promote everyone's participation and involvement.
- Value individual identities within a collective space, or rather give voice to both individuals and group.

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- Value individual identities within a collective space, or rather give voice to both individuals and group.
- Support children's interactions/relationships *among* themselves, by valuing differences and similarities, and conveying an attitude of respect, mutual knowledge, dialogue (Bolognesi et al., 2006).
- Recognizing the value of multilingualism amongst children and finding concrete strategies to support it (for example by having books in multiple languages and promoting activities on it).

MODULE 4: FLEXIBLE PRACTICES, INNOVATION and TRANSFORMATION

Dr. Nima Sharmahd, Dr. Miklós Lehmann, Bert Wastijn

Theoretical framework

The diversity characterising today ECEC services entails the need of flexible practices, ready to be transformed, to dialogue with the needs and interests of children and families, to negotiate, and to be readjusted. This Module contributes to developing competences aimed at flexibility transformation of educational practices. In particular, it is about developing methodological and reflective competences aimed at creating evolutionary and holistic planning, which grows and changes with children and families, while following intentional flexible guidelines based on the vision of the ECEC cen-

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tre (Catarsi, Fortunati, 2005). Planning in a flexible way does not mean indeed leaving things to chance. On the contrary, on a pedagogically strong intentional basis, the planning opens up to diverse voices that staff, children, and families bring along. To do so, ECEC professionals should be able to 'put themselves in crisis' (constructive crisis), to 'stay in their own questions', to value their own doubts, in order to constructively co-transform the educational practice (Urban, 2008; Sharmahd, Peeters, Bushati, 2018).

In order to work in such a frame, spaces and materials must necessarily be 'rich', open and plural too. Rich does not mean 'full'. More than else, it is a question of providing spaces that are 'thought', meaningful and 'readable', capable of offering children places that meet their different needs in a holistic way.



The last few decades have seen a growing interest in the role of physical environment in ECEC. Alongside staff (who) and planning (what), the physical environment/materials of a service (where) is in fact recognized as a critical aspect through which ECEC quality could be implemented (Council of the European Union, 2019; Melhuish, 2016; OECD, 2012).

Attention to ECEC spaces has increased even more since the Italian pedagogue and psychologist Loris Malaguzzi, founder of the Reggio Emilia approach, defined physical environment as the ‘third educator’: he assumed that, besides adults and children, features and organization of spaces could convey educational meanings and affect children’s growth in the early years (Edwards & Gandini, 2018; Malaguzzi, 1987). Similarly, the Italian architect Mario Botta has defined the construction of a school building as ‘the first pedagogical act’ (Botta, Crepet, & Zois, 2007, p.73), highlighting the need to consider the physical spaces in which education takes place, even before constructing them (Educas Literature Review, 2019¹).

Contents of the module

The last Module aims at exploring topics related to the flexible and transformative competences needed today in planning daily activ-

¹<https://www.issa.nl/content/meanings-spaces-ecec-centres-literature-review>

ities and in organizing spaces/materials in ECEC centres. More specifically, the Module focuses on:

Planning, observing, documenting, evaluating in a plural and flexible way

- ✓ Exploring the concept of evolutionary and holistic planning, characterised by educational intentionality, yet flexible and open to the 'unexpected' that children and families bring along, and to diversities that today more than ever characterise ECEC services (Catarsi, 2003).
- ✓ Exploring and learning how to observe children and contexts, aiming at monitoring educational practices, and readapting/transforming them when needed.
- ✓ Exploring how to use pedagogical documentation aimed at valuing diversities and similarities, and at investing in communication, negotiation, dialogue, and co-construction of meanings.
- ✓ Exploring how to evaluate practices with the aim of re-planning, taking into account needs and interests of children and families.
- ✓ Exploring how to promote reflective competences, knowing that 'standard solutions' don't exist for children and families,

but only contextualised answers on which constantly rethink.

Investing in plural ‘educare’ spaces and materials

Exploring how to create pedagogically ‘rich’ spaces able to value differences and similarities of children and families. In this perspective it is important to invest in all spaces, and to value also the ones related to the routine moments (sleeping, eating, hygiene).

Exploring how to guarantee a ‘place’ for everyone. It is for example important to be aware of the fact that children need to have ‘individual spaces’ (for example personal boxes, or a personal recognisable bed etc.) within the collective spaces. In the same way, it is important to know that ECEC centres are places for children, but also for their families, which means that spaces (for example chairs, sofas etc.) for families should be foreseen too.

Exploring how to guarantee plural materials able to give voice to diversities and similarities. For instance dolls of the two genders and with different skin colours, books in different languages, as well as diverse types of materials to play with. Following a *less can be more* approach, classrooms can be organized with a selected choice of materials (especially not structured) that gives ‘mental space’ to children to discover and learn. In order to facilitate children’s recognition of the ECEC place as a familiar space, pictures of children and their families can be hanged on the walls and used to talk with chil-

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dren about their home. Children can also be invited to bring materials/toys from home, to create daily 'bridges' ECEC centre/home.



Competences to be developed

The fourth and last Module contributes to acquiring reflective and methodological competences needed to plan in a transformative way, and to rethink the organisation of spaces and materials in a plural and flexible manner. Specifically, it is about developing the ability to plan educational activities in an open and flexible *educare* holistic approach; Developing the ability to reflect and negotiate meanings and methods related to educational planning; Developing the ability

MODULE 4: FLEXIBLE PRACTICES, INNOVATION and TRANSFORMATION

to observe, document, plan, and evaluate in a circular and transformative way; And developing the ability to organise and transform educational spaces and materials, taking into account diversities of children and families.

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How did ECEC staff experience the professional development path: voices and observations during and after the training

As mentioned in the introduction, the I.ECEC training curriculum has been 'tested' in two countries namely, Italy and in Hungary within the action research process. This path foresaw:

- observations done after the training with experimental (professional that followed the training) and control groups (colleagues of the same ECEC centre that did not follow the training), in order to capture the possible 'changes' in the attitude of the professionals
- a focus group (one per country) with the professionals involved

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in the training, aiming at: 1) clarifying some key points that came out from the observations and that were more difficult to interpret; 2) giving a feedback to the teams concerning the results of the observations, in order to create a reflection moment as part of the action research transformation process; 3) getting a feedback concerning how the professionals experienced the training and the whole participation to the project, and what kind of impact they think this had on their practice. Focus groups (Acocella, 2008) can indeed respond at the same time to a research need and to a professional development/support need, linking research to self-reflection and thus to transformation, which is the main goal of action research (Bove, 2009; Sharmahd, 2011).

In the next pages we explain the method used and what comes out from the analysis of the observations and of the focus groups in the two countries, in order to capture the meaning that participating to this action research had for the professionals involved, and thus ultimately for the wellbeing and learning of children and families. The analysis is enriched by certain concepts expressed by the professionals during the training itself, which might be interesting to give an insight concerning the level of reflection that characterized the participants to this project.



Observations and focus group: the method

Observing is an intentional, targeted, chosen look at situations, which translates into the description of the characteristics of a particular event/behaviour and the conditions in which it occurs (Camaioni, 1990). It helps opening up different interpretations on the same situation, which supports professionals' capability to reflect on their practice, to (re)plan it and transform it.

In the I.ECEC project, initially the observational methodology was conceived as a central part of the experimentation of the project: in particular, it was agreed that, after the I.ECEC training, video observations would be carried out by collaborators of the Universities in Italy and Hungary, in some of the involved ECEC ser-

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vices, in order to capture possible differences between experimental group (professionals that followed the training²) and control group (professionals that did not follow the training). A specific *ad hoc* grid (See attachment 1: Observation Grid) has been created by the research team to conduct the observations. The hypothesis was to verify the presence of significant differences regarding specific indicators relevant from an intercultural perspective between the experimental and the control conditions. After that, videos would be codified and analysed thanks to the use of a specific grid created by the partners. The sudden COVID-19 pandemic changed the scenario on different levels in the project, including the possibility of doing observations with external people (the researchers) in the services. The research team, together with the ECEC centres involved, agreed to still carry on the observations, but without external people involved: the professionals themselves would realize video-observations of their practice, and then the research team from the University would analyse and discuss them with the teams involved. This new 'creative' solution turned out to be an interesting alternative for the staff involved, because it 'obliged' professionals to be even more actively involved in their own learning path, by making the videos themselves, selecting the moments to be framed etc. In Italy, four ECEC centres managed by the ARCA Socio Cooperative

²See annex for full observation grid.

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were selected in order to carry out video-observations concerning two moments, each for an educator who participated in the I.ECEC training and for one who did not participate. In Hungary three ECEC centres were involved, with one educator who took part to the training, and one who didn't. However, it needs to be noted that the training included all ECEC centres, and probably professionals talked to each other and influenced each other practice. Obviously, even though we analysed an experimental and a control group, when working in the socio-educational field, many factors (not always definable) influence people's actions.

Each educator was observed in a sequence of actions involving *toilet / hygiene activities* and *structured activities*, in agreement with the partners. This choice was made taking into account the interests of the professionals/coaches of ARCA and the COVID-19 restrictions, also considering that parents could not come in the centre. This means that not all the aspects 'touched' through the training and the project have been observed. However the observations, together with the focus groups, gave to the research team and the professionals themselves enough interesting materials to further reflect on, and to get insight on the effects of the I.ECEC project on practice.

Between October and December 2020, sixteen video-observations were recorded in Italy: in each of the 4 selected

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services, 2 moments were recorded for the educator who participated in the I.ECEC training and 2 moments for the educator did not. In both cases, the videos were filmed by a trained educator. In Hungary, 15 videos were produced on the process of movement development, cleaning, paper theatre, gluing, sculpting and craftwork.

After the video-recording, in the Italian pilot, the research team collected the videos from each services, and afterwards, each video was viewed, codified and analysed through the analysis grid built ad hoc with the partners. Qualitative reflections about the data took place, followed by the focus group with the professionals. The focus group has been coordinated by the University team, and 10 professionals took part. The focus group has been carried out following a grid prepared in advance, with specific questions on some aspects of the video-observations that resulted more difficult to interpretate. Besides, during the focus group, the research team also asked to the professionals how they experienced the training and which changes (if any) they notice in their practice. In the Hungarian pilot, the videos were collected and then analysed following analysis criteria developed also with the teams. After the qualitative analysis, the focus group discussion questions were developed, touching on the contents of the pilot training and the video observations.

Obviously the COVID-19 situation made the process more com-

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plicated both in implementing the observations and in carrying on the focus group, which had to happen online. It also needs to be taken into account that the moments observed refer to a 'particular' situation, since the COVID-19 pandemic obliged the services to suddenly transform their daily practice. However, we consider this crisis also as an opportunity to put in place intercultural competences, exactly because of the emergency of a situation that obliges professionals to 'see' things with new eyes and invent new practice, which is an essential competence when working in contexts of diversity.

The voices of the professionals involved: what comes out from observations and focus groups

Educare approach and communication that values diversity

The observations carried out both in Italy and in Hungary show that an *educare* approach (a holistic interconnection between education and care) (Broström, 2006; Jensen, 2018; Hayes, 2008; Noddings, 2005) is present within the practices of the professionals involved. Both in Italy and in Hungary, the differences between the control and the experimental groups observed are not very big. In Italy this is probably the result of the work of the pedagogical coordination system of ARCA, which continuously promotes reflection on practice

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and professional development activities. In Hungary it is maybe also due to the fact that all ECEC centres were involved in the training and professionals exchanged impressions/ideas during the whole project.

However, some differences in the attitude are noticeable between the two groups, showing the importance of keeping on offering in-service training opportunities, and participatory research projects (like action-research) with the active involvement of ECEC staff.

More specifically, when looking at the observations concerning the hygiene routine in both countries, it is confirmed that the *style of communication* is an important aspect considered as central in this routine, in both groups, and especially in the experimental one. Professionals mostly adopt a personalized type of communication with children, and they are very often flexible, open to listening, encouraging, capable of ‘mirroring’ the child and valuing his/her verbal and non-verbal communication, as explained through Modules 2 and 3 of the I.ECEC training.

Example from Italy

A practitioner calls a child to change her diaper. She waits until the child slowly gets on the little stairs of the changing table. She tells her what she is doing (she verbalizes her actions), she informs her that another child is arriving and that she can say hallo to him if she wants.

This is a small example of respect and communication.

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In Hungary, the 'own educator' strategy (having a privileged relationship between a small group of children and one professional) helps creating an attentive, intimate coexistence with the child. The professional watches what the child needs, what is good for him/her, by giving to care a high educational value.

The hygiene moment results as a real 'relational' moment in the observations of both countries, a holistic educare moment of caring, playing and learning, in which there is space for privacy and calmness (the rhythms are respected), and also for small interactions with other children (when present). Concerning how diversity is taken into account during this moment, it seems that professionals give voice to it by indeed listening and respecting children's rhythms. In Italy it seems that less attention is explicitly given in that moment to how families deal with this routine at home, although there is always an individual meeting with parents before the child starts attending, in which these themes are explored and valued. As a professional explains during the focus group: *'before the familiarization period, we have an individual meeting with each family, during which parents describe their child, their interests etc. These information are very important for us, especially to adapt our way of 'caring'. For example if a parent says 'my child likes cars', then we get a tip that we can use in the first period to have a relationship with the child and making him/her feel at ease. It's a first step. And then we observe*

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the child. We observe very much'.

In Hungary, in the optimal case, the family visit takes place before the familiarization period. The opportunity to visit the family is important to share information and create a relationship. The educator observes the child's place in the family, educational attitude, the child's individual habits, his/her development so far, the family's climate. The parent can tell what and how the child has eaten so far, how the parents deal with the sleeping moment etc. So a family visit is a great opportunity to get to know each other. This meeting can be the basis for the formation of a real partnership.

This attention to what each family says, and to observing each child, in order to find out how to create a relationship with him/her and supporting his/her wellbeing, is one of the key competences that professionals need to have when wanting to work within a holistic inclusive approach based on valuing diversity. The latter can be recognized in many ways in the daily life of the ECEC centre. For example also having personal elements (boxes with personal stuff, names and pictures of the children, personal beds etc.) represents a way to value the individual identity of each child within a collective environment. Concerning the hygiene moment, in the Italian videos themselves professionals don't use 'personal' boxes with clothes/materials of the children, but during the focus group they explained that these boxes actually exist, but their use has

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been restricted due to the COVID-19 rules. In Hungary personal boxes for children are used. It seems important to value the individual objects/materials of children in the ECEC-centre, as a way to 'give a place' to each of them in the collective space, as explained in Module 3 and 4.

Valuing children's identities happens through what can be perceived as 'small' daily practices and habits, which actually hide strong implicit ideas and visions concerning education. As underlined in Module 3, calling children with their name is for example one of these important practices, as also the Convention of the Rights of the Child (1989) reminds us, by dedicating article 7 to stating that having a name is a right of each child, and a crucial aspect of his/her identity. From the observations carried on in both countries, this is definitely something professionals do, and the I.ECEC training helped them in becoming more aware of the importance of this habit. As an Italian professional says during the training: *'when we refer to the children, we call them with their name. He/she is a child with a name, and we have to make an effort to pronounce it correctly'*. It is interesting to notice that one of the activities proposed during the Italian training was exactly related to asking professionals to share the 'story' of their own names (why they have this specific name?). Through the activity, professionals discovered how starting from a name, a process of getting to know each other by valuing

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differences and similarities can start. Focusing on the stories of our names helps in getting closer to each other. This is an activity that can be proposed also to parents ('why you chose this name for your child?'), to create a moment of 'sharing' individual stories in the collective environment, by paying attention not to fall in stereotypes.



From the observations, we can notice that, in general, *welcoming communication* is very present, and appears to be a good consolidated competence in terms of openness, flexibility, encouragement. Both in the Italian and in the Hungarian sample, professionals seem to support and welcome children verbally and non. Regarding the *verbalizations of the children*, professionals seem to support them and communicate with them. However more attention can be given to the interactions and communications amongst the children themselves during the activities, also by valuing differences

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and similarities (for example, 'B. says that he recently got a little sister. Who else has one? ...And a brother?').

Relationships mean also learning to deal with conflicts

When focusing on communication and interactions, professionals need to be aware of the fact that relationships include the possibility of having conflicts too. The latter are part of relationships and they don't need to be avoided (Braga et al., 1994). On the contrary, children need to be accompanied in learning to deal with them in a constructive and respectful way, as explained through Module 3. In order to do so, it is recommended to give them time and to support them in finding their own solutions, without directly intervening, unless necessary. From both the Italian and Hungarian observations, it comes out that professionals normally intervene in a calm and gradual way. However, although very welcoming, the interventions of the professionals often seem to still leave little space to the children themselves to solve the conflict on their own. This is normally a sensitive point to work on for professionals. Even when they are aware of the importance of letting children deal with their own relationships, it is not always easy to give space and time during conflict situations. Keeping reflecting on this is important in order to accompany children in creating their own relationships, which is a crucial point to take into account when working in an intercultural perspec-

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tive. The I.ECEC training sets a step in this direction. During the focus group, professionals showed that they are actually aware of this, but it is not always easy to put it in practice, like this Italian practitioner says: *'generally we observe what happens at the beginning, unless something happens and an intervention is needed. So in the first place we observe and we see if children manage to find a solution on their own. This is the strategy. But it's not always easy to really follow it'*.

The fact that professionals are aware of their 'intentions' shows their competence and knowledge about their role, beyond the fact that sometimes practice and intentions might not match. Showing awareness towards the complexity of conflict situations, and towards the diverse ways to deal with them according to the context, another professional adds: *'Sometimes it is difficult. We ask ourselves if it was ok to intervene, or if we had to wait. It is a continuous search. But I cannot really say 'I deal with conflicts amongst children in this or that way', because it also depends on the situation. What I do is waiting a bit. I wait to see what the children are doing. For example if a child takes an object from another child, I wait to see what he/she wants to do, and also what is the other child going to do. Sometimes there is no need to intervene to give back the object. Because very often these behaviours are actually a search for interactions, so then you just need to be there, but maybe you don't*

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need to do much, just support them'. These words shows another crucial intercultural competences that professionals need to have, which is the capability of trying to see what children do 'with their eyes', and not just from an adult point of view (Ritscher, 2002).



Flexible planning, process-focus and involvement

Regarding the structured activity observed in Italy and Hungary, both control and experimental groups show intentionality and flexibility in proposing and carrying on the activities with the children, as mentioned in Module 4. However in some videos it seems more difficult for the professionals to 'let go' the planning, when clearly the group of children is giving signs of non interest or tiredness. This

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attitude can also be due to the knowledge of being video-taped. In general professionals show anyhow the capability of putting themselves on the level of the children (also physically, by sitting at their level), of having always eye-contact, of trying to see things from their perspective and giving them the needed time to make their discoveries.

Example from Italy

During an activity at the table, a child starts jumping on the bench while sitting. Instead of stopping her, the professional verbalizes what she is doing, her discovery, by saying: 'yes, if you do like this, you jump and the bench moves'. The child continues to jump, the professional starts doing the same by saying 'I can do it too'. Both adult and child laugh, and another child starts doing the same, before going back to the activity.

This seems a small powerful example of a professional that is capable of 'letting go' (even if just for a moment) the control on the activity, in order to 'follow' and give voice to the 'unexpected diverse discoveries' that children bring every day.

As far as *involvement* in the activities is concerned, an open and welcoming attitude of the professionals in both countries is highlighted, especially in the experimental videos, with a warm and flexible encouragement accompanied by verbal and non-verbal elements. When a child doesn't want to participate to an activity, professionals normally try to encourage him/her, but if they see that he/she doesn't want to, they never force the situation, showing a caring and respectful attitude.

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Example from Hungary

During an activity a child did not want to take part in the common play. The professional went closer to the child, put herself on his level, slowed down her way of speaking, explained the activity again to encourage him. It seems that the professional has the means to involve the child, without forcing. However it needs to be kept in mind that it not always necessary to involve a child in an activity, as the reflection with the team underlined when reflecting on the video.

During the Italian focus group, a professional shared the following example: *'one morning I proposed to a small group of children to paint with coloured shaving foam. They were supposed to touch it and paint with their hands. One girl (G.) didn't want to paint, she kept her hands far from the table. I tried to encourage them with words, but she refused to participate. Without noticing I touched G. with the foam on her shoulder and she got very upset. So I understood that she didn't want to get dirty, she didn't like it. That's why I decided to give a brush to everybody, even though this was not planned, just to see if she would then like it better. The other children used the brush but mainly their hands. But G. liked this solution a lot and she then took part to the activity like the others'*. We see here how paying attention to diversity doesn't necessarily mean creating big transformations. It actually often results in small changes coming from important mind-shift processes that allow professionals to see things from different perspectives. We see here how paying attention

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to diversity doesn't necessarily mean creating big transformations. It actually often results in small changes coming from important mind-shift processes that allow professionals to see things from different perspectives.

Concerning this point, amongst the many difficulties, the COVID-19 situation also helped in a certain way, as this Italian professional says: *'the COVID-19 regulations actually helped our flexibility to a certain extent. Because we were asked to use more the outdoor spaces, we did outside many activities that normally we do inside (painting, manipulation etc.). The outdoor environment helped us then in being flexible, because if a child didn't want to take part to the activity it was just easier to let him/her play outside, since the external spaces easily offer alternative possibilities'*. Also in Hungary, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, ECEC professionals were 'forced' to introduce new, previously unused activities into their daily routines. For example, they held online meetings with parents, helping them to find activities that might be interesting for their children, or also just listening to them and their needs. The circumstances forced them to be flexible and to explore areas of communication that were previously unknown.

One of the intercultural competences of ECEC professionals is related to the capability of paying attention to the involvement of each child, and not just of the ones that 'show' in a more explicit way

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their participation. Both in the Italian and Hungarian experiences, a need to further reflect on how to involve children who are less active or extrovert comes out from certain videos and also from the words of professionals themselves, since it is not always easy to 'see' everybody in the group. But the fact that this question exists in the teams, that they are aware of it, it's definitely already a very good starting point.

Intercultural competences include the capability of focusing more on the process in which children are taking part, then on its products. This attention comes out from both the Italian and the Hungarian observations, and it is an important point to underline, since often, in other ECEC centres, the pressure to achieve a final product can hinder the valorisation of the process itself. In the videos we clearly see that with the staff involved this is not the case, and that the respect of the children's rhythms is an interiorized attitude.

Example from Italy

During an activity, the professional sits with the children and stays silent, waiting to see what children will do with the materials she disposed on the table. She does not show them what to do, she observes and listens. She alternates moments of silence with moments in which she mirrors and verbalizes some actions of the children.

Giving voice to diversity with children and families

Giving voice to diversity means many things, some of which we already exposed in the previous paragraphs. As explained in Module 4, specific activities, materials, toys can also be offered (as mentioned in Module 4), with a focus on valuing diversities and similarities amongst children and families. For example, paying attention to offering a diversity of materials, or dolls of both genders and with different skin colours, as well as books in different languages, are all ‘small’ ways to make sure that everybody can feel recognized in the ECEC space.

Example from Hungary

The professionals involved in Hungary worked especially through storytelling. With the help of the Kamishibai (paper theatre) it was easy in JEB to organize exciting performances for the group of children. The educator stimulated and encourages the participation of children both through gestures and words. The group watched a paper theatre tale with great interest in an interactive format.

The ‘Kamishibai’ is a theatre performance in paper; it transforms the storybooks into theatre. The pictures tell a story – each illustration brings to life an element of the tale. The images fill the entire card and are presented facing the audience.

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In this experience parents can also be involved in many ways, for example also by bringing books/stories in different languages and from different parts of the world. In this way a relationship with books and stories is supported. The way children are related to books and literature depends to a great extent on the experience-centeredness of literary education in educational institutions, the loving atmosphere they experience there, and the professional knowledge of educators (Anna Bereczkiné Záluski, 92.p.)

The university's teachers of Eötvös Loránd University's Faculty of Primary and Pre-School Education participating in 4 intercultural modules in Józsefváros Joint Crèches (JEB), used stories in this project following specific steps:

- 1. As a first step, the best classic and contemporary children's books served as a source. Parents could also bring stories.*
- 2. As the next stage of innovative efforts the ECEC centres invited experts to deliver lectures on different topics of language education and early literacy attended by staff and parents;*
- 3. Literature notice boards to guide parents - a new dimension marked by developing family relations. The researchers and professionals decided to collect the rhymes, poems and other works spontaneously recited during daytime in the ECEC centre and create a text available for parents.*
- 4. Literature notebook created jointly by teachers, parents and children: the Józsefváros ECEC centres launched their project designed for the long term. The aim of designing and implementing the Literature Notebook was to build closer ties between parents and institutions, to support families, and to recognize and promote parental competences (Bereczkiné Záluski, 2018).*

In the Italian focus group, professionals explain that they try to

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give voice to diversity in daily life, far from 'folkloristic' approaches. *'We learned songs in Spanish and we sing them, but without necessarily having children with Spanish origins in the centre'* says a professional. *'We sang a song in French for Christmas because a mother brought this song. And we played with the different sounds of the language'* says another professional.

In general, the use of different languages in the ECEC centres is valued. Considering the young age of children, the fact that some of them don't speak Italian or Hungarian yet doesn't create a big difference with the ones that do speak it. *'The main difficulty'* an Italian professional says *'is eventually with the families. In these cases we use pictures and images very much, to explain ourselves'*. These initiatives seem very sensitive and valuable. However, further reflection is needed to explore possibilities to better communicate (for example through linguistic mediators) with all families.

Starting from this, the project opened up interesting reflections in relation with families. *'Sometimes'* says an Italian professional during the training *'we think that families don't participate. But we have to ask ourselves how much we welcome them. I have a small example. We have a tree in the ECEC centre, with welcoming sentences in many languages. I almost forgot about it, but then a mother saw the sentence in her language and she was so happy. She felt recognized. Sometimes these things are more important than we think'*.

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Professionals further reflected with the trainer on the fact that sometimes we ask families to participate, but by already telling them in which way they are supposed to participate. This discussion helped professionals in reflecting on how to involve parents by starting from their 'stories' and from how they decide to take part. *'When we ask something to families'* says a professional during the discussion at the training *'we sometimes ask a song, or a poem in their original language. But in fact maybe they don't know a song or a poem, or maybe it's just 'not their thing', it's not part of their story. So I think we have to ask them something about themselves, about their own story, what they want to bring. We don't have to force them in an image that we have'*. This exchange brought the group to also reflect about the importance of making explicit the more or less implicit ideas and vision of the ECEC centre with all parents, since sometimes professionals take for granted certain concepts that are part of their daily practice, but families are not necessarily aware of them, as explained in Module 3.

Taking into account families' diversities also means adjusting practices sometimes, as this professional from Italy explains in relation with the fact that they have a family following the Jehovah's Witnesses. *'We let them know in advance when we celebrate birthday parties'* says a professional *'so that they can decide if they want their child to participate or not. We also decided that we celebrate*

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the birthday parties early in the morning, so that eventually the child from this family can just come to the ECEC centre a bit later and then he doesn't lose the whole day'. In the same way, professionals discussed what to do concerning celebrating 'father's day', since one of the families attending the ECEC centre is composed by two mothers. They discussed it together with the mothers themselves, showing how reflection and negotiation are connected. The concrete solution found becomes then secondary compared with the valuable dialogue created with this family, who felt recognized and valued (Gigli,2011). The same thing happened with a child that lost his father. 'Diversity becomes then not a missing point, but just a natural fact' a professional explains.



Action-research creates mind-shifts

The I.ECEC project gave the possibilities to professionals to experience a mind-shift process that helped them in 'seeing things with new eyes'. As a pedagogical coordinator from ARCA (Italy) says *'I see that in the people involved in the project a kind of 'sensitivity' has been developed. Sometimes they are not aware of it, but I can see that they stay more in their questions, they have more doubts, but positive doubts, before acting. They stop to reflect, to look, to observe'*. Another Italian professional adds *'I think we leave more space to each child, more autonomy. We take a step back and we listen'*. Or again: *'this project helped us in reflecting on what we took for granted. Our way of working looked like a routine. And now we see better its meaning [...]. And this happens now individually, but also more with the colleagues. We stop and reflect more together'*. This capability of 'having questions' and 'staying in our doubts' before reaching contextualized answers is crucial when wanting to value diversity and create inclusion. Being part of an action research project is a way to support this attitude. As a Hungarian professional underlines: *'In the field of early childhood education, it is often the case that professional development is structured as a workshop or presentation in which a facilitator, acting as 'expert', gives a talk to or leads activities for a group of participants. In the I.ECEC project, professionals could take part in a much more*

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active way, which supports their learning process'.

The COVID-19 situation played an unexpected role in this 'discovery' and mind-shift process. Crisis situations are challenging, but they can also give an opportunity to re-think our taken for granted practice, and discover new possible actions. The COVID-19 crisis brought a sudden change in the way practice could be organized in ECEC centres. The safety and hygiene rules to which suddenly all ECEC centres had to adapt effected also how the spaces were organized. On many levels these effects have been and are perceived as 'negative' for obvious reasons (lack of contacts with families, less 'cosy' atmosphere due to hygiene rules, fear feelings, etc.). However, positive opportunities can also be found in what this situation obliged professionals to face, especially concerning the capability of seeing taken for granted things in another perspective. For example, ECEC staff had to find new ways to keep the connection with families, who were in most of the cases not allowed in the services anymore. Many contacts took place online (during and after the lockdown), with activities for children, storytelling, but also with individual phone calls etc. A new 'space' had to be created, an emotional and relational space capable of connecting also from a distance. Although challenging, this new practice gave to many professionals the opportunity to get closer to the family situation of the children attending the ECEC centre, to 'see' how they live, to value

How did ECEC staff experience the professional development path: voices and observations during and after the training

what they do at home, but also the challenges they might face (Van Laere et al., 2021). As a pedagogical coordinator of ARCA (Italy) underlines: *'we are now completely into the so called intercultural pedagogy, because we are obliged to re-invent ourselves, to think out of the box. For example we had to re-invent the whole organization of the familiarization period (ambientamento), since parents are not allowed inside. Familiarization is crucial in our practice, so we decided to do it outside and it lasts less days than normal, but each day parents stay longer than they usually do. At the beginning professionals were a bit worried of staying for a longer time with the parents, but now they see also the positive sides of it, because parents have more time to get at ease and to have a dialogue with the professionals. So through this forced experience we are discovering new things'*. Another professional says *'we also thought about the whole discussion concerning Muslim professionals who cover their head. I mean, now we are all covered, but children understand everything, they read all our emotions in our gestures and eyes'*.

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CONCLUSION

Drs. Muhammet Safa Göregen, Dr. Nima Sharmahd, Prof. Dr. Clara Silva

In recent years, the concept of multicultural education has obtained a major place in educational research. It can be said that the transition from an agricultural society towards the industrial society and subsequently the knowledge-based society, next to the migration events and the unions formed between countries for economic and social purposes, have increased the importance of this concept. Societies are clearly experiencing a transition from locality to universality during this period. This transition period necessitated the establishment of universal principles in education and fostering intercultural interaction by recognizing different cultures. In addition to these, individuals raised in contemporary societies are expected to interact with different cultural groups in order to develop positive attitudes in their interactions. For this reason, while the developed countries identify their educational problems and produce solutions,

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they also include multicultural education studies. As a result, today's modern states have to redefine, for example, the concept of citizenship within the framework of universal values. Differences such as culture, social class, religion, language and ethnicity are the basic characteristics of society in interpersonal interaction. It is thought educating individuals on these differences at an early age that will be beneficial for them in order to grow up as effective members of the global community in the future. Considering that learning and teaching take place in a social context as a result of cultural interactions, it can be said that dealing with an inclusive educational climate by ECEC professionals will contribute significantly to the development of children.

Taking part to action-research processes represents a powerful experience for ECEC professionals and researchers. As the words and practices of the staff involved in the I.ECEC project underline, participating in this process supported professionals in asking themselves questions before acting, in observing and listening, in seeing things from other perspectives, in allowing flexibility into their practice. The COVID-19 situation, besides bringing several difficulties and limitations, in some way also helped this discovery process, which is the key of an intercultural inclusive approach to education. Considering all the specific competences we explained in this publication, we can summarize that the main competence needed to

work in contexts of diversity is the *open capability to wonder*.

Within this framework, the role of pedagogical coordinators (coaches) is crucial. In order to work 'well' with *all* children and families, by growing in our 'wondering capability', within an *educare* inclusive perspective (as explained in Module 1), it is necessary to be able to 'think' those children and those families. And this can only be done with the support of that 'external but not extraneous' eye (Catarsi, 2011) represented by the pedagogical coordinators. Guaranteeing the concrete realization of co-reflective CPD (Continuous Professional Development) paths is one of the main responsibilities of a system that wants to define itself as competent. The case studies of the already mentioned CoRe research (Urban et al., 2011) show how, in contexts where co-reflective CPD paths supported by pedagogical coordinators exist, where training are continuous and non-fragmented, and child-free hours are foreseen (time without children to document, reflect together, plan), the quality of ECEC services is higher. Conditions, the latter, which are currently absent in most European countries. The co-reflective practice promoted by pedagogical coordination supports that open attitude to valuing diversity and negotiation that is needed in the contemporary social context. All this confirms once again how pedagogical coordination must have a place within a broader 'competent system' (Urban et al., 2011; Vandebroek, 2016) capable of guiding quality educational

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practices *and* policies. Raising awareness at policy level becomes a fundamental part of the implementation of the educational practice itself.



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ATTACHMENTS

Grid for literature review



I.ECEC

Intercultural Early Childhood Education and Care
Curriculum Design for Professionals
ERASMUS+ KA2 Strategic Partnership
Code: 2018-1-HU01-KA201-047763

GRYD FOR LITERATURE REVIEW

Material n.

Title:	
Authors:	
Year:	
Type of publication (Example: Research, PhD thesis, book chapter, scientific article, article, internal ECEC service document, ...):	
Target group to whom the publication is addressed:	
Focus of the publication (which keyword/s):	
Which method/s:	
Abstract in english (max 500 words):	

Grid for observations



Observation Grid - readings IECEC

This grid allows us to observe an entire day or specific moment/activity in ECEC services.

The observation grid allows a coded compilation and at the same time a narrative /descriptive one. Each indicator must be codified (never, rarely, sometimes, often, always or YES/NO). This structured answer should be supported by one or more concrete descriptions of the situations observed. It is recommended to avoid interpretations (which will be done later in the analysis). Not all dialogues and actions need to be reported, but some concrete examples should always be present.

The grid is divided in three sections:

1. The first section is about the observation of different moments of the daily life in the services, with a specific focus on the attention for intercultural pedagogical elements;
2. The second section is dedicated to a more specific observation about interactions in the services;
3. The third section is focused on the observation of spaces, materials and documents.

The grid is composed by **macro-areas** and **specific indicators**. Each indicator should be observed, codified and described.

Some indicators, especially the ones regarding interactions and relations, are common to different sections. This is inevitable, considering the complex nature of the

FIRST PART: OBSERVATION OF MOMENTS OF DAILY LIVING IN THE SERVICES

DATE OF THE OBSERVATION _____		FROM h _____	TO h _____	OBSERVATOR _____						
NAME OF THE SERVICE _____		N° EDUCATORS present _____			N° CHILDREN present _____					
MACRO- AREAS Daily Moment	N°	Indicator	Descriptive Observation	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always		
ENTRY		Does the educator welcomes children and parents in a personalized way?								
	1	<i>Is the educator attentive to the individual characteristics of each child and parent, using words and gestures in a flexible way according to the children and parents received?</i>								
	2	During the entry moment, does the educator respect the individual timing of children and parents? <i>Is the educator attentive to give children and parents the needed time to say goodbye and enter the service?</i>								
	3	Is the educator welcoming with children and parents? <i>Does the educator welcome children and parents using cosy words and friendly gestures (eye contact, smile, prossemic space) with children and parents?</i>								
	4	Does the educator speak to parents? <i>Does the educator talk and refero to parents they are accompanying their children?</i>	<i>Specify what he/she says with a few concrete examples</i>							

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MACRO- AREAS Daily Moment	Nº	Indicator	Descriptive Observation	Never	Raraly	Sometimes	Often	Always
	5	<p>Does the educator address in a welcoming way parents who do not speak the dominant language?</p> <p><i>Does the educator welcome the parent who does not speak the dominant language with behaviors that can be comfortable for the parent?</i></p>	<i>Specify how is its communication and behavior with specific examples</i>					
	6	<p>Is the educator supportive if parents who have a home language different then the dominant one, talk to (say goodbye to) their children in their language?</p> <p><i>Does the educator take action or not support the leave of parents who greet their children in their own language?</i></p>						
	7	<p>Does the educator invite parents in the children room?</p> <p><i>Does the educator invite parents to accompany the children into the children room?</i></p>						
	8	<p>Does the educator facilitate the connection and continuity home-ECEC service during the entrance moment?</p> <p><i>What does the educator do, for example, when a child brings an object from home and wants to take it into the children room?</i></p>						

MACRO- AREAS Daily Moment	Nº	Indicator	Descriptive Observation	Never	Raraly	Sometimes	Often	Always
EXIT	9	<p>Is the moment of reunification personalized?</p> <p><i>Is the educator attentive to the individual characteristics of each child and parent, using words and gestures in a flexible way according to the children and parents received?</i></p>						
	10	<p>During the exit moment, does the educator respect the individual time of children and parents?</p> <p><i>Is the educator attentive to give children and parents the needed time re-find each other?</i></p>						
	11	<p>Does the educator speak to parents?</p>	<i>Specify what he/she says with specific examples</i>					
	12	<p>Does the educator address in a welcoming way parents who do not speak the dominant language?</p> <p><i>Does the educator welcome the parent who does not speak the dominant language with behaviors that can be comfortable for the parent?</i></p>	<i>Specify how his/her communication and behavior is</i>					

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MACRO- AREAS Daily Moment	N°	Indicator	Descriptive Observation	Never	Raraly	Sometimes	Often	Always
	13	Does the educator encourage parents who speak a language different then the dominant one, to talk to their child in their own language?						
	14	Does the educator invite the parents to enter the children room during the exit moment?	<i>Specify what he/she says with concrete examples</i>					
	15	Does the educator support the transfer and co-responsibility between the educational and family environment? <i>Do the educator and the educational service provide systems such as borrowing books, group diaries, "puppets" etc. that can be taken home in turn by parents and children?</i>	<i>Specify how and type of strategies</i>					
CHANGE ROUTINE/HYGENE	16	Does the educator use personalized boxes/closets for the changing stuff of each child?						

MACRO- AREAS Daily Moment	N°	Indicator	Descriptive Observation	Never	Raraly	Sometimes	Often	Always
CHANGE ROUTINE/HYGENE	17	Does the educator take the specific characteristics of each child (and family) into account during this activity?						
	18	Does the educator maintain a welcoming style of communication? <i>Is the educator attentive to being flexible, open to listening, encouraging towards children, and not executive?</i>						
MEAL (Breakfast, Break, Lunch)	19	Are the children sitting in small groups at the table? <i>Specify number of tables and of children, and organization of the space</i>						
	20	Does the educator sit at the table with the children? Does the educator eat with them?						
	21	Does the educator communicate in a welcoming style? <i>Does the educator have an encouraging and non directive attitude towards children (for example, the educator smiles, speaks sweetly, keeps eye contact)?</i>						

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MACRO- AREAS Daily Moment	N°	Indicator	Descriptive Observation	Never	Raraly	Sometimes	Often	Always
	22	<p>Does the educator encourage and sustain conversations and interactions amongst children during the eating moment?</p> <p><i>Does the educator shows flexibility in the content of the conversation Does the educator encourage children's conversations, not just focusing on what they can and cannot do at the table?</i></p>						
	23	<p>Does the educator look welcoming and flexible if a child does not want to eat something?</p> <p><i>When someone refuse food, does the educator try to be supportive? In which way?</i></p>						
	24	<p>Does the service include differentiated diets?</p> <p><i>Are there alternative diets within the service, depending on the specificities and individual characteristics of the children?</i></p>	Specify the type		YES			NO

MACRO- AREAS Daily Moment	N°	Indicator	Descriptive Observation	Never	Raraly	Sometimes	Often	Always
SLEEP	25	<p>Do the children sleep in a dedicated sleeping room (different then a multifunctional room)?</p> <p><i>children feel more comfortable in this moment?</i></p>	Specify where the children sleep and how many they are					
	26	<p>Is the sleeping space personalized?</p> <p><i>Are there personalized beds, personalized objects etc. that can make</i></p>						
	27	<p>Does the educator respect the individual timing of each child?</p> <p><i>Is the educator attentive to taking care of the individual rhythms of children, following their need in falling asleep and getting awake?</i></p>						
	28	<p>Does the educator take into account and respect the different ways of sleeping children?</p> <p><i>Does the educator support children in the process of sleep and rest according to the ways in which each of them is personally accustomed to rest?</i></p>						

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MACRO- AREAS Moment of daily living in the service	N°	Indicator	Descriptive Observation	Never	Raraly	Sometimes	Often	Always
	29	Is the educator welcoming and flexible with the children who do not want to sleep? <i>Does the educator implement welcoming and caring strategies when children do not fall asleep?</i>	<i>Specify strategies and behaviors adopted</i>					
	30	Does the educator flexibly welcome children who wake up first? <i>Does the educator welcome children who wake up first for example offering them to play in the children room?</i>	<i>Specify how</i>					
	31	Does the educator wake up the children at a certain time? <i>Does the educator intentionally wake up the children at a precise time to prepare them for the new activity, or for the arrival of the parents...?</i>						
FREE PLAY	32	Does the educator let them be protagonists, intervening only on request? <i>Does the educator observe and support children (for example by looking at them, smiling, nodding) but not directly intervening where not required? Is the educator attentive, even if he/she doesn't intervene directly?</i>	<i>Specify the position of the educator</i>					

MACRO- AREAS Moment of daily living in the service	N°	Indicator	Descriptive Observation	Never	Raraly	Sometimes	Often	Always
	33	Does the educator maintain a welcoming style of communication? <i>Is the educator attentive to being flexible, open to listening, encouraging towards children, and not executive?</i>						
	34	Does the educator encourage and support the interactions of children during free play? <i>Does the educator listen, support the verbalizations, mirrors them and open them to the group?</i>	<i>Specify what type of interaction between children</i>					
	35	Does the educator support the children when they speak in the non-dominant language? <i>Is the educator welcoming (for example, smiling, maintaining eye contact) and supporting the interaction in progress?</i>	<i>Specify how</i>					
	36	Does the educator support the children that seem to "do nothing"? <i>Does the educator observe without force or constraint?</i>						

INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCES FOR THE TRAINING OF EDUCATIONAL STAFF IN EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES

MACRO- AREAS Moment of daily living in the service	N°	Indicator	Descriptive Observation	Never	Raraly	Sometimes	Often	Always
STRUCTURED ACTIVITY: SPECIFY WHICH _____ _____	37	Is the educator able to adapt and modify the activity according to the needs and interests expressed by the group of children? <i>Does the educator carry out the activity in a flexible way, not adhering rigidly to the planned activity where it departs from the needs or preferences of the group of children present?</i>						
	38	Does the educator try to involve each child in the activity? <i>Does the educator stimulate and encourage the participation of all children both with gestures and with words of openness and welcome? Is she/he trying to pay attention also to the 'more introverse' or less active/ talkative children? Is she/he paying attention to involve children that don't speak the dominant language?</i>						
	39	Is the educator welcoming and flexible in front of children who do not want to carry out the activity? <i>Does the educator implement welcoming and caring strategies when children do not want to take part to that specific activity? Can children choose not to take part?</i>	<i>Specify strategies and behaviors adopted</i>					

MACRO- AREAS Moment of daily living in the service	N°	Indicator	Descriptive Observation	Never	Raraly	Sometimes	Often	Always
	40	Does the educator focus on the process and dynamics at the time? <i>Does the educator direct his attention to the present moment rather than to the final outcome/product of the activity?</i>						
	41	Does the educator focus on the process of the activity instead of just on the final product?						
	42	Does the educator encourage and support the interactions of children during the structured activity? <i>Does the educator listen, support the verbalizations, reflect them and open them to the group?</i>						
	43	Does the educator interact with flexibility when a child speak in the non-dominant language? <i>Is the educator welcoming and supporting the interaction in progress?</i>	<i>Specify how</i>					

SECOND PART: OBSERVATION ABOUT INTERACTION AND RELATIONSHIP

MACRO- AREAS Relationship and Interaction	N°	Indicator	Descriptive Observation	Never	Raraly	Sometimes	Often	Always
	1	<p>Does the educator communicate with children in a welcoming way?</p> <p><i>Is the educator attentive to being flexible, open to listening, encouraging towards children, and not executive?</i></p> <p><i>Is the educator respectful of the needs, individualities and specificities of children. For example, addressing them by name, citing their interest or preference...?</i></p>						
	2	<p>Does the educator support children's verbalization?</p> <p><i>Does the educator encourage and support verbalizations, extending them to the group?</i></p>						
	3	<p>Does the educator help children to value differences and commonalities between them, without incurring into stereotyping?</p> <p><i>Does the educator value differences and commonalities in gestures and words?</i></p>						

MACRO- AREAS Relationship and Interaction	N°	Indicator	Descriptive Observation	Never	Raraly	Sometimes	Often	Always
	4	<p>Is the educator capable to use a descriptive language rather than evaluational and interpretational one with the children?</p> <p><i>Does the educator report observed behavior and not inferred judgments about the child?</i></p>						
	5	<p>Does the educator physically put him/herself at the level of its interlocutor?</p> <p><i>During interaction does the educator put him/herself at the level of the children, establishing a direct eye contact and physical closeness?</i></p>						
	6	<p>Does the educator have a respectful and welcoming educational style towards parents?</p> <p><i>Does the educator respect and accept the parent's point of view?</i></p> <p><i>Does he/she negotiate with parents when necessary?</i></p>						
	7	<p>Does the educator communicate with parents in a descriptive language?</p> <p><i>Does the educator communicate with parents with a descriptive style, related to behaviors and facts and not in an interpretative or inferential way?</i></p>						

INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCES FOR THE TRAINING OF EDUCATIONAL STAFF IN EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES

THIRD PART: OBSERVATION OF SPACES, MATERIALS AND DOCUMENTS

MACRO- AREAS Spaces, Materials and Documents	Nº	Indicator	Descriptive Observation	Not at all	Not enough	Enough	Much	Very Much
	1	Do the materials and toys in the children room take into account the diversity of children? <i>Are there diverse toys according to age, gender, ethnic-cultural background and individual interests? [Specify for example whether there are dolls with different skin colors and gender, or books in multiple languages etc.]</i>	<i>Specify the type</i>					
	2	Are there mostly structured materials?	<i>Specify the type</i>					
	3	At the entrance are there panels of pedagogical documentation (fotos, observations) and/or presentation panels of the service?	<i>Specify the type</i>					
	4	Are the panels multilingual?						
	5	Are the leaflets, inscription documents and materials shared with families multilingual?						
	6	Are there individual spaces (e.g. personal closets) at the entrance for the jackets, personal belongings etc. of the children?						

MACRO- AREAS Spaces, Materials and Documents	Nº	Indicator	Descriptive Observation	Not at all	Not enough	Enough	Much	Very Much
	7	Are there benches or chairs where children can sit to remove jackets and shoes?						
	8	Are adult chairs/armchairs available at the entrance and in children rooms?						
	9	Is there a welcoming space for parents for meetings or talks?						
	10	Is the overall space readable? <i>Is it easy to understand what you do in a space? Are the photos/pedagogical documentation coherent with the space in which they are placed?</i>						
	11	Is the community/territory involved and connected with the ECEC service?	<i>Specify how</i>					
	12	Are there highlighted strategies to support continuity service/ home?	<i>Specify which</i>					

Questionnaire on intercultural knowledge and competences



I.ECEC

Intercultural Early Childhood Education and Care
Curriculum Design for Professionals
ERASMUS+ KA2 Strategic Partnership
Code: 2018-1-HU01-KA201-047763

QUESTIONNAIRE ON INTERCULTURAL KNOWLEDGE AND COMPETENCES

Name and surname of educator/teacher _____

Service/school _____

Children's age _____ 0-3 _____ 3-6 _____ 6-10

Length of service _____ > 5 years _____ > 10 years _____ > 15 years _____ <15 years

Notes:

- ECEC: Early Childhood Education and Care, e.g. ECEC services = early childhood services, childcare services
- CIRRF: Children from Immigrant, Refugee and Roma Families

	QUESTION	True	False
1.	An intercultural and diversity-conscious education should only be promoted in presence of CIRRF children.		
2.	European societies have always been homogeneous, hence multiculturalism is a recent phenomenon.		
3.	Making ECEC services accessible to all means removing language and bureaucratic barriers, and preventing waiting lists.		
4.	The profile of an ECEC professional requires to be familiar with the sociocultural context that her/his pedagogical work takes place in.		
5.	The European Commission recommends that Member States prepare ECEC staff for social, cultural and linguistic diversity.		
6.	The EU policy is expressed through recommendations, projects, funding lines, and programmes.		
7.	In contexts of diversity, it is crucial that trainings support the capability of staff in dealing with differences and commonalities between people.		
8.	Promoting policies able to guarantee the presence of socioculturally diverse staff in ECEC services is not crucial for their quality.		
9.	Diversity (<i>differences</i>) does not exist, as a pedagogical reality, without similarity (<i>commonalities</i>).		
10.	Relational and reflective competences are crucial for enhancing the quality and effectiveness of ECEC services.		
11.	Intercultural education is a branch in itself of educational sciences.		
12.	The social role of childcare services becomes crucial while acting as spaces aimed at promoting diversity, equity and democracy.		
13.	For the work of ECEC professionals, it is important to know sociocultural, linguistic and economic characteristics of the families they interact with.		
14.	Participation in ECEC has no impact on the future school performance.		
15.	Today's ECEC services need a staff capable of valuing diversity.		
16.	Children from minorities and/or low-income families are more often enrolled in ECEC centres than their peers.		
17.	In order to improve the quality and inclusiveness of ECEC services, it becomes essential to meet the needs of children and families inhabiting them.		

INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCES FOR THE TRAINING OF EDUCATIONAL STAFF IN EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES

18.	The identity of immigrant children is formed during adolescence.		
19.	Individual competences of ECEC practitioners are enough to enhance the quality of ECEC services.		
20.	A competent educational staff workforce needs to take shape in a competent system.		
21.	Relying basically upon practical activities, working in ECEC sector requires no cultural competences.		
22.	While working with families, there is no need to include their competences in educational practices.		
23.	In order to promote participation of immigrant families, it is enough to propose some particular activities for them.		
24.	Routine activities need no intercultural approach.		
25.	Educating for interculturality means enriching educational practices.		
26.	The ability to co-construct knowledge with others (colleagues, parents, children) is not one of the core competences needed to work in ECEC.		
27.	Relational competences are based on active listening, non-judgement, and negotiation.		
28.	In order to enhance pedagogical quality and social inclusiveness of ECEC services, it is necessary to constantly reflect upon the educational practice.		
29.	Intercultural education is a critical reflective perspective crossing the fields of educational practice.		
30.	The quality of ECEC services in intercultural terms is related to the ability of educators to revise critically the values, concepts, and meanings surrounding their educational action.		

Grid for Open Educational Resources (OER)



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OER Grid (Open Educational Resources)

Title	
Authors	
OER tag	<p><i>Project research</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Tools</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> For Academic purposes <input type="radio"/> For Practice purposes • <u>Results</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> For Academic purposes <input type="radio"/> For Practice purposes <p><i>Training & Pilot courses Resources</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>By modules</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Module 1 – Complex and Diverse Societies <input type="radio"/> Module 2 – Diversity in ECEC services <input type="radio"/> Module 3 – Inclusion and Participation <input type="radio"/> Module 4 – Flexible Practices, Innovation and Transformation <input type="radio"/> Not related to modules <p><i>Other resources</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Intellectual production of partners <input type="radio"/> European Resources <input type="radio"/> Other resources <p><i>Partners</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> ARCA Cooperativa Sociale <input type="checkbox"/> Erasmus Brussels University of Applied Sciences and Arts <input type="checkbox"/> Eötvös Loránd University <input type="checkbox"/> Galileo Progetti Nonprofit Kft. <input type="checkbox"/> Józsefvárosi Egyesített Bölcsődék <input type="checkbox"/> Università degli Studi di Firenze

INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCES FOR THE TRAINING OF EDUCATIONAL STAFF IN EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES



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<p>Summary/abstract (max 1300 characters)</p>	
<p>Goals of the specific activity/resource (max 1000 characters)</p>	
<p>Keywords (up to three choices)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Present-day societies <input type="checkbox"/> Plurality and complexity <input type="checkbox"/> Diversities and similarities <input type="checkbox"/> Educator competences <input type="checkbox"/> Educator competences today <input type="checkbox"/> Competent system <input type="checkbox"/> Inclusion and participation of families in a plural way <input type="checkbox"/> Reflexivity <input type="checkbox"/> Reflective competences <input type="checkbox"/> Relational competences <input type="checkbox"/> Relationship with the territory <input type="checkbox"/> Children's inclusion & participation in services <input type="checkbox"/> Identity <input type="checkbox"/> Flexibility / flexible planning <input type="checkbox"/> Evolutionary planning <input type="checkbox"/> Spaces and materials

ATTACHMENTS



KA2 Strategic Partnerships for school education
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Target groups	<input type="radio"/> Individual level <input type="radio"/> Pre-service professional <input type="radio"/> In-service professional
What background/knowledge is needed (optional)	
Level of intensity	<input type="radio"/> Easy starter <input type="radio"/> Challenging <input type="radio"/> Going next level
Type of activity/resource	<input type="radio"/> Book <input type="radio"/> (Scientific) Article <input type="radio"/> Workshop <input type="radio"/> Practical Activity <input type="radio"/> Lecture <input type="radio"/> Video <input type="radio"/> Artwork <input type="radio"/> Report <input type="radio"/> Game <input type="radio"/> Other
Materials, tools, ... needed for the activity/resource (optional)	
Other didactical suggestions (optional)	
Duration of the activity (if relevant)	minutes
Language	<input type="radio"/> English <input type="radio"/> Italian <input type="radio"/> Hungarian <input type="radio"/> Flemish <input type="radio"/> French <input type="radio"/> German <input type="radio"/> Spanish <input type="radio"/> Other

The aim of this publication is to summarize the purposes, methods, findings and good practices of the European project (Erasmus+ KA2) Intercultural Early Childhood Education and Care Curriculum Design for Professionals (I.ECEC) for ECEC-professionals, practitioners and University students. The main objective of I.ECEC project was to develop an intercultural training curriculum for ECEC practitioners working in contexts of diversity. The curriculum training is divided in four modules, presented here in the form of chapters, each deepening crucial aspects of today's intercultural education.

