




# Guide on the theoretical foundation for sustainable & intercultural 0-3 ECEC



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### SUSIEE Project partners

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- Consorcio Haurreskolak: [www.haurreskolak.eus](http://www.haurreskolak.eus)
- La Xixa: [www.laxixa.org](http://www.laxixa.org)
- CESIE ETS: [www.cesie.org](http://www.cesie.org)
- Associazione di promozione sociale Naturalmente: [www.facebook.com/people/La-Piccola-Casa-nel-Bosco-crescere-in-natura](https://www.facebook.com/people/La-Piccola-Casa-nel-Bosco-crescere-in-natura)
- Partners Hungary Foundation: [www.partnershungary.hu](http://www.partnershungary.hu)
- United Nurseries of Józsefváros: [www.bolcsode-bp08.hu](http://www.bolcsode-bp08.hu)

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# Preface



We are living in a continuously **changing world**, where **social and geographical mobility is expanding**. Although concepts like **interculturality and sustainability** are frequently mentioned in the media and official documents from educational institutions, these broad topics are not always fully understood. Ethnically and culturally diverse societies need intercultural education as a strategic resource for **achieving sustainability, equity, peace, and social cohesion**.

**Research in early childhood education and care (ECEC)** is increasingly focused on broadening the definition of sustainability and exploring its practical applications. Despite progress in embedding these practices in school curricula, **analyses of educational contexts in Italy, Hungary, and Spain** have shown that ECEC still lacks many resources concerning themes of interculturality and sustainability.

To address these common needs in ECEC, the project "**SUSIEE: Sustainability and interculturality in 0-3 early childhood education and care**" (Project n°:2023-1-ES01-KA220-SCH-000153355) wants **to revise the current EU quality framework for 0-3 ECEC from a sustainability (GreenComp) and interculturality perspective**.

For this reason, our **Consortium has developed a comprehensive guide** that includes **conceptualizations and a selection of intercultural and sustainable ECEC practices for children aged 0-3**. The guide will also contain a **detailed content analysis of the legislative context and curricular structures/programs in 0-3 ECEC** from an intercultural and sustainability perspective in each partner country. Furthermore, **policy recommendations have been formulated for the application of sustainable and intercultural ECEC in accordance with the EU Quality Framework in partner countries**, addressing aspects such as access, staff, and curriculum.

By conceptualizing the terminology and conducting a theoretical analysis of intercultural and sustainable practices in early childhood (0-3), **we aim to establish a framework for future good practices that meet the demands of today's society**. The legislative analysis of the legal and educational context in different member countries will enable us **to tailor our work to specific realities, thereby producing high-quality recommendations that will help transform education into one based on interculturality and sustainability**.

The results of our efforts, including the guide and policy recommendations, will be **disseminated widely among ECEC professionals, policymakers, and academic communities**. This will ensure a direct impact on current and future ECEC provision, fostering an inclusive and sustainable educational environment for young children across Europe.



## Chapter 1

# Intercultural and sustainable ECEC practices for children aged 0-3

# Introduction

In this section, the SUSIEE Consortium conducted **extensive research on the state of the art of intercultural and sustainable practices in early childhood education and care at a global scale.**

In order to do so, a series of best practices have been collected to investigate what are the **existing exercises, methodologies, funding opportunities and projects** that are testing new frontiers in terms of how it is possible to re-structure and build the future of ECEC.

For this matter, the research was structured in the following way:

Each partner country worked on the identification and the selection of three clusters of best practices:

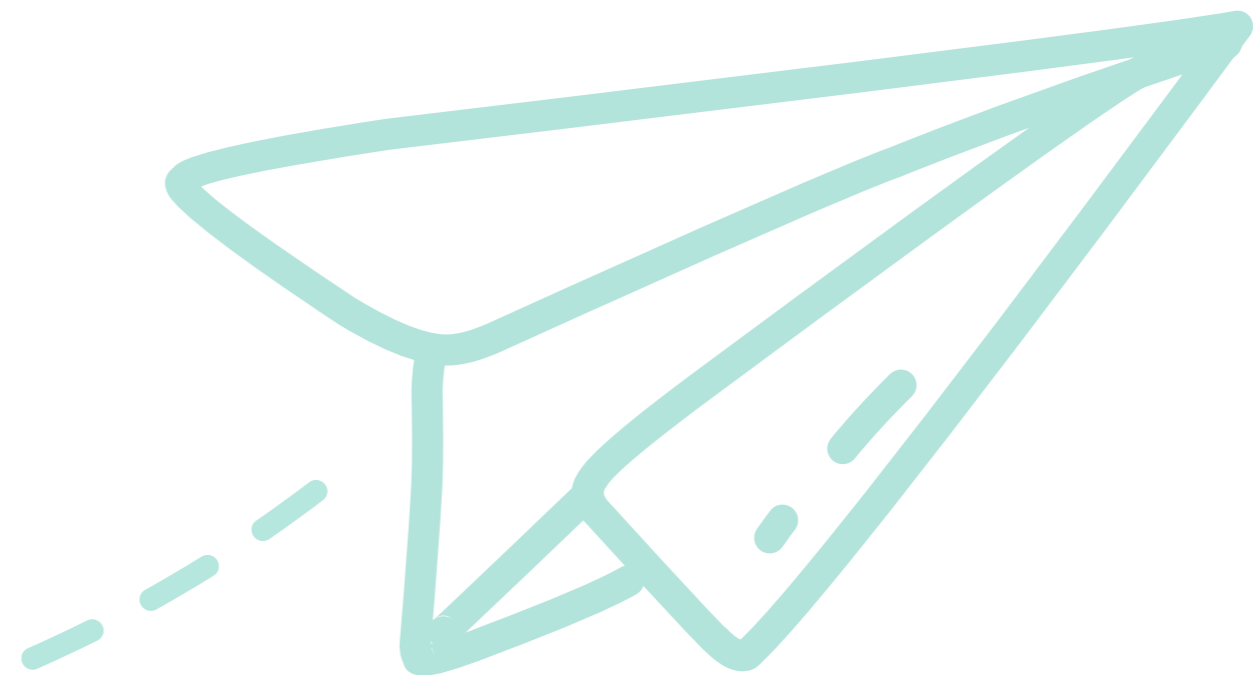
**3 local practices**

**3 practices from a non-partner country**

**3 practices from outside Europe**

This research resulted in the selection of a **total of 27 practices.** At a qualitative level, **the project team as a whole utilized their own background and outlook in the process of identification.** This was thought to be a fundamental element in order to have a diverse and more complete account of what are the examples that our educational institutions could follow or how to underscore the importance of initiatives that are already present in our territories. Moreover, for some of the practices described, we have accompanied them with tips and lists of materials for educators who want to experiment with them.

Italy





# Local Practices

<b>Title</b>	<b>Emotional Education</b>
<b>Author/Source</b>	APS NATURALMENTE
<b>Citation / URL</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Atlas of Emotions [website]: <a href="https://atlasofemotions.org/">https://atlasofemotions.org/</a></li> <li>Progetto Asilo Nido. <i>Emozioni. Idee per attività</i> (Emotions. Ideas for Activities). <a href="https://www.progettoasilonido.org/index.php/teoria-e-pratica-al-nido/progetto-educativo/programma-didattico/183-emozioni-idee-per-attivita">https://www.progettoasilonido.org/index.php/teoria-e-pratica-al-nido/progetto-educativo/programma-didattico/183-emozioni-idee-per-attivita</a></li> <li>Save The Children (2023). Educare alle emozioni e ai sentimenti: 3 attività da fare a scuola (Emotional education: 3 activities to carry out in schools). Retrieved from: <a href="https://www.savethechildren.it/blog-notizie/educare-alle-emozioni-ai-sentimenti-3-attivita-da-fare-a-scuola">https://www.savethechildren.it/blog-notizie/educare-alle-emozioni-ai-sentimenti-3-attivita-da-fare-a-scuola</a></li> </ul>
<b>Date</b>	2024

## Short Introduction

Even though we do not know many things about emotions, these determine our choices and the quality of our lives.

Drawing inspiration the **neurocultural theory** of Paul Ekman APS Naturalmente has developed a journey through emotions for 0-3 children where, periodically, images and facial expressions tied to core emotions (like anger, happiness, sadness, fear, disgust, hate and surprise) are investigated, visualized and reproduced.

This activity allows children to be exposed in the first years of their lives to emotions in a non-verbal way. This is also a method to recognize others' emotional state at a universal level, overcoming linguistic barriers.

Through his neurocultural theory, Paul Ekman introduces the concept of universal emotions. He states that some facial expressions deriving from certain feelings can be universally recognized. However, according to neurocultural theory, besides universal emotions, there are also "display rules". Display rules are understood as social rules for the ways in which emotions are expressed that determine, because of cultural factors, the variations of these facial expressions depending on what is acceptable in a certain context or circumstance.

## Description of Main Activities and/or Methods of the practice

*How is an emotional educational project for 0-3 children built?*

The activities foreseen entail an introspective path with the goal of recognizing the 7 primary emotions.

The exercises always start with the presentation of the emotion with the support of an illustrated book.

The educator then tries to read out loud to allow children to gather theoretical information related to the emotions even if they are not necessarily feeling them at that moment.

## Lasting period: 1 week

Subsequently, the emotion presented through the book has to be reproduced through facial expressions. This will involve the research of images with people of different ethnicities making that facial expression to show the children the universality of emotions.

## Lasting period: 1 week

Once the concept of that emotion and the facial expression have been acquired, the game of "emotions mime" will start.

One-by-one, each child will make a facial expression and the others will try to repeat it. During the activity, children will be photographed while making their facial expression to make a final board with all emotions in it.

## Lasting period: 1 week

This cycle will be repeated for each primary emotion, taking up a whole month for every cycle.

<b>Needed materials</b>	To realize the activities, it's necessary to have these materials: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Digital camera</li> <li>Projector</li> <li>Illustrated books on emotions for 0-3 children</li> <li>Colored cardboard</li> <li>Stationery (glue, paper, pencils, scissors)</li> </ul>
<b>Notes and suggestions for Educators</b>	It is suggested for educators to proceed slowly, allowing every child to find autonomously their focal point. It is also strongly recommended to carry out the activities outdoors.

<b>Title</b>	<b>Recycling and Nature</b>
<b>Author/Source</b>	APS NATURALMENTE
<b>Citation / URL</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Naturarte (2017). <i>Naturarte 1: un percorso alla scoperta dei colori naturali</i> (NatureArt 1: a path to the discovery of natural colors). Retrieved from: <a href="https://percorsiformativi06.it/naturarte-un-percorso-alla-scoperta-dei-colori-naturali/">https://percorsiformativi06.it/naturarte-un-percorso-alla-scoperta-dei-colori-naturali/</a></li> <li>Zerosei Planet (2020). <i>Colori Naturali da frutta e verdura</i> (Natural colors from fruits and vegetables). Retrieved from: <a href="https://www.zeroseiplanet.it/colori-naturali-di-frutta-e-verdura/">https://www.zeroseiplanet.it/colori-naturali-di-frutta-e-verdura/</a></li> </ul>
<b>Date</b>	2024

### Short Introduction

This activity is meant to teach children the importance of recycling through the realization of tools that are sustainable and environmentally conscious such as flour glue, natural painting brushes and colors. This can be a fruitful way for 0-3 children to build contact with nature and explore the world through hands-on experiences.

The activities find their purpose in the development of manual skills, skills in nature, the ability to handle and recognize different kinds of materials, their composition and temperatures. This type of contact activates neural processes that allow children to get to know themselves, others and the environment.

### Description of Main Activities and/or Methods of the practice

The described activities involve the creation of organic glue, colors and painting brushes. This experience is favored in order to develop children's autonomy and creativity in nature. Manipulating and kneading different materials can help release the child's tension and get familiar with their composition in terms of weight, color, texture. These are fundamental elements to introduce the concept of recycling and valorization of natural elements.

Moreover, after the materials have been crafted, it will also be possible to use them for creative activities such as illustration, body painting, collages, etc.

### Needed materials

To make **natural painting brushes** it is necessary to:

Go out in a park or the woods and retrieve **small branches, flowers and leaves**. While the branches will constitute the handle of the brush, the leaves and flowers attached to the branch will be the bristles.

To make **natural glue** it is necessary to have:

- Flour
- Water
- A bowl
- A whip

Once you have all the ingredients, you will have to pour one ounce of flour and two glasses of water into the bowl. Make sure to mix them without leaving any lumps.

### Needed materials

Natural glue can be stored for 3-4 days in containers with a lid.

To make **natural colors** it is necessary to: Start boiling **fruits, vegetables or spices**.

For instance:

- Brown can be made by coffee or cocoa powder
- Orange with carrots
- Yellow with turmeric and saffron
- Green with spinach and green cabbage
- Purple with berries
- Red with turnips or onions (also, by squeezing a few drops of lemon you can obtain a hot pink color, meanwhile if you add baking powder you can obtain a blue color)

### Notes and suggestions for Educators

Natural glue and brushes can be made with the aid of children only. Natural colors, however, entail a preparation from the educators (especially when boiling materials).

<b>Title</b>	<b>Embracing the 5 senses</b>
<b>Author/Source</b>	APS NATURALMENTE
<b>Citation / URL</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Metodo Montessori (2020). <i>Attività musicali per bambini: come il metodo Montessori insegna la musica ai bambini</i> (Musical activities for children: how the Montessori method teaches music to children). Retrieved from: <a href="https://www.metodomontessori.it/attivita-montessori/principi-alleducazione/attivita-musicali-per-bambini">https://www.metodomontessori.it/attivita-montessori/principi-alleducazione/attivita-musicali-per-bambini</a></li> </ul>
<b>Date</b>	2024

### Short Introduction

This activity involves the creation of sensory paths and laboratories focused on the recognition, use and understanding of the 5 senses. The proposed activities will consist of experiences with natural elements and divided into 5 learning cycles each dedicated to one of the senses (touch, smell, sight, taste, hearing).

### Description of Main Activities and/or Methods of the practice

1. **TOUCH:** For this cycle there will be a valorization of outdoor tactile experiences. The aim is that of recognizing the importance of "touch", the feelings attached to it (hot, cold, hard, soft, smooth, rough, etc.), the ability to distinguish different forms and materials, being able to work in groups while building a connection with the soil, and development of eye-hand coordination.
2. **SMELL:** For this cycle there will be paths and experiential laboratories where, through the use of the smells of nature, a child can develop and recognize this sense. The activities are meant to be carried out outdoor with the use of natural elements and aromatic plants. The aims of this entail the ability to distinguish and describe smells, sistematize knowledge on fragrances, sharpen the sense of smell and recognize plants and vegetables only through this sense.
3. **SIGHT:** For this cycle there will be paths and experiential outdoor laboratories where, through the use of mirrors, color palettes, light tricks, it is possible to develop the ability to see and get used to visual depth, perceive chromatic differences, etc.
4. **TASTE:** In this cycle there will be paths and laboratories through which children will discover the four main flavors (sweet, salty, bitter, sour) by tasting food from different parts of the world. The aims are the development of taste, recognizing local food and that of different countries, also conceptualizing what are the emotions connected to the sense of taste.
5. **HEARING:** In this cycle there will be paths and experiential outdoor laboratories for the development of hearing and recognition of sounds. In this case, sensorial hearing paths are created by using small standing bells to have a first approach with sound therapy. This allows children to be relaxed in nature while they start recognizing sound, vibration and the feelings that arise. The aims are: building strong hearing skills, distinguishing between noise and sound, sharpening the sense of hearing and recognizing the quality of sounds.

<b>Needed materials</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For the sense of touch: boards that feel smooth or rough, objects feel hot, cold, hard or soft. Also use leaves, dirt, ashes and grass to create paths where it's possible to feel this elements with the plants of their feet.</li> </ul>
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<b>Needed materials</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For the sense of smell: Aromatic plants, flowers, grass</li> <li>For the sense of sight: Mirrors, colored boards, light tricks</li> <li>For the sense of taste: Local and international foods (always minding potential allergies or intolerance)</li> <li>For the sense of hearing: Standing bells, musical instruments (better if strings or percussions)</li> </ul>
<b>Notes and suggestions for Educators</b>	The process of development of the 5 senses includes a constant repetition of the activities. It is recommended to always start from an explanation, followed by a demonstration from an educator and then support the child in doing the activity.





## Practices from a European non-partner country

<b>Title</b>	<b>Forest Kindergartens: A Multicultural Perspective (Denmark)</b>
<b>Author/Source</b>	Samantha Leder, Natural Start Alliance
<b>Citation / URL</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leder S.(2018).Forest Kindergartens: <i>A Multicultural Perspective</i>. Natural Start Alliance. Retrieved from: <a href="https://naturalstart.org/feature-stories/forest-kindergartens-multicultural-perspective">https://naturalstart.org/feature-stories/forest-kindergartens-multicultural-perspective</a></li> </ul>
<b>Date</b>	2018

### Short Introduction

This practice is an account of the experience with the Danish educational system made by an American teacher called Samantha Leder who studied child development in Copenhagen. Specifically, through an internship she carried out in a forest kindergarten, she was able to observe how Danish culture and pedagogy unfold, also understanding how Danish schools respect difference, encourage autonomy, and trust children to direct their own learning, especially through risky play.

### Description of Main Activities and/or Methods of the practice

In Scandinavian countries, early childhood education is deeply rooted in the concept of "child-centeredness." This philosophy emphasizes the recognition and appreciation of each child's unique personality, temperament, and developmental path. Teachers are tasked with creating an environment that accommodates these individual differences, fostering a space where children ranging from two to five years old can mix, interact, and play together, especially outdoors. The varied emotional, social, and cognitive development stages of each child are acknowledged by educators, who remain sensitive to these differences, recognizing each child's potential and guiding them as they embrace challenges through outdoor play.

A prime example of this approach is the checkpoint system observed in forest kindergartens. During nature walks, pedagogues set predetermined checkpoints along the trail, marked by trees with an "X," a bench, or a natural landmark. Children are given the freedom to sprint, walk, or skip to each checkpoint but must wait for the entire group before moving to the next one. This system allows each child to enjoy their journey and observe their surroundings at their own pace, taking into account their different speeds, needs, and abilities to create an inclusive environment.

In child development classes, the idea of a "**Good Childhood**" is frequently discussed. This concept emphasizes appreciating childhood as a developmental phase where each child is encouraged to mature at their own pace. Danish children, under this philosophy, are trusted with the time, space, and opportunity to become independent from adults and develop autonomy. In forest kindergartens, this independence is fostered by encouraging children to dress themselves for the outdoors, construct their own games, and climb trees without adult assistance. Such independence is crucial for developing self-confidence and self-esteem.

Scandinavian countries cherish childhood as a revered and nostalgic period that is not rushed but embraced. As a result, children are encouraged to enjoy their youth and appreciate play and natural curiosity as forms of learning. Free from the pressures of high-stakes, standardized assessments, Danish children learn at their own pace in relaxed, loosely structured educational settings.

In Danish forest kindergartens, unstructured playtime and peer socialization through creative and interactive play are emphasized. These social interactions help children learn to communicate and relate to others.

Danish children use their freedom and imagination to transform spaces and experiment with different perspectives. They might imagine themselves as animals exploring their habitats, such as crocodiles hunting, monkeys swinging from branches, or fairies concocting magical mud potions. This flexibility in the curriculum and the freedom to adapt learning to an ever-changing outdoor context are hallmarks of Danish forest preschools. Through self-directed play, children design their own games and imaginary worlds, following their natural instincts to construct, investigate, and represent. They build, question, and express knowledge until they internalize meaningful ideas, then start anew. Outdoor spaces and natural affordances provide limitless possibilities for play and learning.

Engaging in risky play is a natural form of exploration for children, allowing them to experience and understand their environment. This type of play is both thrilling and invaluable developmentally, as children acknowledge potential risks but choose to challenge themselves, trust their instincts, and realize their capabilities. Danish pedagogues offer ample opportunities for risky play, such as balancing on fallen trees, running down steep hills, or whittling twigs with small knives. This engagement enables children to develop self-confidence, courage, and resilience as they safely venture outside their comfort zones.

<b>Needed materials</b>	No particular materials needed
<b>Notes and suggestions for Educators</b>	-

<b>Title</b>	<b>Good Start for All (Czech Republic)</b>
<b>Author/Source</b>	Schola Empirica, Czech Republic
<b>Citation / URL</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BE-CHILD project (European project on pre-school education)</li> <li>• BE-CHILD Project [website]: <a href="https://bechild.hi.is/">https://bechild.hi.is/</a></li> <li>• Schola Empirica [website]: <a href="https://www.scholaempirica.org/en/methodologies/good-start/">https://www.scholaempirica.org/en/methodologies/good-start/</a></li> </ul>
<b>Date</b>	2011

### Short Introduction

“**Good Start for All**” aims to foster collaboration between informal education settings, pre-schools, and social service organizations to support the inclusion of children from socially disadvantaged or culturally diverse backgrounds. This initiative provides educators with methods and strategies to enhance the social and emotional development of children. The goal is to implement these strategies across all social settings by creating a network of relevant entities.

In the Czech Republic, the Good Start methodology has proven effective in boosting children’s self-esteem, promoting autonomy, and helping them build relationships with their peers.

### Description of Main Activities and/or Methods of the practice

The teacher training program “**Good Start: Support of Social and Emotional Development of Preschool Children**” is a Czech adaptation of the Incredible Years program developed in the USA. This initiative aims to equip educators in pre-school institutions with effective methodologies to support children in disadvantaged situations in developing social and emotional competencies. The program’s strategies include building positive relationships between teachers, parents, and children, providing individual attention and positive feedback to children, engaging parents through feedback and involvement, and facilitating overall communication.

The ultimate goal is to prepare children with high self-confidence, emotion regulation strategies, problem-solving skills, and other attributes essential for their future education. Additionally, the program seeks to create a comprehensive support network connecting all relevant social entities, such as pre-schools and families, to establish a healthy developmental environment for the children. This network encompasses both informal and formal educational institutions to ensure a smooth transition from pre-school to primary school.

Schola Empirica introduced the Good Start methodology to Czech pre-schools in 2011. Since then, over 2,000 teachers have been trained, and the methods are being implemented in more than 250 pre-schools across the Czech Republic. This widespread adoption underscores the program’s success in fostering the social and emotional development of young children.

The Good Start for All (GSA) program incorporates several best practices to help children develop essential socio-emotional skills. Key **strategies include**:

- **Teaching Self-Management:** Children learn to manage their emotions through simple techniques like taking three deep breaths and understanding the difference between being tense and relaxed.
- **Positive Reinforcement:** Praising positive actions while ignoring negative ones has proven effective in redirecting unwanted behavior.

- **Reward Systems:** Positive feedback and sticker rewards encourage the repetition of good behavior.
- **Innovative Teaching Methods:** Introducing new teaching methods helps bridge cultural differences among children from diverse backgrounds.

### Benefits of the Program

- **For Children:** They acquire the socio-emotional competencies needed for a smooth transition into further education and to face future challenges successfully.
- **For Teachers:** They gain effective methods and strategies to support children’s socio-emotional development, enhancing their professional skills.
- **For Educational Institutions:** The project fosters the creation of effective learning environments across various institutions, cultures, and countries, promoting a cohesive approach to education.

By implementing these practices, the GSA program ensures that children, teachers, and educational settings benefit, leading to more inclusive and supportive learning communities.

<b>Needed materials</b>	In the “ <b>Methodological materials and tools</b> ” the creator of the practice gives an account of potential materials that could be utilized: <a href="https://www.scholaempirica.org/en/methodologies/good-start/main-principles/">https://www.scholaempirica.org/en/methodologies/good-start/main-principles/</a>
<b>Notes and suggestions for Educators</b>	<p><b>Giving Attention:</b> Teachers have to take an individualized approach to each child, noticing and rewarding desirable behaviors while deliberately overlooking undesirable ones. This method ensures that positive actions are reinforced and encourages children to continue displaying them.</p> <p><b>Situational Learning:</b> Teachers need to actively respond to the dynamics of the classroom, helping children understand the causes and consequences of their actions through dramatization with puppets. This interactive method captivates children’s interest, as they enjoy asking questions and engaging in conversations with their puppet-friends, making the learning process both fun and meaningful.</p> <p><b>Spontaneous Social Learning - The Principle of Natural Imitation:</b> Teachers model desirable behaviors and actions, either through their own conduct or by highlighting positive behaviors exhibited by other children. This principle leverages the natural tendency of children to imitate those around them, fostering an environment where positive behavior is consistently reinforced.</p>

<b>Title</b>	<b>La Traversine (France)</b>
<b>Author/Source</b>	Transgardens
<b>Citation / URL</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transgardens [website]: <a href="https://transjardins.org/la-traversine-garden-paris-france/">https://transjardins.org/la-traversine-garden-paris-france/</a></li> </ul>
<b>Date</b>	2017 - ongoing

### Short Introduction

La Traversine is an innovative **educational garden** established in 2017 on the roof of the Bercy school in the 12th arrondissement of Paris. Initially intended as an evacuation passage, the terrace has been transformed into an experimental garden by Designing Hope, integrating various sustainable agriculture methods, including agro-ecology and permaculture. This project is part of the “Parisculteurs” initiative, a call for green projects launched by the Paris City Council to promote urban greenery.

In 2020, La Traversine expanded into the elementary school playground, creating La Traversine #2. This extension has further strengthened the educational and community-focused aspects of the garden.

### Description of Main Activities and/or Methods of the practice

La Traversine is a garden made up of different kinds of spaces where it's possible to conduct learning activities:

**The Keyhole Garden:** A circular raised garden featuring a central compost heap. Nutrients from the compost are distributed to the surrounding plants. The shape of the garden resembles a keyhole, giving the garden its name.

**The Mandala Garden:** Consists of eight trapezoidal garden beds arranged to form a flower pattern inspired by mandalas, a central element in permaculture gardens. Its cultivations are seasonal vegetable crops.

**The Multi-Level Fruit Garden:** Comprises 11 wooden elements, each 2 meters long, arranged in two levels to grow berries.

**The Pergola:** A meeting area for children, surrounded by plants.

**The Insect Shelters:** Three insect shelters located on the terrace, in the nursery school's courtyard, and in the elementary school's courtyard.

All of the spaces and La Traversine's activities are designed to **educate and engage children in sustainable practices and intercultural exchange**. Using the “Communicating Classes” program, **the garden fosters international exchanges between students in Paris and those in Burkina Faso, South Africa, Swaziland, and Senegal.**

### Key Activities:

**Thematic Learning:** Topics include soil health, seed germination, plant life cycles, composting, beneficial insects, and cultivation methods.

**Resource Utilization:** Teaching children to compost leaves, branches, and food waste from the school canteen for garden fertilization.

**Home Gardening:** Encouraging children to plant at home using seeds or plants provided, promoting recycling and composting.

### Extracurricular Engagement:

**Playful Learning:** Small group activities during extracurricular time in collaboration with the educational team.

**Treasure Hunts:** Interactive games designed by the association to make learning fun.  
Recent Developments

In September 2020, the garden was temporarily moved to the elementary school courtyard to allow for roof waterproofing. This move has strengthened the collaboration between the after-school team and Designing Hope's civic services team. Through these activities, La Traversine aims to foster a deeper understanding of sustainability and interculturality among young learners, preparing them to be conscientious and knowledgeable stewards of the environment.

<b>Needed materials</b>	-
<b>Notes and suggestions for Educators</b>	<p>Other insights of La Traversine activities:</p> <p><b>Garden maintenance by children:</b> <a href="https://transjardins.org/maintenance-of-tomato-plants-in-the-traversine-bercy-garden-with-a-pupil-from-the-bercy-school/">https://transjardins.org/maintenance-of-tomato-plants-in-the-traversine-bercy-garden-with-a-pupil-from-the-bercy-school/</a></p> <p><b>Use of pedagogical tools:</b> <a href="https://transjardins.org/pedagogical-tools-at-the-traversine-garden/">https://transjardins.org/pedagogical-tools-at-the-traversine-garden/</a></p>



## Practices from outside Europe

<b>Title</b>	<b>Passport travelers (United States)</b>
<b>Author/Source</b>	Diana Lee Santamaria, Author who wrote an educational book series called "DLee's World" promoting bilingual and early literacy and diversity
<b>Citation / URL</b>	• DLee's World [website]: <a href="https://www.dleesworld.com/about-dlees-world">https://www.dleesworld.com/about-dlees-world</a>
<b>Date</b>	2017

### Short Introduction

This activity allows children to become travelers that travel around the globe and get introduced to their classmates' diverse backgrounds. It revolves around the concept that it is not always necessary to travel physically in order to get to know about other cultures and ways of life.

### Description of Main Activities and/or Methods of the practice

#### 1. Gathering Cultural Background Information

Start by talking to the parents and children in your class to gather information about their backgrounds and any cultural traditions that are important to them. This step, recommended by preschool teacher and children's author Diana Lee Santamaria, helps create a foundation for understanding and respecting the diverse cultures represented in your classroom.

#### 2. Creating Cultural Passports

Have the children create their own passports for an upcoming 'round-the-world trip. Throughout the year, students will take turns sharing information about where they're from. Encourage children to bring props such as photos, favorite snacks, or their country's flag. Each time the class "visits" a new country, everyone earns a new passport stamp.

#### 3. How It Teaches Diversity

This activity helps children understand that despite coming from various backgrounds, they share commonalities and that diversity enriches their lives. According to Santamaria, it reinforces the idea that diversity is present all around them, even within their classroom.

#### 4. Introducing Cultural Traditions Through Food

Food is a central aspect of community in many cultures and can be an engaging way to introduce young children to different traditions. Alison Kim Walker, educational consultant and owner of Hummingbird Learning Group, suggests asking classroom families to share favorite traditional cuisines. Include healthy dishes from a variety of countries that may be unfamiliar to the children, such as fresh guacamole, Bánh mì, homemade hummus with pita chips, or naan with mild curry.

#### 5. How It Teaches Diversity

Sampling new foods can be a gentle introduction to various cultures. This activity allows children to try new cuisines in a safe and supportive environment while giving families an opportunity to share their personal food culture. It helps children overcome fear of new experiences, including food.

#### 6. Learning Greetings in Different Languages

Incorporate learning opportunities into your daily routine by introducing words and phrases in other languages during circle time. Encourage children to greet their friends using their new vocabulary words. This practice not only makes greeting one another fun but also enriches their understanding and appreciation of different languages.

By integrating these activities into your classroom, you create an inclusive environment that celebrates diversity, fosters understanding, and builds a sense of global community among your students.

#### 7. Bilingual Read-Aloud Books

Incorporate bilingual read-aloud books into your classroom activities. These books provide an opportunity to introduce children to new languages in a fun and engaging way.

How It Teaches Diversity: "One of the first steps in understanding cultural differences is recognizing that not everyone speaks the same language," says Carver. "Through this exercise, children begin to understand the many different ways people around the world communicate and that language is a bridge to understanding other cultures, not a barrier."

#### 8. Cultural and Religious Celebrations

Children love a good party, and teaching them about cultural and religious celebrations from around the world is a fantastic way to get them excited about diversity. You can add multicultural classroom celebrations throughout the year by choosing one event to celebrate each month.

#### 9. Incorporating Books and Online Resources

Use books and online resources to teach children about the importance of each celebration. Incorporate relevant music and artwork into the learning experience to make it more immersive.

#### 10. Creative Projects for Celebrations

Engage children in creative projects related to these celebrations. For example, they can decorate their own paper skulls for Dia de los Muertos, create Chinese lanterns and rattle drums for Chinese New Year, and husk an ear of corn for Kwanzaa.

How It Teaches Diversity: A culture's celebrations reveal its deeply held values and traditions. Monthly multicultural celebrations give children something to look forward to while providing a deeper understanding of how people around the world celebrate with family and friends.

<b>Needed materials</b>	The author suggests to try international books such as <i>Hello Ocean / Hola Mar</i> by Pam Munoz Ryan (Spanish), <i>Bee-bim Bop!</i> by Linda Sue Park (Korean) and <i>Am I Small? / Mimi Ni Mdogo?</i> by Philipp Winterberg (Swahili).
<b>Notes and suggestions for Educators</b>	If classrooms do not have a diverse group of children, Santamaria advises reading a book like <i>"Diversity Soup"</i> by Latrecia Brown-Johnson.

<b>Title</b>	<b>RAISED Between Cultures Model (Canada)</b>
<b>Author/Source</b>	University of Alberta
<b>Citation / URL</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>University of Alberta (2017). <i>RAISED Between Cultures - A knowledge and reflection guidebook for intercultural practice in the early years</i>. Edmonton, Alberta: University of Alberta. Retrieved from: <a href="https://www.ualberta.ca/community-university-partnership/media-library/community-university-partnership/resources/publications/finalraised-guidebook-08single-pages-2.pdf">https://www.ualberta.ca/community-university-partnership/media-library/community-university-partnership/resources/publications/finalraised-guidebook-08single-pages-2.pdf</a></li> </ul>
<b>Date</b>	2017

### Short Introduction

The methodology stems from key insights gathered through The Multicultural Early Childhood Assessment and Learning (MECAL) project. This initiative was a collaboration between the University of Alberta and various early childhood stakeholders, including community-based organizations, immigrant-serving agencies, government bodies, and school boards.

Goals of the MECAL Project:

- Understanding Developmental Context and Outcomes
- Identify crucial factors when working with immigrant and refugee children and parents to enhance the understanding of their developmental context and outcomes.
- Supporting Intercultural Practice

Develop resources that support intercultural practices in early childhood education. This approach ensures that all children feel a sense of belonging, learn about each other's cultures, and acquire early skills for navigating multicultural spaces later in life.

Working from a place of interculturality, the MECAL project emphasized the importance of creating inclusive environments where children can thrive. The collaboration led to the development of the RAISED between Cultures model, a framework designed to integrate these principles into early childhood education settings. This model supports educators in fostering an environment that respects and celebrates cultural diversity, ultimately benefiting children's social and emotional development.

### Description of Main Activities and/or Methods of the practice

Growing up between cultures and languages is a common experience for many children of immigrant and refugee backgrounds. The RAISED between Cultures model encourages educators and practitioners to adopt a holistic understanding of children's play, behavior, learning, and development based on their social, cultural, and migration experiences. This model consists of six levels, each highlighting a crucial factor to consider when working with children and families from immigrant or refugee backgrounds. The RAISED acronym is color-coded to correspond to each level of the model, demonstrating how these factors collectively and individually impact children's outcomes.

**Reveal Culture:** Whether consciously or not, we are all cultural beings. Culture encompasses various expressions of common life experiences, such as greeting one another, raising children, mourning loss, and celebrating births. While some aspects of children's culture are visible, like language, clothes, and food, many others are less apparent. These include children's play, eating habits, social behaviors, parents' beliefs about early childhood development, assessment, and health, gender expectations, and ways of relating to family and friends

**Acknowledge Pre-Migration Experiences:** Every immigrant and refugee family has a unique pre-migration story and journey. Some families were forced to flee their country due to war, leaving abruptly to survive, while others left due to economic hardship or in search of better educational opportunities. Despite these differences, all families share the common dream of a better future for their children.

**Identify Post-Migration Systemic Barriers:** Settling into a new country is a long and stressful process, with the first few years being particularly challenging for many newcomer families. They may face hardships such as social isolation, discrimination, poverty, language barriers, and other systemic obstacles. Systemic barriers occur when systems (e.g., health, education, social services) have practices, policies, and procedures that do not consider the social, cultural, and language realities of all families, preventing meaningful participation and equitable access to programs and services.

**Support Family and Community Strengths:** Diverse families bring a wealth of strengths that can positively contribute to children's development. These strengths, sometimes referred to as "funds of knowledge," include resilience, strong intergenerational networks, extended family relationships, hope, educational aspirations, ethnocultural community support, cultural wealth, and bi/multilingualism.

**Establish Connections Between Environments:** Young children with diverse backgrounds are socialized in various environments: home, early learning and care settings, their ethnocultural community, and the broader community. At home and in ethnocultural settings, children experience their parents' heritage culture and begin developing a sense of cultural identity. In early learning and care environments and the broader community, they experience culture and start to develop their identity.

**Determine Child Outcomes Together with Families:** Children's learning and development outcomes are influenced by their experiences at home and in early learning and care settings. For children growing up between multiple cultures, outcomes such as first language proficiency, cultural identity, and cultural social competence are vital to their optimal development and need support. Given the complexity of culture and the varying realities of families, collaboration with families is essential to determine the best learning and developmental outcomes for their children and the most effective ways to support them.

By understanding and integrating these six levels, educators and practitioners can better support the unique needs of children and families with a diverse background, ensuring a more inclusive and effective approach to their development and well-being.

<b>Needed materials</b>	-
<b>Notes and suggestions for Educators</b>	<p>In this section there will be suggestions and insights on how to use the RAISED model appropriately:</p> <p>Culturally-influenced behaviors and actions, which may appear unusual or problematic in one context, can be cherished, necessary, and meaningful in another. Without a deeper understanding of the cultural influences behind these behaviors, one might make incorrect assumptions. Individualistic and collectivist cultures, for example, have differing expectations for children's behavior along a continuum. In individualist cultures like Canada, young children are taught independence skills (e.g., using a spoon, putting on their shoes or coat) from a very young age.</p>

**Notes and suggestions for Educators**

Conversely, other cultures emphasize interdependence and social skills during early childhood, such as obedience or greeting and respecting elders, with independence skills introduced later.

When families relocate to a new country, they rely on their pre-migration knowledge and experiences to navigate early learning and care programs or other early childhood services. The new country's systems will likely differ from those of their home country. For instance, in some cultures, it is the teacher's and education system's role to introduce literacy and numeracy activities. Families from some backgrounds might find play-based learning confusing, as play is traditionally seen as a leisure activity rather than a learning method.

Parents and children may have faced adversities before migrating, especially if they were forced to leave due to war. Young children exposed to trauma may exhibit certain behavioral responses, such as anxiety when hearing loud noises. Both children and parents who have experienced trauma due to war, family separation, or other pre-migration experiences might require additional psychological support in their new country.

Identifying the post-migration family context can enhance our understanding of the daily stressors families face, impacting the mental health and well-being of both parents and children. These stressors can also affect parents' involvement with early learning programs and children's transitions from home to care settings. For example, socially isolated families might have children who rarely interact with peers, making early learning programs their first structured, peer-play experience.

Navigating new systems that do not acknowledge their cultural experiences can leave families feeling overwhelmed and unsafe in expressing their concerns. Even parents who speak some English might feel their language skills are insufficient, making them reluctant to engage in program activities with their children.

Children have the ability to learn two or more languages with proper support and encouragement. Many children grow up speaking a first language other than, or in addition to, English. Speaking multiple languages offers children different perspectives on the world. While learning English is crucial for academic success and social inclusion, maintaining their first language also provides developmental benefits for children growing up between cultures.

Through socialization, children develop language, social-emotional skills, and identities to navigate their social environments. All children need time to adjust to new people, expectations, and routines when transitioning from home to an early learning and care setting. For children with a migration background, this transition might also involve learning a new language and culture. When these children do not see their home culture and language reflected and valued in early learning environments, they may start to feel different and perceive their home culture as less valuable than the dominant culture.

Each family is unique, and the extent to which they practice their culture and language can vary depending on numerous factors.

**Notes and suggestions for Educators**

Culture is fluid and evolves as families move to new places and adopt new ways of raising their children. Making assumptions about parents' expectations and experiences based solely on their origin or language can lead to incorrect conclusions. Parents, educators, and care providers all aim for the best possible future for young children. Achieving this goal requires collaboration towards common objectives. Being welcoming and culturally responsive involves creating opportunities for families to share their hopes, dreams, and concerns. These opportunities should consider families' pre- and post-migration realities and be meaningful to both parents and educators. Trust is gradually built by connecting with and supporting the family, leading to a stronger support network for the child's optimal development.

Reflect on a time you struggled to understand or work with a child in your care or classroom. What assumptions did you make? Did you consider the impact of the family's cultural background or pre-migration experiences? Were there systemic barriers you were unaware of or felt unable to remove on your own? Who could you consult with to help understand some of these barriers and connect the family to community resources (e.g., family liaisons, intercultural consultants, settlement agencies, cultural brokers)?

<b>Title</b>	<b>Environmental Sustainability Strategy (Australia)</b>
<b>Author/Source</b>	Acacia Kindergarten / Government of South Australia – Department for Education and Child Development
<b>Citation / URL</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Government of South Australia - Department for Education and Child Development (2014). <i>Environmental Sustainability Strategy</i>. Reviewed in 2016. Retrieved from: <a href="https://www.preschools.sa.gov.au/acacia-kindergarten/our-centre/things-to-know/acacia_environmental-sustainability.pdf">https://www.preschools.sa.gov.au/acacia-kindergarten/our-centre/things-to-know/acacia_environmental-sustainability.pdf</a></li> </ul>
<b>Date</b>	2016

### Short Introduction

Acacia Kindergarten can be found in the North Hill of Mount Gambier. This is a unique location that serves as a living classroom where nature and learning are merged. The kindergarten has fully embraced a culture that prioritizes nature play, environmental education, and fostering a deep connection between children and the broader community landscape.

The primary objective of this holistic approach is to create an environment where sustainable practices are not just taught but lived. By immersing children in nature, the aim is to instill a lifelong respect and understanding of the environment. This commitment extends beyond the children to include educators and families, ensuring that sustainability becomes a seamless part of everyone's daily routines and overall lifestyle.

Through a variety of outdoor activities and environmental projects, children learn about the importance of conservation and the impact of their actions on the world around them. Educators are dedicated to modeling sustainable practices, from composting and recycling to mindful consumption and energy use. Families are encouraged to participate in this journey, reinforcing the values of environmental stewardship at home and within the community.

### Description of Main Activities and/or Methods of the practice

Acacia Kindergarten is nestled in a park-like setting designed to offer children a natural, flexible, and challenging learning environment. The approach emphasizes sustainability and a deep connection with nature. Here's how these principles are incorporated into the schools' daily routines:

#### Outdoor Learning and Play

- **Natural and Recycled Materials:** We use recycled and loose parts wherever possible.
- **Gardening Responsibility:** Children take care of the garden and can be outdoors for extended periods every day, regardless of the weather.
- **Sun Smart Practices:** Large shade trees, shade sails, umbrellas, hats, and sun-smart clothing enable safe outdoor play during the summer months.

#### Indoor Learning Environment

- **Provocative Learning Spaces:** Designed to extend children's thinking with natural, open-ended, and recycled materials.
- **Flexible Spaces:** Support collaborative learning and exploration.
- **Smart Lighting:** Installed indoors with an 'Earth Hour' every afternoon where the lights are turned off.
- **Air Quality:** Improved with indoor plants and open windows.
- **Reusable Materials:** Glass and china are used instead of plastic and polystyrene.

### Community Engagement

- **Local Collaboration:** Working with the local council for sustainability support and information.
- **Events and Initiatives:** Participating in community events like Clean Up Australia Day, National Tree Day, Harmony Day, and International Mud Day.
- **Local Purchases:** Buying goods from local companies to reduce ecological footprint.
- **Community Walks:** Encouraging active lifestyles and a sense of belonging.
- **Excursions:** Regular trips to local natural areas to foster respect and curiosity for the environment.

### Sustainable Practices

- **Gardening:** Fruit trees, herb and vegetable gardens, chickens, a worm farm, a tumbler compost system, and mulch to reduce watering needs.
- **Water Conservation:** Three rainwater tanks installed; rainwater used for outdoor play and leftover water for indoor plants.
- **Energy Conservation:** Smart lights and 'Earth Hour' practices.
- **Cooking:** Regular cooking experiences using produce from the garden to promote healthy eating.
- **Natural Cleaning Products:** Made and used by educators.
- **Water-Saving Toilets:** Educating children on the use of full and half flush systems.

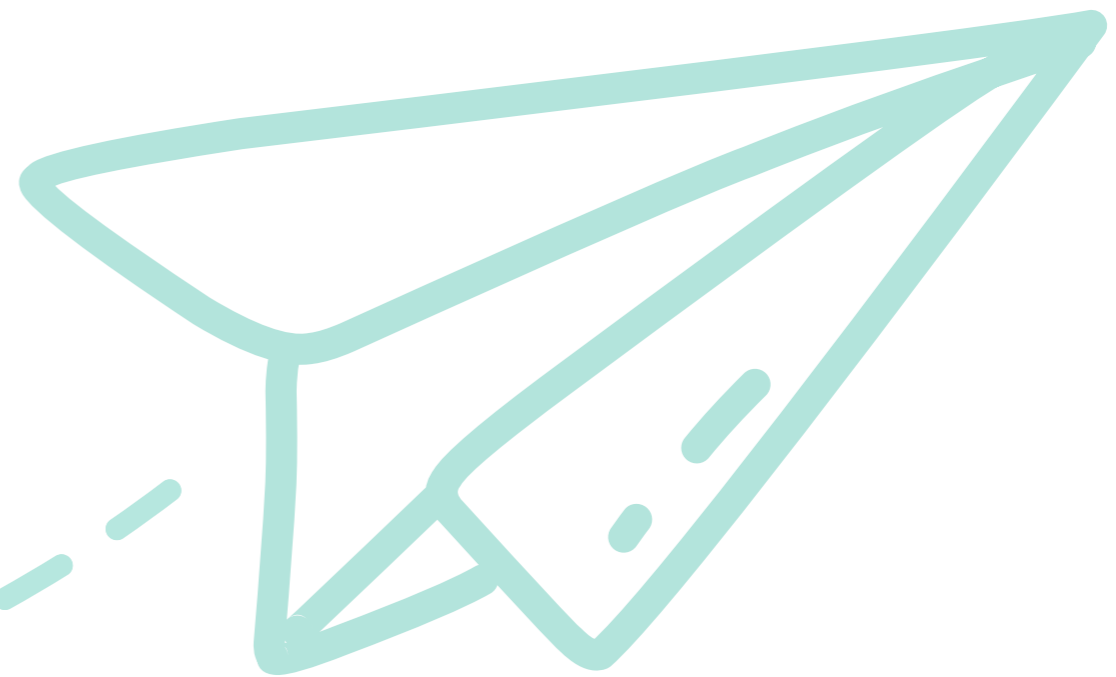
### Waste Reduction and Recycling

- **Reusable Materials:** Families provide materials for creative projects and loose parts play.
- **Food Scraps:** Given to chickens and worms.
- **Recyclable Materials:** Collected in recycling bins.
- **Recycled Paper:** Donated by a local business for children's projects.
- **Nude Food Lunchboxes:** Families are encouraged to pack using reusable containers.

By integrating these sustainable practices, Acacia Kindergarten supports a holistic approach to environmental education, encouraging children and their families to adopt sustainable habits that benefit both their community and the planet.

<b>Needed materials</b>	-
<b>Notes and suggestions for Educators</b>	<p>In order to keep being sustainable, Acacia Kindergarten educators propose continuous developments on their methods. These points might be useful who wants to set up a system that can be improved with the passage of time:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Review of communication and documentation methods which have a high usage of paper.</li> <li>- Educators need to reflect critically on their own practice at work and develop ways they can reduce, reuse, recycle.</li> <li>- Create a space where more fruit trees can be planted.</li> <li>- Connect with community organisations to participate in local native plantings and other conservation projects.</li> </ul>

Hungary







## Local Practices

<b>Title</b>	<b>'Biztos Kezdet Gyermekház' (Sure Start Children's Center) in Hungary</b>
<b>Author/Source</b>	Hungary
<b>Citation / URL</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Eurochild (2021). Early Childhood Development in Hungary. Retrieved from: <a href="https://eurochild.org/uploads/2021/09/Hungary-Country-Profile.pdf">https://eurochild.org/uploads/2021/09/Hungary-Country-Profile.pdf</a></li></ul>
<b>Date</b>	The program has been operating since 2004 - still ongoing.

### Short Introduction

Following the regime change in Hungary, poverty increased, affecting children greatly. The Hungarian government aimed to eradicate poverty, thus, in 2003, the British Embassy and the Ministry of Health, Social and Family Affairs, organized the presentation of the English Sure Start Program, which led to the start of the model experimental program in various types of settlements in 2004. A professional group was established to develop the methodology of the program, including renowned sociologists, social educators, and early childhood experts. The program did not start as a separate service but was integrated with existing social, healthcare, and educational institutional services.

Currently, there are 175 Sure Start Children's Centers operating in Hungary as preventive services for children. The program's motto is "for you, with you, not instead of you," which reflects the main goal of the program, focusing on active parental involvement. Operational conditions are defined by law, and work with family's needs to be documented in the Documentation System dedicated to this purpose (daily attendance, child observation, monitoring of development, documentation, parental questionnaires, case discussions, recording of professional teams, community programs, discussion groups, etc.). The participants in the pilot aimed to support emotional and social development, improve children's health status, develop learning and language skills, and strengthen family and community cohesion based on the principle of inclusion. It was important not to deal separately with disadvantaged families within the program, so the service was advertised and made available to every family with young children living in the area. This promoted inclusion, mutual understanding, acceptance, and avoidance of segregation. Families could access supplementary services provided by institutions in various ways.

In Budapest's VIII district, The Unified Nurseries of Józsefváros undertook to adapt the English program and incorporate it into their nursery profile. Accordingly, it operated as an early program in a housing estate environment, where the developmental level of nursery children was measured, screened, and then individual or group development was provided with the help of an individual plan. They placed great emphasis on active involvement of parents, so they organized playhouses on weekends where parents could talk freely and informally, uncovering any internal family difficulties. Such occasions provided an opportunity for parents and children to participate in activities together, experiencing the joy of creation and belonging to a community. The program proved successful, so shortly thereafter, work with families continued at a location independent of the nursery. This gave rise to the Sure Start Club, which provided an opportunity to reach out to a wider range of families in need of support.

In order to eliminate child poverty, the "Let's Make it Better for Children" National Strategy (2007-2032) was established. This made it possible for programs and clubs participating in the pilot to create Sure Start Children's Centers with funding.

After a successful application in Józsefváros, the Sure Start Children's Centers was established in 2009, where the Sure Start Program, operating since 2004, is implemented. The goal of the Children's Centers is the comprehensive development of children aged 0-3, mainly from socio-culturally disadvantaged backgrounds, with active involvement of parents, families, and the environment, ensuring equal opportunities from the earliest stage of life.

Children's Centers are state-funded, and services are provided free of charge to children aged 0-3 and their families. The Children's Centers is open every weekday from 8 am to 2 pm, providing a single snack for the children during the morning hours.

### Description of Main Activities and/or Methods of the practice

The services of the Children's Center are built around four main pillars, which are valid in every Children's Center:

- **Services aimed at children**
  - » Assessment, screening, developmental recommendations
  - » Providing daily single meals
  - » Capacity-building, developmental activities (fine motor skills, gross motor skills, communication, cognitive areas)
  - » Engagement based on a weekly thematic plan (to establish regularity and consistency)
  - » Assistance in accessing services for children with special educational needs, with different developmental paths.
- **Services aimed at parents**
  - » Strengthening parental competencies
  - » Counseling, parental forums, discussion groups (involving special educators, psychologists, social workers, midwives, etc.)
  - » Strengthening identity, understanding and acceptance of other cultures, stereotype-free attitudes (intercultural education)
  - » Cooking club (preparing ethnic foods together)
  - » Household skills (sewing, kitchen gardening)
  - » Assistance in paperwork, support in accessing services (telephone, internet use)
  - » Laundry facilities for clothing washing and drying
  - » Family visits.
- **Collaboration with professionals**
  - » Regular professional teams involving collaborating professionals
  - » Special educators, psychologists, nurseries, local community centers, midwifery services, family support services
  - » If necessary, case discussions, consultations on decisions affecting children and families.
- **Services aimed at the community**
  - » Aimed at promoting understanding between cultures, acceptance of each other, community building.
  - » Organizing at least 12 community programs annually, targeting children under 3 and their families, as well as the local community, tailored to the needs of users: e.g., Carnival, Easter, International Roma Day, Family Vacation, Farewell, Family Afternoon (outdoor program open to all residents of the district regardless of age), free Clothing Exchange, Christmas, performances by authentic Romani bands, combined with dance and group singing, etc.

## Best Practices

### • Family visits

The urban environment presents challenges in locating families. Accessing multi-story apartment buildings, sometimes 10-15 stories high, is almost impossible. Typical of residential buildings in the VIII district are low comfort levels, small floor areas, where large and multi-generational families live. Community stability is very low in many places, with high turnover due to low income among families moving from the countryside. As a result, people don't know each other well, and few can establish good neighborly relationships. Over the years, the Children's Center staff have tried to incorporate a well-applicable method to reach out to and involve families in using the services of the Children's Center. The steps involved are:

1. **Gathering information about families with young children living in the neighborhood.** We receive information about families to be involved from multiple sources. Recommendations from mothers already using the service, neighborhood acquaintances, referrals, cooperation with local midwifery services, and child welfare services. In addition, the Children's Center closely collaborates with the local Family Support Office, which provides an opportunity for low-income families to seek support.
2. **Visiting families.** Once we have information about the family, we visit them. Two staff members from the Children's Center ring the doorbell. If the family is open to receiving the workers, we enter their home.
3. **Offering services.** When addressing the family, we briefly introduce the most attractive services (spacious room with many toys, shared snacks, outings, community programs) for the family. Using leaflets, we show pictures as well. If possible, we discuss further support options available at the Children's Center with those at home.
4. **Winning over the child.** Every time we bring a small welcome gift for the child. It can be a toy or baby food appropriate for the child's age. Parents are happy when they see their child happy, when they approach their child with affection. Families in difficult situations often have few things they can afford, so small things matter a lot.
5. **Offering to accompany the family or offering further family visits.** The first family visit is not always successful, so considering the family's needs and preferences, we offer to help them get to the Children's Center at a suitable time or to visit them again next time. The purpose of every family visit is to care for the family at the Children's Center. To achieve this, if necessary, we visit the family multiple times, ensuring that the frequency and regularity of visits are not intrusive or disruptive.

### • Family Vacation

A longstanding practice at the Józsefváros Children's Center is the week-long summer family camping trip, which has been in operation almost from the beginning. Families who are regular visitors to the Children's Center, primarily those with low income and in social need, are given the opportunity to participate in the summer family program. Older siblings and parents also participate in the program. During the few days, we are in intensive contact with the families. The escorts are staff from the Children's Center and volunteers who are present throughout the camp and conduct pre-planned daily activities. The camping takes place at a holiday resort owned by the local government in the countryside. During the camp, both families and escorts stay at the resort in well-equipped apartments with private bathrooms. Throughout the week, we go on excursions, play family and community-building games, cook together, hold handicraft workshops, and provide programs by external professionals (e.g., musical workshops). This opportunity serves as a form of experiential therapy for families, as they spend a week in a beautiful environment, outdoors, away from the noise and troubles of the city. The camp provides a shared experience for the family, which many families fondly remember even years later.

For staff, this is an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the lives and functioning of families and to deepen trust. Based on our experience, families who participate in the camp visit the Children's Center more frequently after the vacation, form stronger bonds with the staff, and often continue to return even after their child starts attending nursery or kindergarten.

## Needed materials

Materials presenting the services and informing the public: leaflets, Facebook groups, institutional (The Unified Nurseries of Józsefváros) website, information points set up in the district, recommendations from relevant local organizations (midwifery service, child welfare center, nurseries, kindergartens), recommendations from former parents who used the Children's Center.

Legally defined spaces suitable for providing services (reception area, playroom, bathroom, laundry room, kitchen). Age-appropriate, high-quality toys on open shelves easily accessible to children. Furniture and equipment necessary for children's meals and care processes (changing table, child toilet, handwashing station, table, chair, baby scale, etc.).

During activities and organized programs, songs, rhymes, stories, and recipes specific to a particular culture are used. In the toys and equipment, the presence of various cultures is reflected, such as dolls of different ethnicities, Romani language and theme storybooks.

## Notes and suggestions for Educators

The personalities of the professionals working at the Children's Center are one of the most important aspects. The foundation of building trust with parents lies in how we can address them, how well we can engage them and their child. Essential qualities include openness, acceptance of others, adequate professional knowledge, and flexibility to adapt to different situations. It is necessary for the professional to be well-informed about the possibilities of accessing local services so that they can provide appropriate information about them. Continuous professional development is recommended whenever possible, and to prevent burnout, it is advisable for employees to utilize services aimed at preserving their mental health.

<b>Title</b>	<b>Canine Assisted Activity in the Nursery</b>
<b>Author/Source</b>	Lakos Judit
<b>Citation / URL</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chandler, C. K. (2012). <i>Animal Assisted Therapy in Counseling</i>. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge.</li> <li>Ernst, L. (2014). <i>Animal-assisted therapy: an exploration of its history, healing benefits, and how skilled nursing facilities can set up programs</i>. <i>Annals of long-term care</i>, 22(10), Retrieved from: <a href="https://www.hmpgloballearningnetwork.com/site/altc/articles/animal-assisted-therapy-exploration-its-history-healing-benefits-and-how-skilled-nursing">https://www.hmpgloballearningnetwork.com/site/altc/articles/animal-assisted-therapy-exploration-its-history-healing-benefits-and-how-skilled-nursing</a></li> <li>Fine, A. H., Beck, A. (2010). <i>Understanding our kinship with animals: input for healthcare care professionals interested in the human\animal bond</i>. In Fine, A. (ed.) (2010): <i>Handbook on Animal-Assisted Therapy</i>. 2nd ed. Elsevier Inc.</li> <li>Kruger, K. A., Serpell, J. A. (2010). <i>Animal-assisted interventions in mental health: definitions and theoretical foundations</i>. In Fine, A. (ed.) (2010): <i>Handbook on Animal-Assisted Therapy</i>. 2nd ed. Elsevier Inc.</li> <li>Levinson, B. M. (1969). <i>The pet and mental hygiene</i>. Boris, M. Levinson (szerk.). <i>Pet oriented child psychotherapy</i>. Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas.</li> <li>Wells, D. L. (2009). <i>The Effects of Animals on Human Health and Well-Being</i>. <i>Journal of Social Issues</i>, 65. 523–543.</li> </ul>
<b>Date</b>	2021

### Short Introduction

The use of animals for motivational and developmental purposes dates back to the 1700s (Ernst, 2014; Lakos, 2023), but animal-assisted therapy in the modern sense is attributed to Levinson (Levinson, 1969), who was the first to use a dog as a psychiatrist to facilitate bonding with a child. Following this, the method began to spread and organizations were established worldwide to train dogs (Ernst, 2014). Animal-assisted therapy/activities today refer to programs with therapeutic animals present to improve participants' emotional, social, cognitive, and physical functions (Chandler, 2012; Kruger & Serpell, 2010). In Hungary, the Hungarian Therapy and Assistance Dog Association (MATESZE) has been bringing together assistance dog organizations since 2006, with their main task being the development of unified standards and providing professional assistance.

In Hungary, three basic requirements are necessary for conducting dog therapy or activities. The first is the therapy animal, which must have a therapy examination, a therapy certificate, and veterinary documentation confirming its health. The second requirement is the dog handler (not necessarily the owner), who has passed the therapy exam with the dog and instructs the dog during the activities. The third requirement is the activity leader, who customizes the activity plan for the specific group/individual and conducts the tasks and games (Lakos, 2021). Since 2021, Judit Lakos, a special education teacher, has been organizing accredited animal-assisted activity leader training courses open to all professionals working with people. The therapy dog plays a mediating role during the sessions, motivating and facilitating participants to complete various tasks. It's important that the dog's personality aligns with the characteristics of the group. The therapy dog exhibits calm and balanced behavior under all circumstances, free from aggression. They are socially sensitive, enjoy human company, and willingly engage in interaction with them. They tolerate hugs and strong stimuli such as noise, smells, and sudden movements. Well-trained, they know numerous tricks that they gladly perform for anyone (Lakos, 2021).

Learning aimed at environmental sustainability includes the direct exploration and experience of nature and other species within it. Understanding and respecting the needs and rights of animals occur through playing with dogs and playful interaction. Additionally, dog-assisted activities can be applied in various fields: early development, special education, team-building, education, experiential activities, psychological therapy, etc. (Babos, 2013). Meeting a dog and engaging in joint play have numerous beneficial effects. Simply the presence of the animal can have an anxiety-reducing effect, and its immediate rewarding nature promotes cooperation and maintains motivation during the sessions (Wells, 2009; Babos, 2013). Positive changes can occur in social relationships; interacting with the animal develops emotional intelligence, empathetic skills, and concentration, while also providing emotional support for both adults and children. The dog doesn't judge; it accepts everyone as they are, thus anyone can experience unconditional acceptance and love during animal-assisted sessions (Fine and Beck, 2010). Furthermore, the dog's language is universal; verbal language is not necessary for interaction with them, as they can execute tricks based on hand signals.

### Description of Main Activities and/or Methods of the practice

Since January 2023, the service of dog-assisted sessions has been available at The Unified Nurseries of Józsefváros and at the Sure Start Children's Center. The sessions are led by the psychologist of The Unified Nurseries of Józsefváros as the activity leader, along with a therapy Labrador and its handler. The sessions are organized according to the methodology developed by Judit Lakos, a special education teacher. At the Sure Start Children's Center, children under 3 years old and their parents can participate together in the sessions, ideally with 7-8 young children per session. In the nurseries, nursery groups participate, with a maximum of 10 young children and their caregivers, as well as nurses, per group. The limitation of group size is necessary due to the capacity of the therapy dog. Before each session, the composition of each group is assessed, paying special attention to the individual characteristics and developmental levels of the children. The playful activities are organized from an experiential therapy perspective, allowing children and families to gain experiences with the dog. Parents fill out a consent form beforehand. Considering the employability of the 2-3 age group, each session lasts approximately 20-25 minutes.

The sessions are held in the morning hours and begin with introductions, providing an opportunity to ask questions, get to know the dog, pet it, and become more comfortable. We allow space for the children to release their energy, so the first two activities are always active, gradually transitioning to tasks requiring less intensity. We also focus on developing basic skills; for example, we combine movement activities with rhymes and songs. To enhance social skills, we provide opportunities for both group and individual interactions with the dog (such as leading on a leash, asking for a high five). At the end of the session, we play calm games that require little movement, aiming to reduce the group's excitement. For nursery-age children, the session time is filled with 4-5 engaging activities.

Example of a session:

<b>1) Welcome Session</b>	Introduction, getting to know the dog, asking questions.
<b>2) Mirror game</b>	<p>We take the dog for a walk 'in the forest'. As we walk around in a circle, the dog stays in the middle. At the end of the rhyme, the dog performs a trick, and we imitate it.</p> <p><i>"We're walking, walking, wandering around (walk in a circle), We reach the dense forest (stand up tall). A squirrel jumps among the trees (jump with both feet), What is Daisy doing now? (imitate the dog)"</i></p>

<b>3) Obstacle course</b>	We build an obstacle course with Wesco elements, guiding our way back home from the forest. We need to help the dog who got lost. Children take turns navigating the obstacle course, with one leading the dog on a leash beside the course. At the end, everyone can crawl under the dog.
<b>4) Courage test</b>	The dog is very hungry, let's feed it! Each child receives a treat to place anywhere on their body (e.g., foot, belly). Then, upon command, the dog walks around and eats the treats.
<b>5) What is the little hand doing?</b>	The dog is tired, let's put it to sleep! We sit around and pet the dog in accordance with the lines of the rhyme. <i>"What is the little hand doing?      Caressing gently,      Drumming vigorously,      Tickling playfully,      Pinching sharply,      Dancing skillfully.      So what is the little hand doing?      You know too, say it with me!"</i>
<b>6) Farewell circle</b>	Because everyone was very brave and skilled, the dog rewards everyone with a high five. At the end, we wave goodbye to the departing dog together.

Based on our experiences, dog-assisted sessions have an anxiety-reducing effect, making it easy to motivate even more withdrawn children in their presence. The shared play also gives parents an opportunity to get to know their child and themselves from a new perspective. Additionally, it can serve as a point of connection with other families, facilitating the development of a supportive community. These sessions are an important part of environmental education, as many children encounter dogs up close for the first time during these occasions. In a safe environment, they learn how to approach and pet an animal and experience the animal's reactions to their behavior. This experience can have significant positive effects in the future, fostering love for animals and interest in environmental conservation.

<b>Needed materials</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Therapy dog and its handler</li> <li>• Activity leader</li> <li>• Spacious area</li> <li>• Movement-supporting tools, e.g., Wesco elements, sensory rugs</li> </ul> Other toys, creative tools
<b>Notes and suggestions for Educators</b>	The themes of the sessions should always be tailored to the specific needs of the group, while the activities can be creatively designed, taking into account seasons, special days, holidays, or specific developmental goals, such as strengthening social skills. Meeting the dog provides an excellent opportunity for later joint processing within the group, whether with families or individually, as the shared experience can become a connection point for everyone.

<b>Title</b>	<b>Persona Doll methodology in Hungary</b>
<b>Author/Source</b>	International: <a href="https://personadoll.uk/">https://personadoll.uk/</a> Hungarian: Zsuzsa Laszlo, Partners Hungary: <a href="https://partnershungary.hu/">https://partnershungary.hu/</a>
<b>Citation / URL</b>	• <a href="https://reyn.hu/hatteranyag/personadoll/">https://reyn.hu/hatteranyag/personadoll/</a>
<b>Date</b>	From 2007

### Short Introduction

The Persona Doll method is an effective approach to help children ages 2-8 to talk about emotions and feelings and to explore and confront fear and worries. The method also provides a powerful, non-threatening, and enjoyable way to raise equality issues and counter stereotypical and discriminatory thinking among young children. The dolls help children to express their feelings and worries, think critically, develop empathy, and challenge unfair treatment.

### Description of Main Activities and/or Methods of the practice

The method is specifically designed for professionals working in early childhood. Originating in the UK and used with great success worldwide, the Persona Doll method is an innovative tool for working on emotions and feelings in early childhood settings. At the heart of the method is a lifelike doll endowed with personality traits: family background, characteristics, favorite objects, living conditions, etc. The doll "visits" the children from time to time and allows teachers to talk about sensitive issues that they may have been reluctant to raise previously. With this method, children are able to turn fear and exclusion into respect and worries and bad feelings into problem-solving.

A key element in using the Persona Doll method is that children feel that they are 'not alone'. For many of them, meeting the doll is the first time when they experience that someone has similar feelings, experiences, and worries. This offers a strong symbol of trust and develops communication on feelings and empathy. It is also teaches children how to express compassion for ourselves and to one another.

Using Persona Doll has an impact not only on children but also on early childhood practitioners' attitudes and behavior. After using the method, many EC teachers reported that they listen more and talk less, and also feel more empathetic and are able to show more compassion not only in educational settings but also in their private life.

- » The dolls help children to express their feelings and ideas, think critically, challenge unfair treatment, and develop empathy with people who are different from themselves. Emphasis should always be on introducing differences and increasing tolerance.
- » The Dolls and their stories are powerful tools for exploring, uncovering, and confronting bias.
- » Persona Doll is a methodology for early years practitioners using 60 cm long fabric dolls in the classes.
- » The dolls have their own individual personalities and life histories, likes, and dislikes.
- » Children quickly accept them as friends; they share their joys and sympathize with them when they are sad.

In Hungary, we have been using the method since 2007, and currently, there are more than 300 EC practitioners who have finished the training, and after the training they can use the method. Partners Hungary Foundation offers 1 or 3-day-long training, where participants:

- Learn about the Persona Doll method, which can be used to effectively address the topic of prejudice and discrimination without fear and play and is an effective tool for dealing with emerging conflicts.
- Learn about their own prejudices and are given the tools to work to reduce them.
- They experience and interpret the effects of bias on children and can incorporate its prevention into their daily activities.
- Learn about tools and strategies that help break down fears and worries caused by biases and stereotypes.
- Learn step-by-step how to deliver Persona Doll training

### Needed materials

Persona Doll that accurately represent a range of skin colors and physical features are not generally available; you may have to make them. In any case, many people prefer cloth Dolls because they are likely to be unique and special - different from the dolls in the home corner. Another advantage is that they are more cuddly and huggable.

The Dolls can be any height, but 30 inches is a good size for children to identify with, and clothes are easy to get hold of. Clothes can be made or bought from charity shops and markets or donated by parents - tiny jeans, t-shirts, sweatshirts, dresses, and coats are made for little babies these days and will fit 60 cm dolls. Choose clothes and accessories that reflect the personal qualities of the Dolls and the children in the group. Have a supply of extra clothes so that the Dolls don't always wear the same ones when they come to tell their stories!



*Persona Dolls - 60 cm doll rag dolls made by hand*

### Notes and suggestions for Educators

- We recommend initiating the method only after completing a 1- or 3-day training.
- If it is a 3-day training, we recommend practicing with the dolls between sessions.
- Mentoring participants prove to be highly beneficial.
- We recommend following up with the practitioners.
- We provide examples of niches using the method, where practitioners can attend Persona Doll sessions.



## Practices from a European non-partner country

<b>Title</b>	<b>OMAMA - Slovakia</b>
<b>Author/Source</b>	Cesta von
<b>Citation / URL</b>	• Cesta Von. Program Omama [website]: <a href="https://cestavon.sk/program-omama">https://cestavon.sk/program-omama</a>
<b>Date</b>	The program started in 2018

### Short Introduction

Thousands of children living in generational poverty have their starting line in life shifted from birth. Challenging conditions and chronic stress have a negative impact on their healthy development. Education is not valued as highly by people living in poverty as it is by those in the middle class. They have few examples in their surroundings of individuals who have succeeded due to education. The benefits of education are abstract, uncertain, and long-term, whereas their urgent need is to survive today. This is most pronounced in the most neglected communities. In more developed and less segregated areas, there is a greater interest in education. However, the groundwork must be laid long before school.

All of this supports the goals of the Slovak CESTA von organisation in their advocacy for social change - to provide systemic support to families with the youngest children living in generational poverty, and to help them develop their children to ensure a successful start to school, better school outcomes and a positive attitude to education. In addition, social inclusion, cooperation with the majority society, coexistence of Slovak and Gypsy cultures and the development of intercultural relations are very important. The programme presented here has a direct and indirect impact on all these factors. The overall aim of the OMAMA programme is to ensure that children born into generational poverty have the chance to build a better foundation in their early years on which to build a successful life later. The unique participatory approach of the programme is an intervention that involves direct participation of the target group, as the key actors in the programme are the members of the community to be reached.

At the beginning of 2024 there were 40 Omamas and 21 mentors working in 30 communities with 906 children. The aim for 2030 is to work with 100 Omamas.

### Description of Main Activities and/or Methods of the practice

#### Weekly stimulation for 0-4 years old children and strengthening of parents.

Each Omama conducts lessons once a week with each child and the parent.

The one-hour lessons have two parts: the first is child-focused, and it provides the necessary stimulation for healthy child growth and includes activities supporting cognitive development, gross and fine motor skills, and reading. The second is focused more on building parenting skills and responsive caregiving skills with the parent, identifying stressors in the family and ways the Omamas can assist in eliminating them. Lessons improve the learning potential of Roma (mainly) mothers by increasing their literacy skills, strengthening targeted cognitive functions and nurturing internal motivation. Weekly stimulation for 0-4 years old children and strengthening of parents.

The interaction with the child is conducted in Slovak to give the Roma children exposure to the Slovak language which they don't otherwise have until they are in school.

Every play lesson includes "reading time" from an age-appropriate book. Building a positive relationship to books and reading in communities with limited access to reading materials has a positive impact on their future education.

The Omamas also use the Play Wisely home set cards for cognitive development.

The Omama evaluates each lesson and the mentor tracks each activity. The Omamas are encouraged to identify the ways in which the mother has demonstrated responsive caregiving during the lesson. Records are kept of each lesson.

**Parent Clubs.** Once a month, the Omamas, along with their mentors, organize regular meetings of parents with small children to address various common topics, such as nutrition, breastfeeding, responsive caregiving, etc. Many Roma women become mothers at a very young age without the opportunity to learn about child-rearing from someone in their family.

Each community responds to the specific needs and interests of the particular community, and the topics selected are reflective of these particular interests.

**Omama trainings.** On a quarterly basis, the Omamas and their mentors attend training focused on ECDC methods. Psychologists, pediatricians, and physiotherapists help during the process. The topics include healthy attachment, responsive caregiving, early warning signs in child development, bonding, and language development, but also soft skills such as communication skills, team work, organizational skills, time management.

**Mentoring.** Roma women from poor regions with high unemployment face many challenges in the labour market. The Omama program provides them with a permanent job, regular income and education. Capable and responsible women are chosen to be Omama who have a positive work attitude and are respected in their communities. Most of them finished only elementary school education (8 grades). However, joining the project empowers not only them, but also their families.

Each Omama has her own mentor from the middle class who supports and advises her and acts as her ally. She helps the Omama manage her time, harmonise the work with her family duties, and gain working habits, but also in her work related to family visits. The mentor empowers her to become more independent and gain self-esteem.

**Language of the majority society.** A low (or no) level of Slovak language is a huge barrier for a Romani-speaker child when entering a formal education system; it hinders opportunities for additional formal/informal learning, employment, or participation in public discourse. The public does not value the bilingualism of Roma, which is usually considered to be a barrier.

For Omamas, improvement of language skills is crucial for the quality of lessons they have with children in communities and the language input they provide for them, but also for themselves to grow professionally and actively participate in the debates, etc. They often represent advocates for the needs of children and parents in their communities, and the improvement of Slovak may strengthen their voice and empower them.

A language course based on the CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) method was elaborated, which is compatible with the curriculum of the Slovak language at primary school. Content is contextually, topically, and culturally sensitive to the realities of marginalized communities.

**Impact Evaluation** A year having passed the change of the Omamas can be seen: they are able to communicate with mayors or head teachers, to organize community events, to grant an interview to a media and most importantly – they are keen on to educate themselves (several of them have begun attending schools in order to achieve a higher formal education) and able to dream about a better future. They become role models in the respective communities.

**Needed materials**

- Toys, books (age appropriate) for children
- OMAMA handbook (at the moment it is not reachable for a wider public, the plan is to elaborate it, to offer handbooks with training for further users). The handbook includes a step-by-step description of a home visit, following the same structure to help the child learn a certain pattern.
- Videos with sample home visits
- OMAMA Mobile Phone App (includes information about the parents, their education, their socio-economic situation, the pregnancy of the mother, circumstances around the delivery, developmental milestones of the child)
- Play Wisely home set cards

**Notes and suggestions for Educators**

Videos about the programme and the method:

- <https://youtu.be/LRjL2kYKrjQ>
- <https://youtu.be/MHBbLWDXpgo>
- <https://youtu.be/O5oeeDwa0fg>
- [https://youtu.be/vBZuSusu6tc?si=\\_u1UfzePaukzaHyG](https://youtu.be/vBZuSusu6tc?si=_u1UfzePaukzaHyG)
- <https://youtu.be/BBpuCecAeNc?si=ABI6MZMzJEzZA0FJ>
- <https://youtu.be/5qg9P6gSmm4?si=w91or51dmHif11f->
- <https://youtu.be/GdWi6B4lZnl?si=7vxJNZm4AUyv-Fle>

In the Omama project, the meeting of majority and minority societies and cultures is most evident in the relationship between the Omamas and the mentors. They are the bridge between cultures, they are the interpreters. But this can only be achieved through dialogue, listening to each other's cultures, and through learning. And the understanding that emerges will influence and shape both majority and minority cultures.

<b>Title</b>	<b>Sure Start - English Program to Combat Child Poverty - UK</b>
<b>Author/Source</b>	England
<b>Citation / URL</b>	<p>What is a Sure Start Children's Centre?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nurseries UK: <a href="https://www.daynurseries.co.uk/">https://www.daynurseries.co.uk/</a></li> <li>Gov.UK. Find a Sure Start Children's Centre [website]. <a href="https://www.gov.uk/find-sure-start-childrens-centre">https://www.gov.uk/find-sure-start-childrens-centre</a></li> <li>HANSARD (1998). Comprehensive Spending Review. Deb 14 July 1998, vol. 316 cc187-211. Retrieved from: <a href="https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1998/jul/14/comprehensive-spending-review#S6CV0316P0_19980714_HOC_160">https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1998/jul/14/comprehensive-spending-review#S6CV0316P0_19980714_HOC_160</a></li> <li>The Health Foundation (1998). Sure Start programme. Retrieved from: <a href="https://navigator.health.org.uk/theme/sure-start-programme">https://navigator.health.org.uk/theme/sure-start-programme</a></li> </ul>
<b>Date</b>	From 1999 to the present

### Short Introduction

In Europe, women's employment became prominent in the 1970s. The establishment of childcare networks became increasingly important as childcare for children under 3 was not well organized. In England, parents mainly relied on babysitters and services offered by the private sector. Gordon Brown, the British Chancellor of the Exchequer, aimed to save money with the welfare cutbacks under the "New Labor" political program, intending to invest it in healthcare and education. The government saw the development of education as an opportunity to eradicate poverty. In order to expand early childhood care forms, the Sure Start program was announced in 1998, which started in 1999 and became an important part of the government's program to combat child poverty.

The aim of the program was to assist immigrants and socioeconomically disadvantaged minority groups. Areas with the highest deprivation rates were centrally identified, focusing on children from primarily third-country families living in high-poverty-risk neighborhoods. The centers provided space and opportunities for immigrant families, who were unfamiliar or only slightly familiar with the language and culture, to receive assistance in inclusion through intercultural coordinators. Language learning took place playfully, involving both children, parents and professionals. The program considered child care, early education, and providing the best possible start in life through health and family support services as its tasks. Community development also became an important aspect. Originally aimed at the development of children from pregnancy to the age of 4, it has now been expanded to the age of 14-16.

In the United Kingdom, various services targeting early childhood operate. In Wales and Scotland, programs operate under the names Flying Start and Home Start, assisting families raising children aged 0-4. Sure Start Centers operate in Northern Ireland and England. Currently, there are 38 Sure Start projects in 26 towns in Northern Ireland. Unfortunately, the number of centers in England continues to decline, with 1,416 centers closing between 2010 and 2023; in 2023, 2,204 Sure Start Centers were recorded.

Information on the program's operation and application can be obtained from local authorities. The service is free of charge.

The government is currently working with local authorities to introduce a new program. Under the "Start for Life" program, they plan to introduce Family Hub programs, focusing on the needs of local families with young children.

They aim to provide support for:

- Assisting children in their health, mental, and neurological development at all ages.
- Addressing developmental delays in the earliest stages of life.
- Access to healthcare services (nursing and midwifery services).
- Community building.
- Reducing violence, domestic violence, alcohol, and drug consumption.
- Providing community programs for children and young people with disabilities.

The program includes preparation for kindergarten, which involves the development of social, emotional, and cognitive skills.

### Description of Main Activities and/or Methods of the practice

- Close collaboration with parents
- Health Visitor service - family visits conducted by healthcare professionals
- Supporting healthy development
- Assessment, improvement, and counseling of health conditions involving healthcare professionals
- Development of language and communication skills (with the help of specialist and learner cards)
- Strengthening parental competencies
- Providing age-appropriate and quality toys
- Support for children with special educational needs and their families
- Daycare services as needed (for children aged 2-3)
- Household skills (Cooking Club)

<b>Needed materials</b>	The personality, communication skills, and attitude of the staff. Close collaboration with healthcare professionals.
<b>Notes and suggestions for Educators</b>	Creating a suitable environment and providing age-appropriate and quality toys. In addition to the expertise of the professionals involved in the program, an empathetic and open attitude is essential. It is crucial to understand and accept the internal functioning and culture of the family. It is imperative to explore and provide options tailored to the needs of the family.



<b>Title</b>	<b>Mother Nature – (Erasmus + project): UK, Italy, Slovenia, Hungary</b>
<b>Author/Source</b>	Partnership between European Associations: Permaculture association, UK (United Kingdom); Preplet (Slovenia); Paradiso Ritrovato (Italy); Casa del Cuculo (Italy); Pandora Association (Hungary), and Color-Space Association (Hungary)
<b>Citation / URL</b>	<p><b>ENGLISH/INTERNATIONAL</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facebook: Mother Nature Project</li> <li>Instagram: mothernaturejourney</li> <li>Website: <a href="http://www.mothernatureproject.org/home">www.mothernatureproject.org/home</a></li> <li>Permaculture Association UK: <a href="http://www.permaculture.org.uk">www.permaculture.org.uk</a></li> </ul> <p><b>ITALIAN</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facebook: Mother Nature Italia</li> <li>Instagram: mother.nature.italia</li> <li>Website: <a href="http://www.mothernatureproject.org/home-italiano">www.mothernatureproject.org/home-italiano</a></li> <li>Casa del cuculo: <a href="http://www.casadelcuculo.org">www.casadelcuculo.org</a></li> <li>Paradiso Ritrovato: <a href="http://www.paradisoritrovato.org">www.paradisoritrovato.org</a></li> </ul> <p><b>SLOVENIAN</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facebook: Mother Nature Slovenija</li> <li>Instagram: mothernatureslovenija</li> <li>Website: <a href="http://www.matinarava.si">www.matinarava.si</a></li> <li>Preplet: <a href="http://www.preplet.org">www.preplet.org</a></li> </ul>
<b>Date</b>	2021-2023 (previous project: 2017-2020)

### Short Introduction

A “Mother Nature – Empowering Mothers as Agents of Change Toward Environmental Sustainability” (2021-2023) international project was funded by Erasmus + programme. In motherhood, in becoming a mother, in becoming a helper, we acquire countless skills that help us to lead the way for our children, our communities, and to do so responsibly for the environment around us and for the future. “As mothers, as professionals who help mothers, it is important to connect with the cycles of nature, the elements, medicinal plants, and the beautiful diversity of our Earth.

As parents, we face new questions: in what state will we leave our planet to our children and what kind of world will they live in as adults? We are faced with the responsibility of shaping the lifestyles and habits of our children and families, and directly influencing the way they live. Moreover, in our nurseries, schools and wider communities, we have a bigger scope to explore our leadership role as mothers, so if we are more responsible for the world around us, we can have a positive impact on many people.

As a result of this project, we will transfer knowledge and tools on the relationship between motherhood and nature, motherhood and ecology, and mothers as natural leaders to mothers and professionals who support mothers.”

Content of “Mother Nature – Empowering Mothers as Agents of Change Toward Environmental Sustainability” project

- 75 podcasts to promote conscious motherhood and to create a toolbox for self-support and self-exploration

- A second card deck and guidebook on the connection of motherhood and nature connection, green lifestyles, eco-anxiety and leadership
- An on-line Leading Mother Nature Circles course
- Mothers as Natural Leaders (2023) book

The 2021-2023 year project is based on activities and results of a previous project (2017-2020). Results of the first project:

- Mother Nature Principles and illustrated Journey card deck
- The Mother Nature Guide Book - Exploring our Mothering Journey (2019)
- Mother’s Journey methodology and course framework

The first project focuses on the individual, the inner path, the second one looks outward

### Description of Main Activities and/or Methods of the practice

Mother Nature is a new vision, a new ethos, a complex approach. A book, a deck of cards, a podcast - it reaches out in different ways, through different senses, to those who are interested, who want to embark on the Mother Nature journey.

Mother Nature is about individual responsibility, about becoming a leader, about how we can influence our environment. Feminine and regenerative leadership which aims to bring people back to the living world, rather than gaining material profit or power. It is flexible, empowering, supporting, listening, connecting and trust based, intuitive, led by love, kindness and compassion. It is a radical leadership style, based on care and self care.

One of the premises of Mother Nature is that “nature connection can connect us with our own nature and gifts”.

The authors of Mother Nature describe their journey as “how we can use our skills as mothers to create a more just, equitable, ethical and sustainable world.”

The aims of the book are to encourage us to value and own our leadership skills and stories, to support us to develop more leadership skills, to design our leadership paths, to bring more connection into our lives - with nature, ourselves and others, to encourage us participate actively and contribute to a more regenerative future for the world.

Mother Nature’s philosophy and values are based on responsibility, community, and connecting different people and cultures. The basic premise is cultural awareness, understanding how culture affects the way we think and behave, and can help us to take the path to change.

Culture - the medium in which we are socialized, values, norms, traditions, language, behavior... Mother Nature focuses on the cultural diversity that is simultaneously present in the lives of individuals - the link between culture and identity. Maternal culture, leadership culture, women’s culture, age/generational culture, family culture, institutional culture, etc. “each of us is part of many macro and micro cultures, from the countries we live in, to our extended families, our education background, our dietary choices, etc.”

Mother Nature is not an activity or a method, but an approach, an attitude, full of inspiring content in the form of interviews, pictures, stories, practical exercises, and as the authors suggest, we can use it in many ways, tailored to our own needs.

Below two short exercises, adapted from the book, give you ideas on how to talk and think with children about the environment and the relationship to it:

## 1. FIND YOUR MOTIVATING SPECIES by Looby Macnamara

To get yourself and your child out into nature more often, finding your motivating species will make this whole process much easier and more fun. Once you have them, find ways to bring them both together when you are planning trips out into nature or even just on the walk to school every day. What are your motivating species/elements? What gets you moving and excited? What are your children's motivating species/elements? If you are not sure, ask them questions about different species and elements and observe their reactions.

## 2. LEADING OUR FAMILY THROUGHOUT THE YEAR CYCLE by Ági Berecz

Connecting daily to the cycles of Nature is a powerful tool to feel empowered to act on behalf of the Earth. In Nature and in our lives, nothing is linear, all works in cycles. Awakeness and sleep, activity and rest, inbreath and outbreath, winter and summer, all alternating rhythms that humans are an interwoven part of. Waldorf (Steiner) education originates from Rudolf Steiner, who was the inventor of biodynamic gardening. Waldorf schools put strong emphasis on strengthening connection with Nature around us and it's done by introducing rhythms in the life of children and families, rhythms that tune us with the cycles of our lives: the daily cycle of activities, the weekly rhythm of the days, and the great yearly cycle of Nature. Here are a few examples you may find useful for your family to follow nature's patterns along the year cycle: Respect the daily cycle – create small rituals throughout the day that help your family's rhythm –from breakfast to afternoon walks and bedtime habits. Learn and sing songs together that are connected to the period of the year. Set up a "season table", a little seasonal altar in your home with nature treasures. Eat fresh seasonal food, use a whole variety of grains. You may want to follow the variety of grains corresponding to the days of the week, following Rudolf Steiner's system. This was introduced in Steiner kindergartens to guide small children throughout the week: Monday, rice; Tuesday, barley; Wednesday, millet; Thursday, rye; Friday, oat; Saturday, corn; Sunday, wheat. Read bedtime stories that relate to the season. Spend regular time outdoors, get to know native plants surrounding you. Each season has its own beauty, and as mothers we have the potential to lead our family back to the cycles of Nature, to find beauty in each part of the year.

Card deck can be primarily a tool for mothers, educators and leaders. The images and texts on the cards can be used as a tool for (self-)development work individually or with help of a coach/supporting professional, or they can be used in group sessions or as inspiration. There is no rule book, but a helpful, interpretative book supports the user of the cards.



### Needed materials

Those listed here are products of the project, some of them may be inspirational or linked to a specific activity.

- Mothers as Natural Leaders book (in 5 languages, online)
- Leading Mother Nature Circles course
- Mother Nature card deck and guidebook
- Mother Nature podcast series

### Notes and suggestions for Educators

The use of the material allows for a high degree of flexibility and creativity, taking into account the context of the culture.

The project materials are partly freely available and partly available for purchase - but the creators recommend attending courses offered by the participating organizations, either to use the cards in groups or to lead the mother circles.

Mother Nature is for everyone who has motherhood qualities, whether female or male, whether they have children or not. "Motherhood qualities show up when you support someone or create something and nurture it, learn from it and grow with it through challenges, when (...) as you mother in your own way through your life."



## Practices from outside Europe

<b>Title</b>	<b>Culturally Responsive Pedagogy - New Zealand</b>
<b>Author/Source</b>	The Education Hub (New Zealand)
<b>Citation / URL</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Hargraves V. (2022). <i>Culturally responsive pedagogy in early childhood education</i>. In The Education Hub. <a href="https://theeducationhub.org.nz/culturally-responsive-pedagogy-in-ece/">https://theeducationhub.org.nz/culturally-responsive-pedagogy-in-ece/</a></li></ul>
<b>Date</b>	It has been implemented since the early 2000s

### Short Introduction

New Zealand has a very diverse population with several minority groups, including Maori, Pasifika, and Asian children. To effectively address the needs of each child in such a heterogeneous classroom, teachers need a pedagogy that is responsive to the children's different cultures, and prior knowledge and experiences.

Cultural responsiveness in early childhood education involves deeply engaging with diverse cultures and worldviews to transform teaching and learning practices. It goes beyond celebrating differences to actively supporting and sustaining minority cultures. By incorporating aspects of children's home cultures into the educational setting, cultural responsiveness promotes equitable opportunities for all children and families. It validates children's identities, fosters positive responses to cultural differences, and supports parent partnership and collaboration.

To achieve cultural responsiveness, educators must acknowledge the complexities of culture and reject simplified understandings of cultural identities. They should develop detailed knowledge about children and their families, including their cultural resources, strengths, and educational goals. Additionally, educators should respect and learn about family attitudes towards learning and education, ensuring equitable and productive relationships with families.

It's crucial to align teaching practices with the learning discourses valued by families, allowing for meaningful communication and respect for their aspirations. Furthermore, educators need to be aware of how institutional practices may perpetuate social inequality and compromise success for children from minority cultures. Educators can create inclusive environments that empower all children to thrive by fostering cultural responsiveness in early childhood education.

### Description of Main Activities and/or Methods of the practice

#### 1) Reflecting on oneself and one's own culture

By fostering self-reflection and cultural awareness among educators, we can create more inclusive learning environments that honor the diversity of students and families. Elements of this process:

- To acknowledge the necessity of understanding one's own cultural values before appreciating others'. Teachers should continuously explore their own cultural backgrounds and biases to enhance cultural sensitivity.
- To recognize that personal cultural beliefs influence perceptions and practices in education and to evaluate how dominant cultural practices influence daily routines such as eating, sleeping, and communication.
- To emphasize that current educational norms are culturally relative, not universally applicable.
- To identify challenging interactions with diverse families to uncover hidden values and biases.
- To critically analyze pedagogical practices to ensure inclusivity and fairness for all families.

#### 2) Reflecting on other cultures and recognize cultural complexity

By reflecting on and embracing the diversity of cultures within early childhood education, educators can create inclusive and culturally responsive learning environments that support the holistic development of all children. Elements of this process:

- To acknowledge the importance of ethnicity and culture in children's and families' identities.
- To emphasize the need to avoid stereotypes and understand the complexity of cultural identities.
- To seek to understand specific cultural practices, perspectives, and beliefs of families.
- To utilize minority families' perspectives to challenge traditional pedagogical practices.

#### 3) Developing positive attitudes towards diversity

By cultivating positive attitudes towards diversity, educators can foster inclusive environments where all children and families feel valued, respected, and supported in their learning journey. Elements of this process:

- To recognize that positive attitudes include commitment to culturally responsive practices, social justice, curiosity, flexibility, empathy, and sensitivity.
- To create inclusive, safe, and respectful environments where diversity is celebrated and accepted.
- To share a belief in the potential success of all children, recognizing diversity in what success means.

#### 4) Working with families as a valuable resource

By building strong partnerships with families, educators can create inclusive learning environments that honor and incorporate the diverse backgrounds, beliefs, and values of all families involved. Elements of this process:

- To emphasize genuine, heartfelt relationships with families as essential for learning about home practices and beliefs.
- To utilize appropriate verbal and non-verbal communication to foster respect, attentiveness, and sincerity.
- To employ strategies like home visits and invitations for collaboration to build trust and understanding over time.
- To focus on receiving and acknowledging families' perspectives rather than imposing your own.
- To suspend judgment and value families' input as valuable information.
- To promote cultural exchange and facilitate conversations about values and beliefs, weaving families' values into the curriculum.
- To address cultural inequities and disparities respectfully and proactively.
- To empower family engagement by encouraging active participation of families in the educational setting without pressure.
- To enhance collaborative decision-making by inviting families to participate in decision-making about children's learning and development through conversations or e-portfolio annotations.

#### 5) Observing and analyzing

Educators can create learning experiences that honor and build upon the diverse cultural backgrounds and experiences of children and families by incorporating observation and dialogue with families into curriculum development. Elements of this process:

- To utilize analytical approaches by combining observation of children in dialogue with families to inform culturally responsive curriculum development.
- To observe family practices, conversations, and children's behaviors to understand their interests, skills, and values.
- To engage children in conversations about their families and interests to gain insight into their perspectives and communication styles.

- To be mindful of power dynamics and inequities when observing children, such as patterns of social exclusion and the use of culturally diverse materials.

#### 6) Responding

By enacting culturally responsive curriculum practices, educators can create inclusive learning environments that honor children’s diverse backgrounds and empower them to thrive academically and socially. Elements of this process:

- To recognize diverse responses to shared experiences rather than providing entirely different experiences.
- To base curriculum on children’s lives and cultural backgrounds, to enhance multicultural significance.
- To value play-based learning to empower children’s language and ideas, connecting with their experiences and contexts.
- To provide diverse learning opportunities, including observation, independent exploration, and group activities.
- To negotiate caregiving routines using culturally familiar language and norms.
- To challenge and rework all aspects of the curriculum based on local concepts and responsive assessment practices.
- To address incidents of racism and stereotypes through open dialogue and problem-solving with children.

#### 7) Resourcing

By ensuring resources are culturally responsive and inclusive, educators can create environments that honor and celebrate the diversity of children and families while promoting meaningful learning experiences for all. Elements of this process:

- To recognize that resources can be found within staff, management committees, children, and families.
- To integrate physical resources sensitive to families’ cultures into daily programs rather than keeping them as wall displays or occasional celebrations.
- To use books, images, and posters to validate children’s cultural identities and offer diverse positive identities.
- To address cultural marginalization by recognizing unfamiliarity with certain activities may exclude children and take steps to mitigate this.
- To provide opportunities for children to learn about and express their own cultural backgrounds within the setting.
- To invite families to participate in the setting and personalize involvement opportunities.
- To offer open-ended materials to ensure all children can construct meaning based on their experiences.

<b>Needed materials</b>	Books, images, and posters to validate children’s cultural identities and offer diverse positive identities. Open-ended materials to ensure all children can construct meaning based on their experiences. Physical resources sensitive to families’ cultures.
<b>Notes and suggestions for Educators</b>	Plan regular meetings for reflection and discussion on practices. Take specific cultural items (such as music, toys, books, and posters) as part of the everyday operation rather than use them as a project or an event to help families and children feel at home in the setting. Invite parents to suggest topics and events to incorporate into planning. Offer different kinds of opportunities and channels for feedback and comments for parents and children (discussion, online platforms, anonymous boxes, etc.).

<b>Title</b>	<b>Head Start Program - United States of America</b>
<b>Author/Source</b>	United States of America
<b>Citation / URL</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Head Start - Early Childhood Learning &amp; Knowledge Center. <i>Head Start Approach</i> [website]. <a href="https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/programs/article/head-start-approach">https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/programs/article/head-start-approach</a></li> <li>ChildCare.gov [website]: <a href="https://childcare.gov/">https://childcare.gov/</a></li> </ul>
<b>Date</b>	From 1965 to the present

### Short Introduction

In the early 1960s, a significant portion of the United States population lived in poverty. Lyndon B. Johnson, the American president, saw the possibility of breaking out of poverty through education. In his political program (Great Society), he proclaimed the eradication of poverty through the "War on Poverty." Initially, legislation was passed to prohibit racial and gender-based discrimination in employment, segregated education was abolished, and an opportunity arose to launch a comprehensive program like Head Start. The aim of Head Start was to enhance the capabilities of children with disadvantaged and low-income families, and prepare them for school. Originally starting as an 8-week summer camp program, Head Start supported 3- to 5-year-old children in Head Start Child Development Centers. They design a comprehensive child development program to meet the needs of preschool-aged disadvantaged children. In a short period, it evolved into a school readiness program and later, with active parental involvement, into a catch-up program. Thanks to its successful operation, in 1967, The Parent and Child Centers project was established, providing an opportunity for families raising children under 3 years old to access services. From this, the Early Head Start program emerged in 1994, emphasizing the importance of the first three years. Participation in the Head Start and Early Head Start programs is free and state-funded. These programs are operated by local nonprofit organizations, community action agencies, and school districts. Eligible participants for the program are those whose family/household income does not exceed the amount specified in the poverty guidelines (HHS Poverty Guidelines), or regardless of income, they receive state assistance, are foster families, or are homeless families. Participation is free.

The principles of the program include:

- Every individual is rooted in their own cultural environment.
- The cultural composition of the community is taken into account when organizing programs.
- Effective programs are built upon acknowledging linguistic differences.
- Stereotypes are overridden through understanding individuals.
- Upholding a diverse society based on the principle of inclusion.
- Employment of professionals sensitive to sociocultural differences.
- Understanding the backgrounds of families from different cultures is crucial.
- Supporting understanding between cultures plays a prominent role.

### Description of Main Activities and/or Methods of the practice

- Supporting healthy development of children (social, emotional, cognitive, and communication)
- Health screenings (hearing, vision, etc.)
- Providing physical and gross motor activities indoors and outdoors
- Providing healthy meals and fostering dietary culture
- Creative, thematic play activities
- Active involvement of parents

- Inclusion of children with disabilities and support for their strengths
- Assistance during pregnancy and postpartum periods
- Supporting parents in education and financial literacy
- Home Visitor service

Home Visitors are trained professionals who have completed the required training for their work. The aim of the service is to integrate individuals and families into the community by understanding their culture. Their task is to support parents in daily activities such as caregiving processes, daily planning, time management, and age-appropriate play activities. It is important that they do not perform the activities themselves, but rather guide the parents. The Home Visitor facilitates quality time planning within the family, allowing for shared play opportunities. They engage in conversations with parents and verbally guide them towards appropriate actions, putting the spotlight on the parents and making them competent.

Each Home Visitor may have 10-12 families (variation is possible if the family has multiple children or if families live farther apart, increasing travel time). Visitors are guided by a mentor/supervisor, who assigns families to the professionals, and inquiries about involving new families can be directed to them. Professionals visit families on a weekly basis, spending a minimum of 90 minutes with each family. For the Early Head Start program, a Visitor must make a minimum of 46 visits per year, and for the Head Start program, 32 visits per year are required. Missed visits need to be made up. In addition to individual family visits, group activities are organized, involving the families under care, thus aiding in the socialization process. For the Early Head Start program, this amounts to 22 sessions, and for the Head Start program, 16 sessions per year. These sessions are planned jointly with the families under care, tailored to their needs, preferences, and the child's age.

<b>Needed materials</b>	The personality, communication skills, and attitude of the workers are crucial. Credibility is important. The most credible helpers for the incoming families are those parents who have been involved in Head Start, so there will be a large number of employees from this background.
<b>Notes and suggestions for Educators</b>	In addition to the expertise of the Visitors, an empathetic and open attitude is indispensable. It is necessary to accept the functioning and culture of the family and to be able to perceive and show the possibilities from their perspective.

<b>Title</b>	<b>Suzuki method - Japan</b>
<b>Author/Source</b>	Japan
<b>Citation / URL</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Papp, B. (2016). Útkeresés a Japán zenepedagógiában: A Szuzuki-módszer (Search in Japanese Music Pedagogy: The Suzuki Method). <i>Parlando</i>, 1.</li> <li>• Rohlen &amp; K. LeTendre. (2012)., <i>The Suzuki Method of music instruction</i> (pp. 345-368). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.</li> <li>• Suzuki Method [website]: <a href="https://www.suzukimethod.or.jp/english/">https://www.suzukimethod.or.jp/english/</a></li> </ul>
<b>Date</b>	Beginning - Mid 20th Century

### Short Introduction

The Suzuki method is one of the most significant educational reform methods of the 20th century, fitting perfectly into the realm of educational reform movements while incorporating unique Japanese elements.

The method is instrument-based, advocating for musical education to commence even during fetal development, with expectant mothers listening to music. At this stage, they may also start playing instruments to practice with their future child. Children begin their education at the age of 2-3 without the need for reading sheet music or literacy. They attend lessons accompanied by their mothers. The child learns to play the instrument before learning to read or write music notation. The foundation of the method lies in imitation, akin to how we learn our native language.

Presently, the method has branches in twenty-three countries, with around 300,000 students worldwide. The method's very young students have garnered significant attention by performing difficult violin and piano pieces en masse, pieces that were previously the domain of professional musicians and occasional prodigies. While the method itself retains its distinctively Japanese approach to education, embodying deeply rooted Japanese cultural assumptions, its successful application in numerous foreign countries demonstrates its broad appeal and its ability to adapt to different cultures. When adopted by other countries, certain aspects of the method have been modified to align with the indigenous educational attitudes and practices of the host cultures. This is particularly evident in the United States, where the method differs significantly from its Japanese counterpart (For example: difference between song usage or bigger autonomy for children). In addition to the American and Japanese Suzuki associations, there are also European, Asian, and Pacific associations. More than half of European countries have at least one Suzuki school or foundation. Within Asia, organizations operate in Malaysia, Indonesia, Korea, Taiwan, and the Philippines. In the Pacific region, there are Suzuki associations in New Zealand and five in Australia. In Africa, there is a foundation in South Africa.

### Description of Main Activities and/or Methods of the practice

The basic principles defined by the International Suzuki Association are as follows:

- The importance of listening to music
- Early start (typically at the age of 3-4 in most countries)
- Teaching instrumental play before learning to read music
- Providing a caring, positive learning environment
- A repertoire of songs known by all Suzuki students worldwide (Papp, 2016).

Suzuki learned to play the violin in Germany, and much of the repertoire consists of works by Western composers. Additionally, folk songs and compositions written by Suzuki himself were included in the repertoire. The complete repertoire can be found on the Talent Education website.

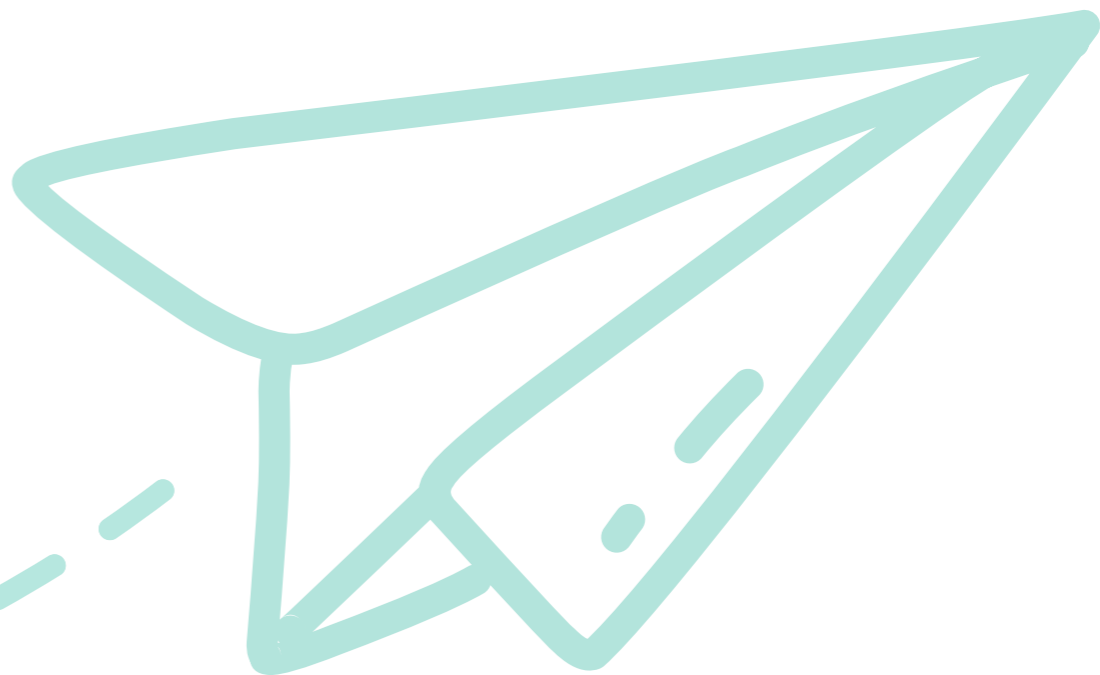
The fact that all Suzuki students know the songs in the repertoire facilitates interaction with other children: through the language of music, all Suzuki students worldwide can communicate with each other.

This creates a bridge, providing connections between different cultures, stemming from the unique features of the method and the universality of music.

Another important cornerstone of the method is parental involvement. The child does not come to class alone; the parent also takes up an instrument. As a result, the child can practice at home under actual parental supervision. The involvement of parents provides motivation for the child.

<b>Needed materials</b>	<p>According to the Suzuki method, there are five levels of teacher certification, ranging from the lowest to the highest.</p> <p>Primary instruments include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Violin, viola, cello, piano, and flute.</li> </ul> <p>In Suzuki schools, teachers are trained for these instruments. In addition to these, in Europe, individual teachers also teach the following instruments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Double bass, flute, mandolin, guitar, trumpet, harp, and organ</li> </ul>
<b>Notes and suggestions for Educators</b>	<p>In every case, parents are involved in the music session with their child. The session is always adjusted to the child's current mood.</p>

Spain





## Local Practices

<b>Title</b>	<b>EIEL (Local Entity Children’s School) - Ses Païsses: “Sowing seeds in an eco-sustainable environment with all the strengths of educational community”</b>
<b>Author/Source</b>	Reyes, M.I., Casau, R., Hidalgo, C., Benítez, M.C., Tur, M.A., Marí, C. and Díaz, E. (2023). <i>Buenas prácticas de educación para el desarrollo sostenible. Sembrando semillas en un ambiente ecosostenible con todas las fortalezas de la comunidad educativa</i> (Good practices in education for sustainable development. Sowing seeds in an eco-sustainable environment with the strengths of the educational community).
<b>Citation / URL</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Handbook: <i>Buenas prácticas de educación para el desarrollo sostenible. Sembrando semillas en un ambiente ecosostenible con todas las fortalezas de la comunidad educativa</i>. Secretaría General Técnica. <a href="https://www.libreria.educacion.gob.es/libro/coleccion-de-buenas-practicas-de-educacion-para-el-desarrollo-sostenible-no-9-sembrando- semillas-en-un-ambiente-ecosostenible-con-todas-las-fortalezas-de-la-comunidad-educativa_184056/">https://www.libreria.educacion.gob.es/libro/coleccion-de-buenas-practicas-de-educacion-para-el-desarrollo-sostenible-no-9-sembrando- semillas-en-un-ambiente-ecosostenible-con-todas-las-fortalezas-de-la-comunidad-educativa_184056/</a></li> </ul>
<b>Date</b>	2021-present

### Short Introduction

The good practice “Sowing seeds in an eco-sustainable environment with all the strengths of the educational community” is one of the 13 practices compiled in the handbook “Collection of good practices of education for sustainable development”. In it, the Ses Païsses Local Authority Nursery School introduces the youngest children to an ecological and holistic vision by educating them in contact with nature where they can observe, learn, and collaborate in a relationship of respect and recognition of mutual dependence. This practice seeks to offer points of view that help the improvement of educational centers and their social environment in education for sustainable development.

The initiative arose from the following problem: The schoolyards and the outdoor space of the educational centers were not liked and were not a friendly space for the users. That is why both families and educators saw the need to transform these spaces and turn them into another learning space along with the rest of the facilities of the school. The objective was to give visibility to the space and turn it into a place where students could develop their motor skills, interact with nature, socialize with peers, and develop creativity. Through this transformation, the project had the following objectives:

- Improve the use of outdoor spaces and turn them into learning places for students.
- Promote collaboration and participation among all the actors that make up the educational network: students, family members, educational staff, pedagogical professionals, gardening professionals, etc.
- Emphasize the importance of free play, and encourage experimentation, learning and creativity by offering different forms of play and diverse activities.
- To promote an integral education for ecological development. To bring natural elements closer to the play space, introducing the use of natural and recycled materials.

### Description of Main Activities and/or Methods of the practice

This initiative is innovative as it applies a cross-cutting approach in its process, from start to finish.

That is to say, it manages to involve the entire educational community and all the actors that compose it (families, students, educators, institutions, technical staff, etc.) in the process and encourages collaboration among them.

The project also conceives students not as mere spectators, but as people full of potential and autonomy who are at the center of the teaching and learning process. They are the ones who will ultimately participate and create, being a continuous learning process.

This collaboration is achieved through the coordination of all these parties, mainly by organizing meetings with each of the actors involved. Regarding **activities**, first, meetings were organized with the school’s pedagogical staff to define the approach; then with the families to explain the proposal to them. Then work teams were organized to collect materials, make furniture and other logistics. Finally, a day was scheduled to celebrate a day where most of the staging could be done. The final details can be finalized by the educational center.

The content that the initiative intends to cover is organized in **3 areas**: 1) Growth in Harmony; 2) Discovery and Exploration of the Environment; 3) Communication and Representation of Reality. These areas correspond to areas of children’s experience and development, and should be addressed through learning proposals that have interest and meaning for the students. These proposals must be developed in a transversal way, that is to say, interacting and establishing relationships with all the elements that compose it (students, play space, environment, etc.).

Through these areas, the aim is to include actions and tasks oriented to the development of the students. That is to say, to promote their knowledge and learning processes. **Methodologically**, all this is governed by the fundamental principle of respect for the individual rhythms of each person and the essential care in an effective, participatory and equal environment that provides confidence, welfare and security.

This practice offers the possibility of being replicated at different scales depending on the resources and spaces available to the educational centers. **Steps to follow to replicate the initiative:**

- 1) To test the space available: Create groups and explore all the possibilities that the playground offers in terms of experiences, games, interactivity, etc. In this way new inspirations and opportunities may arise.
- 2) As it is a collective collaborative project, different proposals and points of view on how to approach the implementation emerged. For example, if environmentally friendly values are to be transmitted, the use of building materials such as wood, rocks, ropes and other recyclable materials was taken into consideration. The materials had to be placed in a creative, friendly and pedagogical way.
- 3) Once the proposals were finalized, they were communicated to the entire educational community and implemented.
- 4) To put into practice a self-evaluation system between the professionals who carried out the project and the actors involved; this process will open the door to new proposals and initiatives.

In relation to the **evaluation**, the project applied a process of analysis that included the collection of pictures and videos that would be used as documentation material. This material would be used as part of the evaluation process that helped to bring new ideas for materials, furniture, decoration and the optimal use of spaces.

Finally, the project carried out an evaluation process that could involve practices such as interviews, questionnaires or self-evaluation forms.



## Needed materials

**FINANCIAL RESOURCES:** The biggest challenge for the implementation of this project was the financial budget.

**HUMAN RESOURCES:** Likewise, in order to make the project as financially independent as possible, the collaboration of the educational network (students, families, families, neighbourhood, teaching staff, the gardening staff of the Balearic Institute of Nature, etc.) was crucial. To achieve this, however, a lot of management and coordination work between the parties involved (meetings, assemblies, creation of proposals, planning, etc.) is necessary.

**MATERIAL RESOURCES:** Depending on the proposal, it must take into account the materials needed to carry out the project. Some materials are cheaper than others, or more accessible, but less resilient to weather conditions such as rain or sun. Natural and recycled materials.

**SPACE RESOURCES:** The school itself; a green, sustainable and dynamic patio.

## Notes and suggestions for Educators

This is an open and inclusive project that is approached from an eco-social perspective, with the SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) and children's rights as its backbone. This good practice is included within the framework of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs that are specifically reflected in the project are: SDG 3, SDG 4, SDG 5, SDG 7, SDG 11, SDG 13.

### Why call it a good practice:

- To involve the entire educational community and all the actors that compose it (families, students, educators, institutions, technical staff, etc.).
- Standards of coexistence known and assumed by the whole educational community: Public school; Ibicencan school; School for diversity; Eco-environmental school (holistic-systemic); Conscious school; Inclusive school.
- Students as protagonists of the teaching-learning process.
- Proposals worked on in a cross-cutting manner.
- Respect for personal learning rhythms.
- Creating an effective, participatory and egalitarian environment that provides confidence, well-being and security.

### Find more:

- » <http://aulesconscientsaeivissa.blogspot.com/2018/06/ei-ses-paisses-una-escoleta-conscient.html> (Center Blog)
- » <https://twitter.com/jacampomar/status/1520050902610100226> (Twitter sustainability and interculturality from 0-3)
- » <http://centresecoambientals.blogspot.com/2020/> (Blog educational centers in the Balearic eco-environmental program)
- » <https://www.periodicodeibiza.es/fotogaleria/escuela-infantil-eip-ses-paisses-imagenes.html> (news: the Center in images)
- » <https://www.periodicodeibiza.es/pitiusas/ibiza/2023/11/16/2051485/distinguidos-centros-educativos-ibiza-formentera-como-centros-ecoambientales.html> (news: institutional recognition as an eco-environmental center)
- » <https://www.periodicodeibiza.es/pitiusas/aldia/2023/02/02/1875185/escoleta-ses-paisses-elegida-como-segunda-mejor-espana.html> (news: second best center in the state in an online center search engine)

<b>Title</b>	<b>Schools towards sustainability in NETWORK (ESenRED)</b>
<b>Author/Source</b>	Gutiérrez, J.M. (2021). <i>Buenas prácticas de educación para el desarrollo sostenible hacia la sostenibilidad en Red – ESenRED</i> (Good practices in education for sustainable development towards networked sustainability - ESenRED).
<b>Citation / URL</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>HANDBOOK: <i>Escuelas hacia la sostenibilidad en Red (ESenRED)</i> Secretaría General Técnica. <a href="https://www.libreria.educacion.gob.es/libro/coleccion-de-buenas-practicas-de-educacion-para-el-desarrollo-sostenible-no-1-escuelas-hacia-la-sostenibilidad-en-red-esenred_171536/">https://www.libreria.educacion.gob.es/libro/coleccion-de-buenas-practicas-de-educacion-para-el-desarrollo-sostenible-no-1-escuelas-hacia-la-sostenibilidad-en-red-esenred_171536/</a></li> </ul>
<b>Date</b>	2011-present

### Short Introduction

ESenRED, created in 2011, is a statewide network of networks of sustainable educational centres (non-university) promoted by public administrations (Autonomous Communities, Provincial Councils, town councils, etc.).

The good practice “Schools towards sustainability in NETWORK (ESenRED)” is one of the 13 practices compiled in the “collection of good practices in education for sustainable development”. It aims to develop environmental education for sustainability in order to empower students in the face of the ecosocial crisis that the planet is suffering.

The main objectives of the ESenRED network are the following:

- Facilitate the meeting, exchange, collaboration and dissemination between the different networks of actions, resources, materials and ideas.
- To promote reflection, evaluation and innovation on their own practice in order to collectively build knowledge in reference models.
- To develop common or shared projects by the networks that seek the permanent improvement of the students’ learning competences, through their participative protagonism, as well as the permanent improvement of the teachers’ professional competence.
- Establish contacts, relationships and common projects with other international networks of schools towards sustainability.

The network of networks is a space for exchange, collective learning and growth of the level of competence in sustainability.

Networking is valued in order to share ideas, ways of doing things and possible common projects within this framework from an eco-social perspective.

### Description of Main Activities and/or Methods of the practice

The main **contents** on which ESenRED’s work is based are the following:

- Shared leadership: the technical staff of the networks democratically decides the tasks of the course and a joint evaluation is carried out;
- Education for sustainable development and global citizenship: Values and respect for human rights;
- Responsibility: both individual and collective to develop an improvement in the quality of local and global life in the key of sustainability;
- Protagonism and empowerment of students: promoting eco-social awareness;
- Transformative action: education for action is promoted with transformative proposals.

ESenRED’s main **activities** include the following:

- Seminar: Meeting and exchange space for the technical staff responsible for the annual networks held at the National Centre for Environmental Education (CENEAM).
- The Caring for the Planet Youth Conference (CONFINT): Biannual pedagogical process where young people of different nationalities and ages deepen concepts and values such as eco-citizenship, sustainability, democracy, responsibility and participation. It is held in an autonomous community of the network.
- ESenRED Teachers’ Symposium: Annual meeting of teachers from the different networks with the aim of exchanging successful practices, training and developing common projects.
- ESenRED Action on 5 June on the occasion of World Environment Day: every year, schools are asked to carry out a common educational-communicative action in relation to a current topic, the SDGs, etc.

In terms of **methodology**, it is worth highlighting the collaborative nature and dialogue of this proposal, which allows for networking.

The **evaluation** of all the actions carried out is a fundamental element in the organisation and functioning of the network of networks, carried out through different tools and dynamics. Commitment is needed from the technical staff of the networks and improvement is needed in the creation of a protocol for welcoming new networks.

To highlight some **results**, twelve technical staff seminars have been held at CENEAM; hundreds of school CONFINTs all over Spain, dozens of Autonomous CONFINTs and 5 State CONFINTs, as well as participation in 4 European CONFINTs; 6 ESenRED teaching symposiums. ESenRED in 2021 was formed by: 16 networks of 15 Autonomous Communities of the Spanish State; 4225 non-university educational centres (including some of Early Childhood Education); more than 1,500,000 students and more than 100,000 teachers. ESenRED has collaboration agreements with CENEAM.

### Needed materials

**MATERIAL RESOURCES:** Materials needed to develop the common projects.  
**SPACE RESOURCES:** Meeting places in the different Autonomous Communities of Spain; the National Centre for Environmental Education (CENEAM).  
**HUMAN RESOURCES:** The educational community as a whole; teachers involved, pupils.

### Notes and suggestions for Educators

The environmental education projects of the ESenRED networks are linked to the SDGs from real and concrete scenarios in favour of an ecologically more sustainable and socially fairer world. Each school has its own contextualised project with a shared focus and common lines of action. The representatives have a shared responsibility to promote change and progress, promoting networking in a horizontal way. In this way, a great impact is achieved on students and teachers through common projects that produce eco-social transformations in their immediate surroundings.

**Why call it a good practice?** 1) It is a community of practice that generates cooperative work with the aim of generating a culture of sustainability in schools. 2) It is a network of networks. 3) It is based on shared leadership; respect for human rights; responsibility; student protagonism and empowerment; and transformative eco-social action. 4) It creates a more socially just and ecologically balanced society.

Find more: @esenred21 (Twitter)

<b>Title</b>	<b>Basque and interculturality in our town</b>
<b>Author/Source</b>	Amelia Barquín y Karmele Pérez (Faculty of Humanities and Educational Sciences - University of Mondragón) With the collaboration of the Association of Basque Municipalities (UEMA)
<b>Citation / URL</b>	/
<b>Date</b>	2021-Present

### Short Introduction

In recent years, more and more migrant families have been living in the Basque Country. The official languages are Basque and Spanish, but Basque is still a minority language. In this context, this project aims to work on interculturality, strengthening communication in Basque and providing tools to improve families who do not know Basque and thus improve their participation.

The project called “*Euskara eta kulturartekotasuna gure herrian*” is being carried out in different municipalities to promote coexistence, interculturality and communication between families, in collaboration with an educational centre. Subsequently, more municipalities have become involved with the collaboration of the Basque Government and the Provincial Council of Bizkaia. Specifically, in the municipality of Azpeitia, the Haurreskola from 0 to 3 years of age is also involved.

The main objectives of the project are as follows:

- To live in Basque
- To guarantee a respectful communication and environment with all families, including those who do not know Basque.
- To build interculturality from Basque.

The operational objectives are as follows:

- To combine Basque and interculturality in the educational centres involved and in the town.
- To transfer the experience in small Basque municipalities to a larger and more complex municipality.
- To work with more than one school in the same locality and, consequently, to work together in relation to the objectives of this project.
- Create a local driving group and, working together, build a local strategy.
- Identify opportunities and needs in the village and create and implement joint strategies.
- To influence school and local practices: To develop a series of linguistic relations and strategies; To communicate, share, apply and analyse these strategies; To carry out these actions in a contrasted and consensual way with the educational community.

### Description of Main Activities and/or Methods of the practice

The project has a community character and is contextualised with the needs and opportunities of the municipality. In this context, for example, nursery schools play a crucial role in the involvement of families, pupils and educators.

The following steps should be considered as **phases of the project**: Sharing the problematic on the issue and the situation of each municipality; Consensus on the process and presentation of communication formats; Working on communication formats with the educational community; Elaboration of strategies with local actors; Carrying out and sharing the analysis of the implementation; Agreeing on systematisation criteria.

Some of the **strategies** used are the following: simultaneous translation in meetings and activities; meetings with families, teachers; whatsapp or telegram groups; written notes for families.

**Methodologically**, the project has a dialogical character and aims to create a safe environment to work on issues that are often complicated. One of the keys is the creation of a driving group that agrees on the process and the implementation. Specifically, three working groups are identified with different tasks assigned to them:

- **Tasks of the driving team**: Work on the problematisation of the problem; Agree on the process, the strategy and the framework; Dynamise the meetings in the educational centre, participate and share the project; Identify the needs and opportunities of the municipality and create and dynamise common strategies.
- **Tasks of the technical staff of Udalerri Eusladunen Mankomunitatea (UEMA)**: Organise, dynamise, monitor and document (keep minutes); Training with the teachers and families of the school and collect feedback; Liaise and coordinate with the advisory staff of the university.
- **Tasks of the university advisory staff (HUHEZI)**: Main coordination of the project; Training with teachers and families of the schools and collecting feedback; Providing all the necessary tools in the process; Assisting in the evaluation of the process.

As an **evaluation**, one of the tools being used in the processes is SWOT analysis, so that the weaknesses, threats, strengths and opportunities of the project being developed can be identified.

In terms of **results**, there has been an improvement in the participation and communication of non-Basque-speaking families in the dynamics proposed by the school.

### Needed materials

**MATERIAL RESOURCES**: minutes, documents in different languages, translators, Telegram/Whatsapp, etc.

**SPACE RESOURCES**: The municipality; educational centres.

**HUMAN RESOURCES**: Involvement of the educational community. The agents involved must participate on a voluntary basis; the educational centres must participate with the approval of the teaching staff, the management and the parents' association to get involved for a year; a driving group will be created to adapt to the needs of each centre and town; the project has a dialogical character and aims to promote a friendly atmosphere.

### Notes and suggestions for Educators

This is an expanding project and it will be necessary to monitor the results that are obtained.

**Why call it a good practice?**

- Community project that promotes the participation and communication of migrant families.
- Basque as a key element in inclusion.
- Respect for different cultures while respecting the languages of migrants.

**Find more:**

[https://www.uema.eus/eu-ES/Albisteak/Oriak/20240313\\_Zaldibia-topaketa-UEMA.aspx](https://www.uema.eus/eu-ES/Albisteak/Oriak/20240313_Zaldibia-topaketa-UEMA.aspx) (News)

<https://uztarria.eus/azpeitia/1709826138383-etorkinen-eme-alabak-eta-euskara-elkarrekin-pentsa-dezagun-saioa-egingo-dute-asteazkenean> (News)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=utyPb4-huD8> (Youtube)

<https://azpeitia.eus/berriak/item/8952-euskara-eta-kulturartekotasuna-uztartzeko-egitasmoa-jarri-da-abian> (News)



## Practices from a European non-partner country

<b>Title</b>	<b>"KOALA" project - Poland, Cyprus, Greece, Belgium and The Republic of North Macedonia.</b>
<b>Author/Source</b>	Embrace Project. (2023). <i>Fostering a Culture of Inclusion - Handbook</i> .
<b>Citation / URL</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>HANDBOOK: <i>Fostering a Culture of Inclusion - Handbook</i>. <a href="https://project-embrace.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/EMBRACE_PR3_HANDBOOK_EN.pdf">https://project-embrace.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/EMBRACE_PR3_HANDBOOK_EN.pdf</a></li> </ul>
<b>Date</b>	2022- 2023

### Short Introduction

Basic quality services from the first years of life lead to a lasting, positive impact on the child's social, emotional, and physical development and, later, school results. In general, families in deprived areas make less use of childcare. In some neighbourhoods the risk of deprivation regards one in four babies and toddlers that have fewer opportunities since they were born, and this leaves a mark on their lives. The Koala project is about preventing and tackling this through a neighbourhood-based partnership of basic childcare and family support services.

Koala focusses on families in vulnerable situations with children from 9 months to 3 years old that live in certain underprivileged neighbourhoods. The project guidelines (as created by Kind&Gezin) define a family in a situation of vulnerability when it scores inadequate on three (or more) of the deprivation criteria listed below:

- Monthly family income
- Parental level of education
- Development of the children
- Employment situation of the parents
- Housing situation
- Mental and physical health of family members.

Families either find their way to the activities because they know the community centre or are referred to it by social partners such as nurses/doctors at Kind & Gezin, local school, staff in the community centre, community health centres, Caritas international and day-care initiatives.

Families are welcome to join Koala from pregnancy until their child has reached the age of 3 years old.

### Description of Main Activities and/or Methods of the practice

The Koala projects offers an 'inclusive family support offer' through the organization of an accessible contact point for families as well as weekly child and parent activities (rich powerful learning environment). By participating in **Koala activities**, a relationship of trust can grow, from which a bridge can be made to other areas of life: preventive health care, pre-school education, community work and children's activities, culture, Dutch language practice opportunities, employment, educational opportunities, etc. Families can be warmly guided to these facilities, with **special attention to childcare and community work**.

Koala project also offer extra activities (not on a weekly basis).

This may include visits to the local library, exploring different playgrounds in the area, participating in parent-child sporting events, visits to the local community health center, participating or facilitating sensory therapy (monthly activity).

**Every activity is carefully constructed to include the different areas of experience of the MeMoQ pedagogical framework: me and the other, body and movement, communication and expression, and exploration of the world.**

**Activities are based on the educational philosophy and pedagogy of the Reggio Emilia approach using self-directed, experimental learning in relationship-driven environments.** Many of the families that visit Koala speak different languages at home and most parents have very little or no knowledge of the Dutch language, and therefore language stimulating elements are always included without ignoring the importance of their parental language(s).

**Results and evaluation** at KOALA, the objective is to achieve the following impact:

- Maximise development opportunities for young children through a rich environment and inclusion (MEMOQ)
- Broaden the network of families in vulnerable situations so that they consciously use sources of support and support organizations in their environment
- Increase resilience in parents so that they experience success in various life domains and gain and seize development opportunities for themselves and their children.

As the ultimate goal, Koala provides children (and by extension adults and the whole family) with every opportunity for development so that they can grow into resilient adults. Staff works to empower the whole family and support them in building a broad and strong network they can fall back on.

<b>Needed materials</b>	<p><b>MATERIAL RESOURCES:</b> toys, stories, cardboard, paints, puppets, mats, adapted furniture, among others.</p> <p><b>SPACE RESOURCES:</b> the school itself, the municipal library, parks and green spaces in the area, etc.</p> <p><b>HUMAN RESOURCES:</b> the project can be developed due to the inclusion and participation of different agents in collaboration: professionals from the community center, health professionals in the area, educators from the nursery school, families and other social agents.</p>
<b>Notes and suggestions for Educators</b>	<p><b>Why call it a good practice?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It works on child rights by supporting parents</li> <li>• Works with the community</li> <li>• Offers inclusive, holistic, and needs-based services</li> <li>• Every year, the Koala project reaches out to more and more families for both individual support and group activities.</li> <li>• It continues to follow up families until other assistance can continue or an informal network has been created that the family can really fall back on.</li> </ul> <p>Find more:  <a href="https://vbjk.be/nl/projecten/koala-kind-en-ouderactiviteiten-voor-lokale-armoedebestrijding">https://vbjk.be/nl/projecten/koala-kind-en-ouderactiviteiten-voor-lokale-armoedebestrijding</a>  <a href="https://vimeo.com/775708788">https://vimeo.com/775708788</a>            Reggio Emilia approach:  <a href="https://www.reggiochildren.it/en/reggio-emilia-approach/valori-en">https://www.reggiochildren.it/en/reggio-emilia-approach/valori-en</a></p>

<b>Title</b>	<b>Project: My ideal school; the school I would like - Italy</b>
<b>Author/Source</b>	Antonini, et al. (2024). <i>My Ideal School - Children as Policy Makers - Pilot Action Activity Handbook</i> . Bologna: University of Bologna - Interpreting and Translation Department.
<b>Citation / URL</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>HANDBOOK: <i>My Ideal School - Children as Policy Makers - Pilot Action Activity Handbook</i>. Bologna: University of Bologna - Interpreting and Translation Department. <a href="https://newabc.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Handbook-MyIdealSchool_compressed.pdf">https://newabc.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Handbook-MyIdealSchool_compressed.pdf</a></li> </ul>
<b>Date</b>	2021-2024

### Short Introduction

Today in Europe, children and young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds continue to struggle with inequality and conflicts in school. To address this issue, it is important to empower migrant and refugee children to find ways to cope and persevere. Also, effective strategies are needed to ensure inclusion. The EU-funded NEW ABC project proposes a transformative and collaborative approach that can facilitate strategic change. The project combines voices of stakeholders and the development of young person-led, innovative activities in a co-creation setting. It includes nine innovation pilot actions in nine EU Member States. The overall goal is to ensure the adaptability, scalability and long-term sustainability of actions' results.

Within this framework project, different pilot projects were developed, a space in which we find the experience we share: **"My ideal school; the school I would like"**, in this project students from 3 to 14 years old take part.

**The aim of this pilot action is to help children/families/communities find their voice and bring their real needs in education to other stakeholders as well as policymakers at the local, regional and national levels.** Allowing children, families, teachers and communities, especially those with an immigrant background, to express their voice to overcome barriers in education increases their agency and allows them to make their real needs in education visible to decision- and policy-makers.

Goals are to be expected in two different levels:

- First, the voice of children, parents, and teachers should have an impact at the 'micro' level of classroom activities. They should be able to express their perspective and make a difference in how everyday activities in educational institutions unfold.
- Second, stakeholders' perspective should be given visibility by creating synergies and connections with policymakers at the local, regional, and national levels. In this case, the aim is to bring children's and parents' ideas to the fore, forcing policy makers to take into account their perspectives.

### Description of Main Activities and/or Methods of the practice

The activities in general passed by these phases: 1) Brainstorming, 2) Conceptual map of ideas, 3) Co-creation of activity, 4) Implementation of the activity, 5) reflection and evaluation, and 6) presentation to families at a class/school final event.

That pilot project developed the following sub-projects:

- THE BOOK CLUB.
- KAMISHIBAI ON INCLUSION.

- RENOVATING A ROOM.
- CREATING A DIGITAL BOOK.
- PUPPET THEATER.
- POETRY.
- A SCHOOL TO EAT.

**Related to methodology**, we can say that the general framework for action is CO-CREATION, the activities of this pilot are co-created by taking a multi-pronged approach based on the whole-child/school, bottom-up, and participatory action research theories. This approach will help include the learning dimension with the cultural, social, and emotional sphere thus contributing to promote and enhance inclusion.

The project developed in the school, as we saw, takes different formats (different subprojects) depending on the age of the students, among other issues, the 3 year old students, for example, worked through the metaphor "A school to eat"

**Some indicators that can be useful to evaluate your activity.** You can develop an evaluation tool using some (or all) of them:

- » Children's participation
- » Networking in the school
- » Parents' involvement
- » Policy makers' involvement
- » Professional development
- » Overall impact

<b>Needed materials</b>	(Depends on each subproject, referring to "A school to eat":)  <b>MATERIAL RESOURCES:</b> Food (cookies, chocolate...) and various materials <b>SPACE RESOURCES:</b> - <b>HUMAN RESOURCES:</b> teachers, pupils, their families, and members of the municipality
<b>Notes and suggestions for Educators</b>	(Related to "A school to eat" subproject:)  Activities that involve constructing something tangible together and eating together are usually very effective in pre-schools; they can be used as vehicles to socialize children to the value of diversity and to the value of their relationships at schools (with teachers and peers). Through these kinds of activities, children also develop various cognitive and senso-motor skills.  <b>Why call it a good practice?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It promotes networking among teachers, social agents, families, etc.</li> <li>This activity promotes children's participation, and therefore training in social action from childhood, dreaming/designing their ideal school.</li> <li>These activities can be easily replicated.</li> </ul> <b>Find more:</b> <a href="https://newabc.eu/project/">https://newabc.eu/project/</a> <a href="https://newabc.eu/pilot-school-contest-my-school-children-as-policy-makers/">https://newabc.eu/pilot-school-contest-my-school-children-as-policy-makers/</a>

<b>Title</b>	<b>"A GOOD START" project (Slovakia, Hungary, Macedonia, Romania, Spain)</b>
<b>Author/Source</b>	UNESCO and the Council of Europe (2014). <i>Guidelines on inclusive early childhood care and education for Roma children</i> . Strasbourg: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).
<b>Citation / URL</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Guidelines on inclusive early childhood care and education for Roma children</i>. Strasbourg: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). <a href="https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000227503/PDF/227503eng.pdf.multi">https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000227503/PDF/227503eng.pdf.multi</a></li> </ul>
<b>Date</b>	"A Good start" was launched in 2010.

### Short Introduction

The project targets both disadvantaged Roma and non-Roma children, from birth to age 6 or 7 years, as well as their parents or caregivers. It is implemented in 16 locations in four countries (FYR Macedonia, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia) where it offers pre-school, community and home-based services. Its objectives are to enhance the school readiness and subsequent life opportunities of the children involved, and to scale up access to quality early childhood care and education services for Roma children. The project activities were designed after analysis of baseline surveys, which were carried out by REF and its partners, in order to get an overall picture of the coverage and quality of ECCE services and schooling in each targeted locality.

### Description of Main Activities and/or Methods of the practice

Regarding birth to age 3 years, there is a focus on development. The issues to address are; birth registration, communication and counselling for health care, nutrition and feeding, with an emphasis on infant-caregiver interaction; attention to the play, social development and language development of toddlers through providing a responsive, rich and stimulating learning environment.

In summary, **the main activities are the following**: supporting children to attend formal kindergarten; training teachers and supporting staff; providing informal classes for children; providing parenting classes and enrolment support (e.g. Identity documents, vaccination).

In general, we have worked with participatory **methodologies**, focused on the needs of students and their families from a multicultural education approach, placing value on this cultural richness. It is worth mentioning that in some of the projects developed, the proposals have been included into the Waldorf pedagogical framework.

For A Good Start (AGS), a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation system was designed in order to capture the initial situation and to determine the subsequent effect of the project on its beneficiaries.

The main tools utilized included:

- a Community Assessment establishing a baseline of information for each locality on the families and the early childhood education and care services available;
- a household survey focusing on parents' attitudes and behaviors on education and care with basic socio-economic data; and
- a database which incorporates, amongst others, the household survey, information on families' participation in project activities, and children's attendance at preschool.

To date, **the project has successfully broken down access barriers to education and health with the result that more children are accessing mainstream or informal pre-school education and health services.**

Parents are more knowledgeable about education and early care and there are better relations between the kindergartens and Roma parents. **The outcomes include: improved access to quality early education for disadvantaged Roma children; improved parenting practices; improved access and use of early health and care services for young Roma children; and improved transition and access to quality mainstream primary school education.**

Already, 4.350 Roma and children from disadvantaged backgrounds are the direct beneficiaries of the programme.

### Needed materials

**MATERIAL RESOURCES:** There are the guidelines that provide orientation on four key themes pertinent to the care, development and early education of young Roma children. The themes selected are: (1) a national ECCE agenda for Roma children; (2) curriculum and pedagogy; (3) initial education, professional development and support for early childhood practitioners; and (4) transition from home or early childhood programmes to primary education.

The Guidelines provide many good practice examples, and suggested reading and resources on the above-mentioned themes.

**SPACE RESOURCES:** the school itself, the municipal spaces (welfare, health and employment centers...).

**HUMAN RESOURCES:** the project can be developed due to the involvement and participation of different agents in collaboration (families, school professionals, etc.)

### Notes and suggestions for Educators

This is a holistic project, so the involvement of more institutions and agents would be necessary. If this is not possible, it is possible to focus on the activities that can be carried out from children's schools.

#### Why call it a good practice?

- It is based on a participatory and in-depth evaluation.
- It has a strong community character.
- It is obtaining good results in the access of students to schooling in nursery schools and in their inclusive development within their communities.
- It is being replicated in different locations in different countries.

Find more:

<https://www.romaeducationfund.org/activities/>



## Practices from outside Europe

<b>Title</b>	<b>Jardín de Infantes de gestión pública estatal de la ciudad de Mercedes de Provincia de Buenos Aires</b>
<b>Author/Source</b>	Burgos, N., del Carmen Silva, M., Grinóvero, N., Villamonte, P., Bregagnolo, N., Gusbert, J. V., & Lodi, A. (2019). <i>Investigaciones sobre buenas prácticas en educación inicial en Argentina</i> . Scientia Interfluvius (Research on Good Practice in Early Childhood Education in Argentina). 10(2), 17-42.
<b>Citation / URL</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Investigaciones sobre buenas prácticas en educación inicial en Argentina</i>. Scientia Interfluvius <a href="https://revista.uader.edu.ar/index.php/aasif/article/view/134">https://revista.uader.edu.ar/index.php/aasif/article/view/134</a></li> </ul>
<b>Date</b>	2017-2018

### Short Introduction

It is part of a strategic line of identifying good practices in Early Childhood Education from an international, multicultural and multidisciplinary perspective.

This article analyzes the good practices carried out by the State Public Management Kindergarten of the City of Mercedes, province of Buenos Aires. Good practices were analyzed by three fundamental elements: the personal vision of the agents, the practices themselves and the relationship between the previous elements. Through various interviews carried out with the teachers, the problems they highlighted were known. Specifically, the different forms of communication (internet, mobile phones...) had opened a certain gap when it came to informing the community and in the initial training provided to the infants. In this space, they want to educate children who are critical of their own reality, participatory and open to new knowledge, promoting attentive listening from a fully inclusive perspective.

Recognizing the problem, a project titled "We listen, we know, we express ourselves, communication as a right, communication through verbal and non-verbal languages" was carried out. This project has the aim of visualizing and implementing strategies appropriate to the changes in community communication in relation to the use of different media, such as cell phones and the impact of new forms of communication on the institution and the relationships in the Kindergarten.

### Description of Main Activities and/or Methods of the practice

Taking into account the stated objective, the main **activities** consisted in **creating spaces** where gesture, sound, color, words, the different verbal and non-verbal languages were used as inclusive experiences to improve expressiveness, and propose reflective communication privileging democratic values and human rights.

The spaces were separated in this way according to the classes:

- From the non-verbal to the verbal (Nursery level)
- Towards the imagination (first grade)
- Photography (second grade A)
- We present a photographic exhibition (second grade B)
- Languages and communication (second grade C)
- Creators, create! (third grade A)
- I tell you, you tell me, we tell each other (third grade B)

For example, in the two photography rooms they worked on the critical analysis of the reality that was seen in the photo. Understanding that everything that was seen was part of a specific context and that all the people who were in the photo, were not in reality as they appeared. On the other hand, the teaching staff carried out a project titled "For social memory, recording CDs with songs." This album was recorded with the participation of teachers, children and parents. The groups in each room created the lyrics and the music teacher set them to music.

In terms of **methodology**, information-gathering instruments were used, such as interviews with managers and teachers; observation of practice; and analysis of institutional and professional documents.

Regular **evaluations** were carried out among teachers, students and families, using a variety of indicators. Some of the evaluation questions that were asked were the following: Did the forms of communication inside and outside the Kindergarten expand? Between whom? What were these forms? Did we discover characteristics of forms of communication and their influence on our daily actions? Were we able to problematise our forms of communication? How? Did we teachers expand the forms of communication, both verbal and non-verbal? In what type of communication do we feel we can achieve greater understanding? Were common criteria established between teaching peers in relation to the forms of communication? What were these criteria?

As a result, this process produced changes in teaching interventions, as well as horizontalizing relationships. Improvements were achieved in teaching and learning processes, in play relationships and classroom work, shared decisions, greater participation of family groups in kindergarten activities, etc. This CD, with the aim of it being a product for the entire community, they visit the city radio station so that they could use the CD for their programs.

<b>Needed materials</b>	<p><b>HUMAN RESOURCES:</b> community entities, such as the community radio station</p> <p><b>MATERIAL RESOURCES:</b> photographs, CDs, etc.</p> <p><b>SPACE RESOURCES:</b> classrooms, meeting spaces, community radio space.</p>
<b>Notes and suggestions for Educators</b>	<p>Why call it a good practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community project in a rural area where values are worked on with the involvement of different groups in the community, considering the pupils to be the real protagonists.</li> <li>• Development of pupils' autonomy.</li> <li>• Respect for the child.</li> </ul>

<b>Title</b>	<b>Te Whāriki He whāriki mātauranga mō ngā mokopuna o Aotearoa Early childhood curriculum - New Zealand.</b>
<b>Author/Source</b>	Ministry of Education, New Zealand (2017). Te Whāriki He whāriki mātauranga mō ngā mokopuna o Aotearoa. Early childhood curriculum.
<b>Citation / URL</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Te Whāriki He whāriki mātauranga mō ngā mokopuna o Aotearoa. Early childhood curriculum. <a href="https://www.education.govt.nz/assets/Documents/Early-Childhood/ELS-Te-Whariki-Early-Childhood-Curriculum-ENG-Web.pdf">https://www.education.govt.nz/assets/Documents/Early-Childhood/ELS-Te-Whariki-Early-Childhood-Curriculum-ENG-Web.pdf</a></li> </ul>
<b>Date</b>	2017

### Short Introduction

*Te Whāriki* sets out the curriculum to be used in New Zealand early childhood education (ECE) settings and provides guidance for its implementation.

Unique in its bicultural framing, *Te Whāriki* expresses our vision that all children grow up in New Zealand as competent and confident learners, strong in their identity, language and culture. It emphasizes our bicultural foundation, our multicultural present and the shared future we are creating. It encourages all children to learn in their own ways, supported by adults who know them well and have their best interests at heart.

*Te Whāriki* is an inclusive curriculum, a curriculum for all children. Inclusion encompasses gender and ethnicity, diversity of ability and learning needs, family structure and values, socioeconomic status and religion.

Factors that may contribute to the distinctive character of this local curriculum include:

- » cultural perspectives, for example, those found in bilingual or language immersion services
- » the specific learning needs of individual children
- » structural differences, such as whether the service is sessional, school- or full-day
- » the age range of the children in the setting
- » environmental opportunities and constraints
- » the ethnic and cultural makeup of the community
- » organisational and philosophical emphases, such as Montessori or Steiner
- » the different resources available in urban and rural settings
- » the ways in which parents, whānau and communities are involved.

### Description of Main Activities and/or Methods of the practice

The programme provides **activities** for children to develop their strengths, interests and abilities, such as in music, movement, language, construction, art, sorting and organizing, and in doing things with others.

Children experience activities that develop their gross and fine motor skills and offer varying degrees of physical challenge and reasonable risk. Such activities include climbing, balancing, hammering, hopping, turning, pouring and undertaking obstacle courses and construction projects.

**Methodically**, the curriculum is underpinned by four principles: empowerment */whakamana*, holistic development */kotahitanga*, family and community */whānau tangata*, and relationships */ngā hononga*.

These principles are the foundations of curriculum decision making and a guide for every aspect of pedagogy and practice.

The use of traditional storytelling, arts and legends and of humour, proverbs and metaphoric language can support children from some communities to navigate between familiar and less familiar contexts.

The programme encompasses different cultural perspectives, recognizing and affirming the primary importance of the children's families and cultures. The balance between communal, small group and individual experiences allows opportunities for interaction, cooperation and privacy.

The **evaluation** considers how effectively the service is providing for the strengths, interests and needs of all children and how their learning is progressing. It may focus on the teaching and learning programme, the service's priorities for learning, or other elements of the ECE service directly impacting on learning and teaching.

A far-ranging internal evaluation might look, for example, at leadership, the learning environment, and relationships with parents and whānau. It will ask: What is working well, and for whom? What needs to change, and how? A more narrowly defined internal evaluation may follow a specific curriculum event or intervention, with the aim of reviewing.

The project proposes the narrative **forms of assessment**, such as learning stories, may make use of a formative assessment sequence: noticing, recognising, responding, recording and revisiting valued learning. Opportunities for children to revisit items in their portfolios invite learning conversations and support self- and peer assessment.

<b>Needed materials</b>	<p><b>MATERIAL RESOURCES:</b> musical instruments, toys, paper, pencils, props for imaginative play, brushes, rollers, stamp pads, scissors, digital devices, musical instruments, materials drawn from nature, etc.</p> <p><b>SPACE RESOURCES:</b> indoor and outdoor playgrounds, the outdoor experiences involve different play spaces, such as smooth floors, carpet, grass and sand.</p> <p><b>HUMAN RESOURCES:</b> networking involves the participation of teachers, social agents, families, etc.</p>
<b>Notes and suggestions for Educators</b>	<p>Why call it a good practice?</p> <p>We consider the proposal a good practice because, among other elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• it is absolutely respectful of cultural diversity, for example, including Māori values and principles</li> <li>• it pays special attention to language, models, etc.</li> <li>• it promotes networking among teachers, social agents, families, etc.</li> <li>• it addresses possible difficulties, barriers to inclusion in a broad sense, these can be: physical (for example, the design of the physical environment), social (for example, practices that constrain participation) or conceptual (beliefs that limit what is considered appropriate for certain children).</li> </ul> <p>Find more: Communities of Learning   Kāhui Ako <a href="https://www.education.govt.nz/early-childhood/teaching-and-learning/communities-of-learning-kahui-ako/">https://www.education.govt.nz/early-childhood/teaching-and-learning/communities-of-learning-kahui-ako/</a></p>



<b>Title</b>	<b>Fundamental aspects of Early Childhood Interventions. Sustainability processes. REEA Early Childhood Care Programme (Peru)</b>
<b>Author/Source</b>	Novoa Seminario M. (2020). Aspectos fundamentales de las intervenciones en la primera infancia. Procesos de sostenibilidad (Fundamental aspects of early childhood interventions. Sustainability processes). REEA. No. 6, Vol II. Agosto 2020. Pp. 54-71. Centro Latinoamericano de Estudios en Epistemología Pedagógica.
<b>Citation / URL</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aspectos fundamentales de las intervenciones en la primera infancia. Procesos de sostenibilidad. Centro Latinoamericano de Estudios en Epistemología Pedagógica. <a href="http://www.eumed.net/rev/reea">http://www.eumed.net/rev/reea</a></li> </ul>
<b>Date</b>	2008 - 2020 (Although the practice has not been officially reported as finished, the last updates that have been retrieved are from documents dated back to 2020.)

### Short Introduction

The early childhood care programme (AEPI) is the set of structured, planned, orderly activities aimed at early childhood children and their families, with the intention of developing and/ or enhancing the motor, cognitive, social and language skills of early childhood children and strengthening the capacities of parents and families to improve their care.

The AEPI recognises the importance of the first three years of life for adequate human development and as a factor for the progress of peoples. In this sense, the programme focuses its work on:

- Promoting the development of capacities in the areas of: Self-awareness, relationship with the natural environment and cognitive and social communication in children under 3 years of age.
- Strengthen the parenting culture of families in the district to guarantee the comprehensive development of children under 3 years of age.
- Improve the capacities of early education teachers and facilitators to promote early childhood care.
- Involve inter-sectoral bodies to ensure the programme's sustainability.

### Description of Main Activities and/or Methods of the practice

The early childhood care component proposes its guidelines from three **topics**:

1. Capacity building for families, based on a process of accompaniment and support for the family to empower it in its role and guarantee the rights of children.
2. Capacity building of early childhood education teachers and facilitators, and community volunteers, for the promotion of early childhood care in families and the community.
3. Implementation of adequate educational spaces to guide the timely stimulation of children with the direct participation of mothers and fathers.

Forms of intervention through the proposed actions such as:

- **Action 1.1:**  
Design of an early childhood care program, articulated between health and education.  
Activity 1.1.1: Workshop for the participatory review of a training program for early childhood care, articulated between health and education, in the perspective of gender and environmental conservation approaches, aimed at: Early Childhood Education teachers and animators, parents and community volunteers.  
Activity 1.1.2: Workshop for the participatory construction and dissemination of specific indicators of change in the family and community on early childhood care.

- **Action 1.2:** Training aimed at families for the timely care of children under 3 years of age, in the perspectives of gender and environmental conservation, by a local multidisciplinary team.  
Activity 1.2.1: Training workshop for members of the multidisciplinary team, family promoters and members of the community committee for early childhood.  
Activity 1.2.2: Training workshop for parents of the communities of the district of Morropón.  
Activity 1.2.3: Development of a radio program to promote and disseminate early childhood care.  
Activity 1.2.4: Delivery of information booklets to families on early childhood care.  
Activity 1.2.5: Accompanying families in the care processes for children under 3 years of age, in homes and educational spaces.
- **Action 1.3:** Training for teachers and early education promoters, and community volunteers for the promotion of early childhood care in families and communities.  
Activity 1.3.1: Training workshop for teachers and early education promoters, under the responsibility of the pedagogical assistants of the initial level of the locality.  
Activity 1.3.2: Training workshop for volunteers under the responsibility of the pedagogical assistants of the initial level of the locality and the toy library assistant.  
Activity 1.3.3: Accompanying the processes of promotion and dissemination of early childhood care.

The **programme's approach** to early childhood care:

- » Early childhood development approach: During the first three years of life, brain development is the central axis of the child's overall growth, so the most important events in its maturation must take place during this period.
- » Cross-sectoral programme approach: Involving families, authorities and the community as a whole ensures the sustainability of actions in favour of children by getting different social sectors to work in a coordinated manner towards common objectives.

Direct attention to early childhood children will be provided through two intervention **strategies**:

- Sessions in the toy library spaces: There will be the participation of the toy library coordinator who will be responsible for the execution of the activities and the community volunteer staff who will be trained and advised by the person responsible for the toy library.
- Home visits: Children under three years old whose homes are in communities outside the play centers will be cared for in their homes with the families' companions.

At a **methodological** level, the permanent and respectful dialogue with the families involved is emphasized through the application of the evaluation sheet of indicators of change in families. The information is then systematized and a report is written.

The following instruments are used as **evaluation**: the observation guide of teaching performance in the classroom; evaluation sheet for indicators of change in families; measuring instruments on performance levels of children under three years of age.

Regarding some **results**, it is noted that the population served in this program is 186 families and 190 boys and girls under 3 years of age. These people show beneficial changes not only in family dynamics or lifestyle, but also in personal and social attitudes in society, making children feel more confident and socially stimulating in their activities.

**Needed materials**

**MATERIAL RESOURCES:** childhood, families, teachers, community, representatives of the health sector, representatives of local government, police, parents' associations, Catholic church, private institutions, etc

**SPACE RESOURCES:** materials for the development of activities with children from 0 to 3 years old.

**HUMAN RESOURCES:** playrooms, meeting spaces.

**Notes and suggestions for Educators**

Why call it a good practice:

- Early childhood development approach and cross-sectoral programme approach.
- Multidisciplinary actions.
- Presence of authorities committed by the development of their municipalities.



Chapter 2

Legislative context  
and curricular structures in ECEC  
for children aged 0-3  
and policy recommendations

# Introduction

In this section of the SUSIEE guide, researchers within our consortium took care of frame another picture of the ECEC systems in the partner countries.

According to the key components of a qualitative ECEC system as defined in the **Quality Framework** of the EU (Access, Staff, Governance & Funding, Curriculum, Evaluation & Monitoring) we have analyzed relevant legislative and curricula documents, statistics and articles related to the ECEC situation in your countries in relation to those parameters.

In order to provide a wider spectrum, our research has also investigated how the current situation regarding the ECEC Quality Framework matches or differs from an intercultural and sustainable perspective (**GreenComp**).

Connecting with the first section of this guide, through this comparative analysis, it was possible to establish if efforts and initiatives to make pre-schools more intercultural and sustainable are supported by national legislations. Moreover, based on the results obtained, policy recommendations were drafted for the application of sustainable and intercultural ECEC in accordance with the EU Quality Framework in the partner countries, especially in relation to access, staff, and curriculum.

When needed, especially in the case of Spain, contextual explanations have been added to clarify the different legislative and governmental layers that might make up a country.

Italy



## Analysis of the legislative context

### Access

*Is ECEC education available and affordable for all? Does it encourage participation and strengthen inclusion, embracing diversity?*

### Current situation

In Italy, a daycare center, also known as an infant care center, is an educational and social service of public interest, open to all children aged 3 to 36 months. It works in partnership with families to support the growth and development of children within the framework of early childhood policies and to ensure the right to education, respecting individual, cultural, and religious identities. Additionally, daycare centers provide a crucial service in helping families balance work and personal life, offering support for better family organization. Attending daycare and spending quality time with parents are crucial factors in reducing inequalities among children.

Disparities in the acquisition of skills and competencies begin to form from the earliest years of life. However, in Italy, only 1 in 10 children can access a public daycare center, with particularly negative peaks recorded in Calabria and Campania. In these regions, coverage is nearly nonexistent, with only 2.6% and 3.6% of children respectively attending a public daycare center. This scenario has particularly adverse effects on children from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, who face greater difficulties in accessing private, non-contracted daycare services.

This is the scenario outlined in the report “The Best Start. Inequalities and Opportunities in the Early Years of Life,” released in conjunction with the start of the school year in Italy. The report presents the results of a pilot survey conducted between March and June 2019 in 10 Italian cities and provinces: Brindisi, Macerata, Milan, Naples, Palermo, Prato, Reggio Emilia, Rome, Salerno, and Trieste. This survey was carried out in collaboration with the Centro per la Salute del Bambino, which provided scientific oversight along with the Istituto degli Innocenti and the University of Macerata.

The pilot survey highlights those educational inequalities, which can have long-lasting impacts on children, manifest well before they enter compulsory schooling. Therefore, educational poverty must be addressed from the early years of life through robust early childhood and parenting support policies, which are currently severely lacking in Italy. It is crucial to ensure that children from families in disadvantaged situations are not excluded from educational opportunities such as daycare centers.

The research findings indicate that children who attended daycare centers responded appropriately to about 47% of the questions posed, compared to 41.6% of those who attended supplementary services, started preschool early, or stayed at home without accessing any services.

The duration of daycare attendance is found to be a decisive factor in preventing educational poverty. Children from families in a socio-economically disadvantaged situation who attended daycare for three years appropriately answered 50% of the questions. This is compared to 42.5% for those who attended for 12 to 24 months, and 38% for those who attended for one year or less—a percentage similar to those who did not attend daycare at all.

### Intercultural and Sustainability perspective

In the Italian system, protocols and suggestions on how to make pre-schools more accessible for children with a migration background are rarely mentioned, but some guidelines are in existence. In 2022, the Ministry of Education published the document “Intercultural Guidelines: Ideas and Proposals for the Integration of Students from Migrant Backgrounds” on its website. This document was developed by the National Observatory for the Integration of Foreign Students and Intercultural Education.

The text updates and modernizes the previous 2014 Guidelines for the Reception and Inclusion of Foreign Students. It aims to provide organizational methods and operational guidelines to promote the inclusion of all students and foster an intercultural dimension in every school. The guide acknowledges that, over the years, schools have made significant progress in inclusion and integration efforts. However, disparities and challenges remain, even for students from migrant backgrounds who were born and raised in Italy. Additionally, there is a tangible risk that the pandemic has exacerbated these issues, deepening gaps and inequalities, as highlighted by the 2021 “Invalsi” Report.

At a legislation level it is guaranteed for every child the right to access all levels of schooling. The situation most often described by the government concerns the possibility for minors without residence permits to access nursery schools.

Firstly, it is important to consider that nursery schools, although not strictly part of the formal education and training system and not within compulsory schooling, represent a pre-school system aimed not only at supporting parents but also at the socialization and education of children. These goals, according to the Constitutional Court’s jurisprudence, are similar to those recognized for educational institutions, and thus all minors should have equal opportunities in this system.

Nursery schools are defined by current legislation as “structures aimed at ensuring the education and socialization of children aged between three months and three years and supporting families and parents” (Law 448/2001, art. 70). From this definition, the Constitutional Court clarifies that “the service provided by the nursery school is not merely a support function for families in child care or a mere aid to facilitate parents’ access to work, but also includes educational purposes, being aimed at fostering the cognitive, emotional, and relational potential of the child.” The Court further notes “the assimilation, by ordinary legislation, of the educational and socialization purposes pursued by nursery schools to those recognized for educational institutions – which does not imply the inclusion of these structures in the school system, “affirming that “concerning the recognized educational purposes of nursery schools,

their regulation must fall within the realm of education (albeit in the preschool phase)”

The Constitutional Court’s jurisprudence has repeatedly affirmed that nursery schools are “special social services of public interest.” The principles set forth by Law 448/2001 and affirmed by the Constitutional Court’s jurisprudence have also been incorporated into some regional laws regarding nursery schools.

Given the “educational and formative purposes” recognized for nursery schools, it must be considered fully applicable the principle enshrined in Article 28 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, in conjunction with Article 2, which recognizes every child’s “right to education” regardless of their residence permit status. In addition to the general principle of “non-discrimination” provided by Article 2 of the Convention, the principle of Article 3 must be highlighted, which states that in all decisions concerning children, the best interests of the child must be a primary consideration.

With this in mind, let’s see how Article 6, paragraph 2 of the Consolidated Immigration Act 286/98 applies. From the above considerations, it is clear that enrolling a child in nursery school is not only in the interest of the parent but also in the child’s interest and the public interest (regarding the constitutionally protected right to education and child protection).

Thus, the same argument cited concerning kindergarten and services such as meals and transportation applies here: given that Article 6, paragraph 2 of the Consolidated Immigration Act 286/98 exclusively refers to enrollments and other provisions “of interest to the foreigner” and not those of interest to the child and the public interest, access to nursery school should not be conditioned on the presentation of a residence permit. This interpretation has been adopted by the Ministry of the Interior concerning birth registration and can thus be extended, by analogy, to access to nursery school.

Finally, it should be noted that Article 38 of the Consolidated Immigration Act 286/98 (which was not amended by Law 94/09) states that foreign minors present in the territory, regardless of their residence permit status, are subject to “all provisions in force regarding access to educational services,” which undoubtedly include those regulating nursery schools. As seen above, several regional laws, in line with this provision, establish that foreign minors present in the regional territory “are guaranteed equal conditions of access to early childhood services, school services, and interventions provided for in the matter of the right to education.”

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## Staff

*What is the working condition of the ECEC staff? How is leadership in the country dealing with this type of education?*

### Current situation

The service conditions for educators in public daycare centers are governed by national collective agreements, which can be supplemented locally through agreements with trade unions. Due to the variety of contracts in effect, detailed descriptions of service conditions are not provided in this chapter.

Service conditions for teachers in state-run preschools, primary, and secondary schools are regulated by central legislation and national collective agreements. Teachers are granted teaching autonomy, adhering to constitutional principles. The Ministry of Education and Merit (MIM) is responsible for annually planning the intake for initial teacher training programs for preschool, primary, and secondary education. The total number of available positions is determined based on regional staffing plans and the resulting need for teaching staff in state schools, as outlined in each school's three-year educational plan (PTOF). Schools hire teachers from rankings organized at the regional level. These rankings are based on the results of regular and extraordinary competitions held every two years. The rankings are valid for two years after their final approval or until new rankings are published.

The staff-to-child ratio in Italian kindergartens must be calculated based on the total number of enrolled children. The facility must have a pedagogical coordinator who possesses the necessary educational qualifications and professional requirements as stipulated by current regulations. The required personnel for organizing daycare activities include:

- Educators: There must be at least one educator for every five children aged 3 to 12 months, one educator for every eight children aged 13 to 24 months, and one educator for every ten children aged 25 to 36 months in facilities that exclusively serve this age group.
- General Service Staff: When these services are performed internally and not outsourced, the staff-to-child ratio is one general service staff member for every 20 enrolled children.
- Kitchen Staff: Dedicated personnel for the kitchen are required if meals are prepared within the facility.

In cases where there are children with disabilities, the staff-to-child ratio must be one educator for each child. If the facility also accommodates minors with psycho-social issues, the team must include professional educators, as per D.M. n. 520/1998, as well as other appropriate professional figures in relation to the socio-health services required. Any necessary healthcare services are provided by the Regional Health Service, in accordance with the current organizational model.

Additionally, the structure should ensure that all educational and support staff are well-trained and continuously updated on best practices for early childhood care. This includes ongoing professional development opportunities to enhance their skills in managing diverse needs, including special education and psycho-social support. The aim is to create an inclusive and

nurturing environment that caters to the holistic development of all children, regardless of their backgrounds or specific needs.

Overall, maintaining a balanced and well-qualified staff-to-child ratio is essential for the effective functioning of daycare centers. It ensures that each child receives adequate attention and care, promoting their well-being and early development. By adhering to these standards, Italy strives to provide high-quality early childhood education and care, laying a strong foundation for the future growth and success of its youngest citizens.

### Intercultural and Sustainability perspective

In Italy, the management of interculturality within school staff is not directly regulated by the government but is guided by frameworks such as "Intercultural Training for Teachers: Professionalism, Resources, and Global Challenges" (released in 2021) and other initiatives under governmental fundings and supervision like the FAMI program. The FAMI Program includes specific actions for training school personnel on integrating students from migrant backgrounds. The FAMI (Asylum, Migration, and Integration Fund) Program, overseen by the Ministry of the Interior and co-financed by the European Union, supports migrant integration policies. The Ministry of Education's participation in the 2021-2027 FAMI programming is part of a comprehensive strategy, built on experiences from the 2014-2020 programming period, aimed at strengthening the integration policies for students of all ages from migrant backgrounds, especially those from third countries.

The planned interventions are divided into two main actions. The first action involves the participation of schools in collaboration with the Ministry's Regional Education Offices and the central administration. The second action consists of national and European initiatives conducted with other institutional actors.

Beyond the previously described interventions for unaccompanied minors (MSNA), the program includes capacity-building actions for training principals, teachers, and administrative staff. It also involves creating school networks, opening "information desks" for families and students, and enhancing linguistic training in Italbase and Italstudio.

The primary actions include:

- a) Interventions in schools to improve the educational system in multicultural and peripheral contexts.
- b) Language training programs and active citizenship courses based on the core themes of the new civic education curriculum.
- c) Welcoming projects.
- d) In-service training.
- e) Awareness projects on international protection holders and initiatives to prevent and combat discrimination.

These efforts aim to promote an inclusive educational environment that supports the integration and success of students from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Considering the multicultural reality of Italian schools, especially in light of the pandemic, the Italian educational system is making a significant shift from multiculturalism—a structural dimension describing the composition of the student population—to interculturality, which necessitates rethinking teaching and learning practices to create welcoming and inclusive pathways.

At the core of these reflections is the teacher, a key figure in addressing and developing new strategies in their professional practice. This involves a strong emphasis on the need for training to acquire new competencies. The guidelines clearly highlight the urgent need to revisit the issue of interculturality to overcome both the risk of meaninglessness—following a long phase during which schools saw a rapid increase in students with a migration background—and the potential resistances, often masked by indifference or the presumption of having already acquired a sufficient minimum knowledge to operate in heterogeneous classrooms.

The primary partners in the education of students from migrant backgrounds are their families and educational agencies. For parents, enrolling their children in the educational services of the host country represents a significant milestone. It is their first continuous and daily interaction with the services and professionals (educators) of the host country. As highlighted in the “Intercultural Guidelines” (Miur, 2022), this is where “families experience the role of parents alongside other parents and can engage in discussions on crucial topics such as the conception of childhood, ideas of care, and educational styles.”

This comprehensive approach aims to ensure that intercultural education is not only about recognizing diversity but also about fostering meaningful interactions and understanding among all members of the school community. The teacher’s role is crucial in this process, requiring ongoing professional development and an openness to adopting new methodologies that embrace the diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds of their students. The ultimate goal is to create an inclusive educational environment where all students can thrive and where intercultural competence becomes a fundamental aspect of teaching and learning.

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## Governance & funding

*Is the value and importance of ECEC recognized? Do they have clear rules and expectations on the quality of ECEC structures? Are there enough investments on ECEC?*

### Current situation

The Minister of Education and Merit, Giuseppe Valditara, has signed a decree for a new Plan for nursery schools, amounting to €734.9 million. This Plan, aligned with the objectives of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR), aims to increase the number of nursery school places to enhance educational offerings from early childhood and provide tangible support to families.

This substantial effort aims to increase the newly created places and achieve the European target set by the PNRR.

The decree not only allocates and mobilizes available resources but also defines the criteria for their distribution among municipalities. These criteria consider ISTAT data on current service coverage for the 0-2 age group, resident population, and the number of children within this age bracket.

14 metropolitan cities, due to the territorial extent of these areas, are set to receive a share of resources to activate and enhance nursery services, regardless of the current level of service coverage for the 0-2 age group.

The investment aims to improve educational offerings from early childhood and provide concrete support to families, encouraging women's participation in the labor market and balancing family and professional life. A total of 150,480 new nursery school places will be available.

### Intercultural and Sustainability perspective

New investment plans do not specifically concern intercultural education. However, the current approach of the Italian government regarding interculturality focuses on providing tools to enhance the school system in multicultural contexts through a systemic and interinstitutional cooperation. The goal is to offer shared resources that promote the integration of students with migrant backgrounds into the school system. Within this framework, the project aims to strengthen and implement tools to support governance and networks between schools and local communities.

Among these resources, the ISMU Foundation publishes annual reports (with specific focuses on the presence, characteristics, needs, and pathways of students with non-Italian citizenship in our educational system) and five guides targeted at teachers, school leaders, and school staff. These guides offer thematic deep dives, reflections, experiences, teaching practices, suggestions, operational guidelines, collections of tools, and reading recommendations. They address five current topics chosen for their importance in building a high-quality intercultural school environment:

Managing school-family relationships, the role of linguistic-cultural mediation, and providing

school orientation to ensure equal educational opportunities.

Welcoming unaccompanied foreign minors into the educational and training system through a networked approach involving schools and local agencies for integrated education and training. Addressing online hate speech and racism from a citizenship education perspective, incorporating media education and intercultural pedagogy.

Promoting a multilingual approach within the framework of language education that values and gives voice to the many mother tongues present in schools, alongside the second language, academic languages, and foreign and minority languages.

Training teachers and school leaders with an intercultural perspective, identifying the primary training needs of school staff working in multicultural contexts to develop new and effective training programs that are increasingly aligned with evolving educational environments.

This comprehensive strategy aims to ensure that intercultural education is not only about recognizing diversity but also about fostering meaningful interactions and understanding among all members of the school community. The role of the teacher is pivotal in this process, requiring continuous professional development and openness to new methodologies that embrace the diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds of their students. The ultimate objective is to create an inclusive educational environment where all students can thrive and where intercultural competence becomes a fundamental aspect of teaching and learning.

In terms of sustainability, with the new fundings that are set for pre-school facilities, the efforts are more focused on the general construction of safe buildings and environments. The new investment plan focuses on increasing the availability of early childhood facilities through the construction, renovation, and securing of nursery schools and kindergartens. This will improve education both quantitatively and qualitatively.

To ensure the measure complies with the Technical Guidance "Do No Significant Harm" (2021/C58/01), the eligibility criteria in the terms of reference for future project calls exclude the following activities:

- Activities related to fossil fuels, including downstream use.
- Activities under the EU Emission Trading System (ETS) that achieve projected greenhouse gas emissions not lower than relevant benchmarks.
- Activities related to landfills, incinerators, and mechanical biological treatment plants.
- Activities where long-term waste disposal may harm the environment.

The terms of reference also require the selection of activities that comply with relevant EU and national environmental legislation.

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## Analysis of curricular structure and programs

### Curriculum

*Are curricula locally determined or are they determined at regional and at system level? Are curricula holistic and flexible? Are they supervised regularly? Have they developed curricula taking into account the diversity and resources in the local environment, and the sociocultural backgrounds of children and their parents?*

### Current situation

Preschool contributes to the education and development of children in emotional, psychomotor, cognitive, moral, religious, and social aspects. It fosters their relational, autonomy, creativity, and learning potentials, ensuring equal educational opportunities. Respecting the educational role of parents, preschool contributes to the integral formation of children and, through its autonomy and unified pedagogical approach, ensures continuity in education from nursery to primary school.

The National Guidelines set the developmental milestones for children's competencies across five "fields of experience" that form the basis of preschool educational activities:

- Self and others
- Body and movement
- Images, sounds, colors
- Speech and words
- Knowledge of the world

Each field of experience provides objects, situations, images, and languages related to the symbolic systems of our culture, stimulating and supporting children's learning and increasing their confidence.

The 2012 National Guidelines were updated in 2018 to include "new scenarios" emphasizing citizenship and sustainability education, in line with the recommendations of the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union, as well as the goals outlined by the UN in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

#### Teaching Methods and Daily Organization

Preschool promotes well-being and serene learning by carefully preparing educational environments and managing the entire school day. The preschool curriculum is a balanced integration of care, relationship-building, and learning moments.

Learning occurs through action, exploration, contact with objects, nature, art, and the community, within a playful context that serves as a typical form of relationship and knowledge acquisition. Teaching methodologies focus on concrete experiences, exploration, discovery, play, trial and error, conversation, and peer and adult interaction.

Routines are essential parts of the day, recurring consistently and linked to welcome, well-being, hygiene, and interpersonal relationships. These routines regulate the daily rhythm and provide a secure base for new experiences and stimuli. They help children orient themselves in time and enhance their personal, cognitive, emotional, and communicative skills. Examples include roll call, task assignments, personal care, tidying up, communal meals, and rest periods.

Significant emphasis is placed on play, during which children express themselves, narrate, and creatively rework personal and social experiences.

Teachers' observation in various forms is crucial for understanding and supporting children's development in all areas. Documentation helps track, remember, and reflect on individual and group learning progress for both adults and children. Evaluation acknowledges, accompanies, describes, and documents each child's growth processes, serving a formative purpose.

### Intercultural and Sustainability perspective

According to official statements of the Italian Ministry of Education, schools are ideal venues for initiating educational projects focused on the environment, sustainability, cultural heritage, and global citizenship. The connection with the local community, daily interactions with students, the interdisciplinary nature of education, and the ability to create targeted learning pathways are crucial elements. These factors enable schools to be at the forefront of supporting young people in working towards the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) outlined in the 2030 Agenda. This journey involves emotional and cultural exploration and raising awareness about sustainability, promoting comprehensive human well-being, protecting the environment, and caring for our common home.

#### Towards Inclusive, Just, and Peaceful Societies

Through education on environmental issues, sustainability, cultural heritage, and global citizenship, schools can instill a sense of community, both local and global, particularly in younger generations. Developing adequate sensitivity to personal and collective well-being, adopting healthy lifestyles, and combating climate change are essential for building inclusive, just, and peaceful societies by 2030. Addressing these topics from a global, scientifically informed, and internationally shared perspective, schools should focus on ecological, social, and economic sustainability. This requires continuous and collective reflection, interdisciplinary approaches, intercultural dialogue, and education on solidarity, peace, and legality.

#### The Role of the Ministry of Education (MIUR)

This challenging and stimulating endeavor requires responses from the entire educational system. The Miur serves as a primary point of contact for young people and students. Through teachers, the Miur can engage families with informational and educational programs to increase awareness and knowledge, ensuring they stay updated with new developments.

#### Schools as Promoters of Culture and Synergies

In recent years, schools have expanded their educational responsibilities to include new cross-disciplinary areas. School autonomy has laid the foundation for different ways of interacting with the local community and professional and institutional entities within it. As promoters of

culture and relationships, schools can provide students, families, and the community with the tools necessary to foster a virtuous process leading to a more fraternal humanity. Establishing relationships and synergies with local stakeholders is crucial for implementing appropriate interventions. Broad collaborations involving institutions, local authorities, and all social entities are essential for shared growth.

The Miur has signed numerous protocols of agreement with other ministries, institutions, national and international organizations, entities, and sector associations on topics such as environmental education, sustainability, cultural heritage, and global citizenship. The Directorate General for Students, Integration, and Participation coordinates annual educational programs and training activities outlined in these agreements. These initiatives aim to spark interest, knowledge, and awareness among young people, also integrating educational activities offered within the community.

Nearly fifty years since Italy began transforming into a country of immigration (despite a significant emigration flow, particularly among young Italians with a medium to high level of education) it is essential to adopt a different perspective. We must view individuals from migrant backgrounds not merely as bearers of needs, but as holders of rights and responsibilities. This can be achieved through initiatives aimed at:

**Valuing Linguistic and Cultural Heritage:** Recognize and give prominence to the linguistic and cultural heritage of students from migrant backgrounds, fostering multilingualism and religious pluralism. This requires moving beyond viewing cultures and identities as static or folkloric entities. Too often, a misunderstood form of intercultural education is influenced by a folkloric, essentialist, and relativistic view that exalts cultural differences for their own sake. Instead, we should adopt a constructivist perspective on diversity, understanding cultural differences as socially constructed and fluid identities, shaped through social interaction, rather than as innate and unchangeable traits.

**Supporting Networks:** Foster networks among schools, adult education centers, educational centers, and associations. These networks should serve as relational spaces that encourage critical reflection on current educational practices and the development and implementation of activities aimed at the entire population. This includes rethinking schools and education as primary spaces for intercultural mediation.

**Promoting Interaction and Mutual Understanding:** Encourage opportunities for meeting, dialogue, and mutual understanding to facilitate the transition from a multicultural situation—where different cultures merely coexist—to one of genuine interaction, acceptance, and exchange. The intercultural approach respects and values diversity while seeking common values that enable harmonious living together.

This new vision of relationships among people from different cultures should transform the very structure of the school organization and teaching methods, as well as evaluation methods and the relationships between teachers, students, and families both within and outside the school. By adopting these approaches, we can reshape the educational environment to better support the integration and mutual enrichment of all students, regardless of their cultural background.

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## Evaluation & Monitoring

*Are evaluations regular and transparent? Are they done in the best interest of the child? Is monitoring used in effective ways for policy development?*

### Current situation

The government has set quality standards for daycare centers, establishing protocols to ensure optimal teaching within these facilities:

The minimum and maximum capacity of a daycare center is set at 20 to 60 children, respectively. The maximum capacity can be increased by up to 15% to account for daily variations in attendance, provided there is sufficient space available. For micro-daycare centers, the minimum and maximum capacity is set at 6 to 20 children. Both daycare and micro-daycare centers can operate full-time, with opening hours of eight or more hours daily, or part-time, with less than eight hours daily.

Essential spaces for children and general services include:

- a) An entrance area with a sufficient buffer space for microclimatic protection, providing access to sections without passing through other sections. For facilities attached to educational services, a single entrance may suffice.
- b) Functional units (sections) for each group of children, designed to accommodate rest and meals in the same or functionally connected spaces that ensure hygiene and usability before use.
- c) Hygiene facilities for children, serving multiple sections but adjacent to each section, equipped with changing tables, washbasins, and an average provision of one toilet per ten children.
- d) Common spaces for recreational activities, used rotationally by sections or for individual and group activities.
- e) General services and adult areas (changing room and WC for staff, separate storage for cleaning equipment and materials, space for meal preparation materials, and parent consultations).
- f) A kitchen or kitchen terminal, or another equipped space for serving externally provided meals.
- g) Outdoor or play areas equipped with fixed and dedicated structures.

If the facility spans multiple floors, measures must be taken to ensure child safety at all times, with each section and its connected spaces located on a single floor. Except for the spaces listed under e) and f), areas for children's activities cannot be situated in basements or underground levels. Functional units or sections are organized by age groups, reflecting children's developmental needs and activity differentiation.

### Personnel and Services

The services provided must meet the following objectives:

- a) Support for families, especially single-parent families, in childcare and educational decisions.

b) Daily and continuous care (more than 5 hours per day) by professional staff in an external, non-family context.

c) Stimulation of children's development and socialization, ensuring their physical and mental well-being and fostering their cognitive, emotional, relational, and social potential.

During the child's stay, the facility must provide hygiene services, meals, continuous care and supervision, rest time in adequately equipped spaces, educational activities, recreational group activities, workshops, and early literacy programs. An educational plan must be developed for each functional unit or section, including necessary customizations based on the children's diverse needs.

### Intercultural and Sustainability perspective

As of now, there are no detected official tools and governmental instruments that regulate the quality of sustainability and intercultural education in Italian kindergartens, apart from programs and guidelines presented in the previous sections.

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## Third section: Policy Recommendations

### **Centralized Approach to Sustainability in Education**

Sustainability in education currently relies heavily on the individual efforts of teachers. There is a pressing need for a more centralized and systematic approach. This centralization would ensure that sustainability is ingrained within the educational framework rather than being dependent on the varying levels of commitment and expertise of individual educators. A centralized strategy should involve the development of specific curricula that embed sustainable practices and principles across all levels of education.

Thus, there would be the need to:

- Develop and implement a standardized sustainability curriculum across all educational levels.
- Establish national guidelines and resources to support teachers in integrating sustainable practices into their teaching.
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of sustainability education to ensure continuous improvement and alignment with global standards.

### **Importance of Early Childhood Education**

Research underscores the critical role of high-quality early childhood socio-educational services, including daycare centers, in mitigating educational inequalities from the earliest stages of life.

In Italy, to achieve this goal, it would be essential to:

- Increase the availability of daycare places and expand territorial coverage for children up to 3 years old.
- Reduce the financial burden on families to make these services more accessible.
- Implement inclusive access criteria to ensure children from particularly disadvantaged backgrounds can benefit from these early educational opportunities. Increase funding and resources to expand daycare centers and early childhood educational services, particularly in underserved areas.

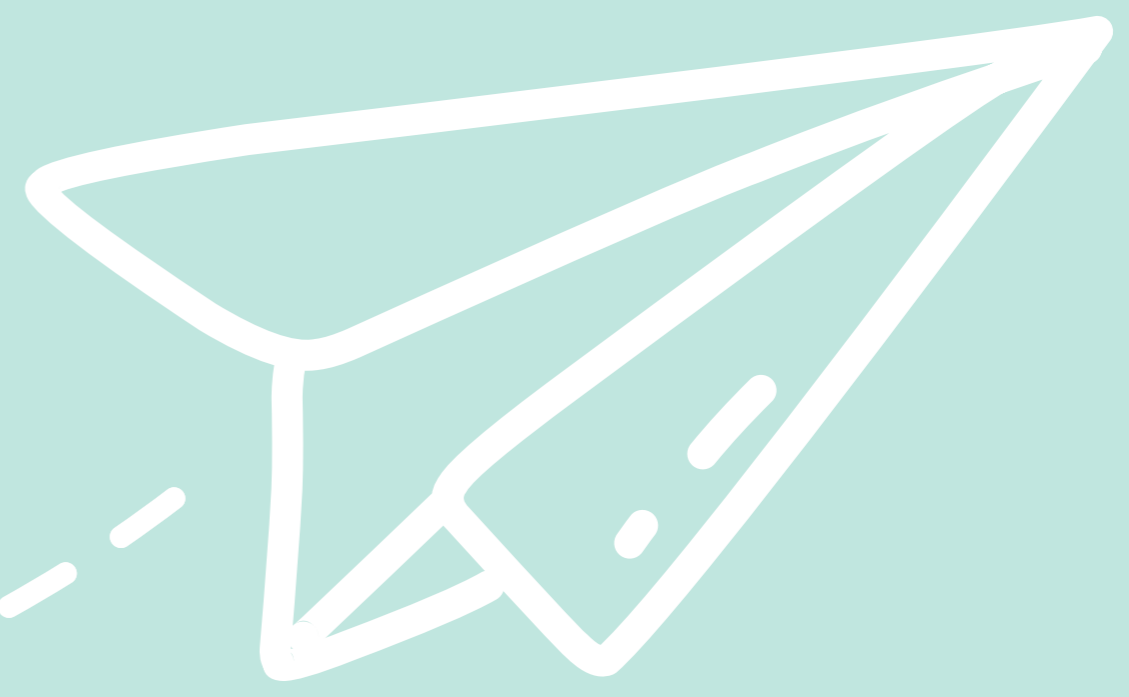
### **Multilingualism and Cultural Diversity in Schools**

Recent investigations have highlighted the influx of multiple languages and cultures into Italian schools. However, this diversity is not always matched by a widespread recognition of the value of linguistic diversity in classrooms. While bilingualism is often viewed positively, this tends to be limited to languages with social prestige, neglecting the mother tongues of families with a migration background.

There is a need for an educational approach that genuinely embraces multilingualism by:

- Recognizing and incorporating the languages spoken by children in their home environments.
- Collecting and valuing the linguistic biographies of students.
- Promoting the worth of every language and the linguistic diversity present in the community.
- Encouraging metalinguistic processes of comparison and exchange between languages to enhance students' linguistic awareness and skills.

Hungary



## Analysis of the legislative context

### Access

*Is ECEC education available and affordable for all? Does it encourage participation and strengthen inclusion, embracing diversity?*

### Current situation

Every child living in Hungary has the right to access basic child welfare services, including daytime care for children (legal background: based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child adopted in New York on November 20, 1989, the Child Protection Act of 1997, and its implementing regulation 15/1998. (IV.30.) NM regulation).

Daytime care for children, as a child welfare service, includes age-appropriate daytime supervision, care, education, activities, and meals. The forms of this care include nursery care, daytime child supervision, and alternative daytime care. In the public sector, nurseries can be used by children who have a valid social security (TAJ) card.

From 2017, it has been mandatory for municipalities in every settlement in Hungary to provide nursery or mini-nursery places where more than 40 children under the age of three live, or if there is a demand for at least five children.

There are four types of nursery care nationwide:

- Nursery
- Mini Nursery
- Family Nursery
- Workplace nursery

Family nurseries and workplace nurseries are available as alternative options.

Nurseries in Hungary are open to all children without discrimination based on race, color, sex, language, religion, national or social origin, property, birth, or other status (e.g., special educational needs). When enrolling children for nursery places, priority is given first to the children of working parents, followed by those who are socially disadvantaged.

The care, education, and development of children with special educational needs in nursery groups (either in specialized or integrated groups) can be managed with the resources required for the care of two healthy children. A specialized group should be established as a unit within the nursery. This group cares for and develops children under the age of 6 who have significant developmental delays and cannot be integrated into a regular nursery group at the time of admission.

In terms of funding, the state supports the care system with task-based contributions, the amount of which depends on the number of employees, the number of children cared for, and operating costs. These factors are considered together to determine the annual amount of state support. The average daily cost of caring for a child is approximately:

- Care: ~25,000 HUF (63 EUR) per day
- Meals: ~7,000 HUF (18 EUR) per day

About 40% of these costs are covered by the state, 4% by the parents (based on the decision of the maintainer), and 56% by the maintainer. An exception to this is family and workplace nurseries, where parents and the maintainer cover about 80% of the operating costs.

The legislation mandates fees for care and meals. The nursery provides four meals a day for the children (covering 75% of their energy needs), and the legislation allows for discounts based on social circumstances.

### Intercultural and Sustainability perspective

For years, the number of children under the age of 3 who did not have access to any form of daytime care in their place of residence has been gradually decreasing. In 2021, there were 2,320 municipalities in the country where around 56,000 children (20.1% of the affected children) did not have access to daytime care directly in their place of residence, which represents a 5.5 percentage point improvement compared to 2017. By 2021, there was no district without available nursery care.

Although the legislation stipulates that families with more than five young children can request the initiation of nursery services in their municipality, families are often unaware of this fact and the procedure for making such a request.

Attending kindergarten is mandatory from the age of 3, marking the beginning of institutional education for children. In the case of at-risk children, authorities can require parents to enroll their children in institutional education (e.g., in cases of child protection intervention), because nursery care is a service and not mandatory.

Legally, the service is available to everyone, but access for groups in vulnerable situations is not adequately encouraged (information and support are insufficient). Therefore, in disadvantaged areas, small settlements, and regions with a high population of Roma, it cannot be stated that inclusive education is being fully realized.

In Hungary, the daytime care of young children is supplemented by other basic welfare services (family support, health visitors, child welfare, social support, educational institutions, pedagogical services, general practitioners, specialist clinics), which are variable accessible across different regions and municipalities due to a severe shortage of professionals and underfunding in the sector.

Hungarian legislation allows for pedagogical work in institutions to be carried out in the spirit of inclusion. However, the education system in Hungary generally lacks the knowledge and experience to properly handle diversity. Communication difficulties arising from the lack of a common language with non-Hungarian-speaking parents also hinder the realization of inclusion, and educators often lack the knowledge and tools needed to successfully manage intercultural situations.

The successful or partial integration of children with special educational needs is significantly impeded by the lack of professional knowledge and inclusive mindset among early childhood educators.

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## Staff

What is the working condition of the ECEC staff? How is leadership in the country dealing with this type of education?

### Current situation

**In Hungary, legislation prescribes the required number and qualifications of professionals necessary for operating nursery services.**

Minimum staffing norms: For a regular nursery (these are not mandatory for other types of nurseries):

- Nursery director: 1 person
- Mandatory number of teachers in each nursery group: 2 (the maximum group size is 12 children under the age of 2; if all children are over 2, the group size can be increased to 14), plus 0.5-1 assistant.
- In specialized groups, the caregiver-to-child ratio is 1:3, meaning one caregiver for three children with disabilities, with a maximum group size of 6.

Qualification requirements:

- Bachelor's degree (BA) in early childhood education or a secondary level qualification as an early childhood caregiver/educator
- Assistant: specialized training as a nursery assistant

**In Hungary, early childhood educators are entitled to 46 days of paid leave annually. Their salary consists of a base salary and an allowance, as the government provides a special allowance for nursery workers, recognizing the importance of educators working with children aged 0-3 years.**

Base salary:

- Bachelor's degree (BA): 538,000 HUF (1,400 EUR) per month
- Secondary level qualification: 326,000 HUF (847 EUR) per month

Nursery allowance:

- Bachelor's degree (BA): 123,200 HUF (320 EUR) per month
- Secondary level qualification: 106,000 HUF (275 EUR) per month

Total:

- Bachelor's degree (BA): 661,200 HUF (1,720 EUR) per month
- Secondary level qualification: 432,000 HUF (1,122 EUR) per month

These amounts are gross, with taxes and contributions deducted from them.

**Additional benefits may include:**

- Work clothing
- Cafeteria benefits
- Maintenance wage supplements

The working hours for early childhood educators are 7 hours per day, and 6 hours per day in specialized groups.

Every year, April 21 is Nursery Day, which is a workday without childcare duties. The program for this day is decided by the institution itself (they can organize events, invite speakers, etc., financed from their own budget).

## Intercultural and Sustainability perspective

Unlike other levels of the Hungarian education system, the nursery sector is less affected by the shortage of professionals, although there is still a significant number of early childhood educators with lower qualifications. While there are generally few Roma professionals among those with degrees, statistical data indicates that cultural diversity is more common in the teaching profession, which predominantly employs women.

In Hungary, the general perception of teachers, including early childhood educators, is not particularly positive. Their work is not widely recognized, and their social esteem is low.

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## Governance & funding

*Is the value and importance of ECEC recognized? Do they have clear rules and expectations on the quality of ECEC structures? Are there enough investments on ECEC?*

### Current situation

Supporting families is of paramount importance at the governmental level in Hungary, part of which includes a significant and continuous expansion of nursery placements. To achieve this goal, Hungary has accessed a series of European Union grants for nursery development across its entire territory. Utilizing these funds, the number of nursery places has increased substantially in recent years, from 32,000 in 2010 to 65,000 by 2024, according to data from the Central Statistical Office.

Nurseries can be maintained by municipalities, associations, religious organizations, and civil society organizations. They are required to have operational permits issued by the competent government offices. Each nursery operates under such a permit and has a daily reporting obligation in the national registry system.

The regulatory authority and a methodological institution (Hungarian Nursery Association) conduct mandatory inspections of nursery facilities and operational conditions every two years. Additionally, the maintainer conducts annual inspections of nursery operations.

The system of nursery care is supported by legislation concerning operations, financing, and professional requirements alike. The professional regulation of nursery education is governed by the National Core Curriculum for Nursery Education and Care. This national program supports and frames pedagogical work while allowing considerable freedom in daily educational processes. Each nursery develops its own professional program (pedagogical program) that reflects local characteristics and the specialized professional knowledge of early childhood educators.

The legislation also specifies the basic conditions for implementing nursery services. Nursery care units consist of two group rooms, two bathrooms, and two dressing rooms.

In each nursery group, up to 12 young children can be cared for. There is a minimum of 3 square meters of floor space per child.

In terms of child nutrition, specialized authorities conduct random and continuous inspections to ensure the compliance of kitchen facilities with public health standards and HACCP regulations.

### Intercultural and Sustainability perspective

At the level of governance and financing, the issues of intercultural education and sustainability are less clear or less understandable.

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## Analysis of curricular structure and programs

### Curriculum

*Are curricula locally determined or are they determined at regional and at system level? Are curricula holistic and flexible? Are they supervised regularly? Have they developed curricula taking into account the diversity and resources in the local environment, and the sociocultural backgrounds of children and their parents?*

### Current situation

**Within the framework set by the National Core Curriculum, each nursery develops its own professional program (pedagogical program). Nursery education places the focus on young children and indirectly on the families who raise them. Nurseries view families as complex systems, aiming not only to nurture and care for young children but also to support the entire family.**

The principles of nursery education include:

- A systemic approach to families
- Embracing early childhood intervention
- Primacy of respecting family upbringing
- Respecting the personality of the young child
- The pivotal role of nursery educators' personalities
- Establishing safety and stability
- Implementing gradual progression
- Applying individualized approaches
- Highlighting the significance of caregiving situations
- Supporting the development of child competencies

#### Tasks of nursery education:

1. Supporting families and developing parental competence based on their strengths: Understanding and supporting family strengths by emphasizing positives.
2. Health protection and establishing a healthy lifestyle: Monitoring, documenting, and supporting the development of young children; creating a healthy and safe environment for their harmonious physical and mental development.
3. Developing emotional and social competencies: Special attention to early development and care, fostering social and emotional competencies of children with special educational needs or from disadvantaged backgrounds; supporting parents and involving other helping professionals when needed.
4. Supporting cognitive development processes: Providing knowledge and facilitating exploration and processing of experiences and learning in nursery care situations.

Key situations in nursery education include play, poetry, storytelling, learning, care, movement, nursery rhymes, singing, creative activities, and other activities.

The National Core Curriculum recommends the "Key person" system in Hungarian nurseries.

According to this system, each nursery educator is responsible for 6-7 children directly. They facilitate the child's adaptation to nursery life and remain their educator throughout their time at the nursery (following a progression system). The educator closely monitors and documents the child's development. This system allows for greater attention to each child and enables more precise tracking of individual needs, issues, and habits.

### Intercultural and Sustainability perspective

In the Core Curriculum, primary respect for the child's personality and family upbringing is emphasized, supported by these principles:

"Nursery education aims to fully unfold the child's personality, support the development of personal, social, and cognitive competencies, while respecting fundamental children's rights. It pays special attention to fostering tolerance towards ethnic, cultural, religious, linguistic, gender, as well as physical and mental differences, promoting acceptance of diversity, and creating a prejudice-free, inclusive atmosphere."

"An institution providing nursery care respects and strengthens the values, traditions, and customs of family upbringing in its educational role with children."

"It is essential to ensure that young children have opportunities to acquire knowledge, experiences, and skills through play, caregiving situations, and other activities, experiencing the joy of spontaneous learning. By nurturing their curiosity and providing positive feedback, efforts must support their independent initiatives, thereby laying a solid foundation for lifelong learning needs and processes."

"The parent knows their child best, thus they can convey their habits, needs, and preferences, greatly assisting the nursery teacher in developing differentiated, individualized care based on the child's understanding. The nursery teacher, as a professional, builds on their expertise and experience to communicate knowledge and methods related to early childhood development and education, tailored to the parents' preferences."

"Efforts should be made to promote acceptance of coexistence rules and maintain openness towards others."

### Documents analyzed and sources

- A Bölcsődei Nevelés-Gondozás Országos Alapprogramja /The National Core Programme for Early Childhood Education and Care/ Alapprogram - Magyar Bölcsődék Egyesülete (magyarbolcsodek.hu) <https://magyarbolcsodek.hu/hu/alapprogram/>
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## Evaluation & Monitoring

*Are evaluations regular and transparent? Are they done in the best interest of the child? Is monitoring used in effective ways for policy development?*

### Current situation

The maintainer and the Government Office's responsibilities include conducting regular professional and operational inspections in institutions to ensure compliance with legal regulations. The Government Office initiates inspections and involves the methodological institution, the Hungarian Nursery Schools Association.

The institution's director oversees the professional activities of the staff, with continuity supported by the institution's educational consultant.

The continuous professional development of nursery teachers is mandated by legislation within the social sector. The amount of credit points to be obtained through further training, as well as the timeframe for acquiring the required credits, are specified by law.

### Intercultural and Sustainability perspective

In everyday practice, the required supervisory inspections by the maintainer are not always carried out, which can result in the non-fulfillment of the admission expectations stipulated in the legislation.

Regarding the professional development of nursery teachers, there is some flexibility. Nursery teachers can choose from a list of training options, and their choice must be approved by the institution's director.

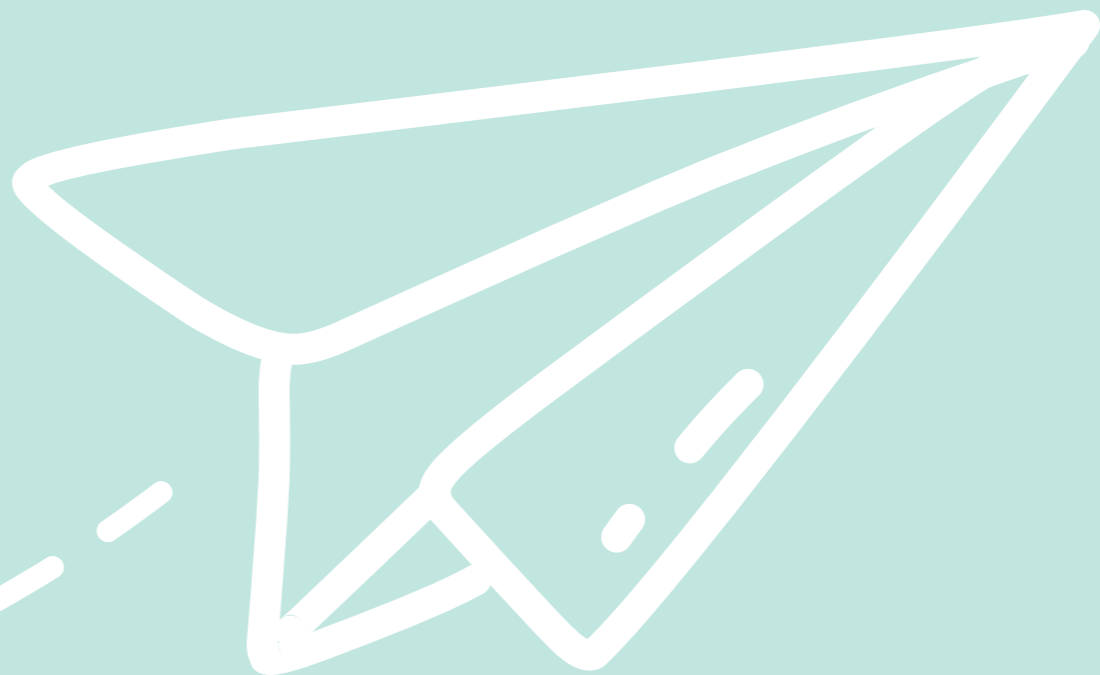
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## Third section: Policy Recommendations

- In the current legislative situation, children without a valid social security card do not have access to state-provided nursery services. It would be recommended to expand the circle of eligible beneficiaries and not tie access to social security coverage, as a significant portion of children who could benefit the most are currently excluded from these services.
- Achieving real inclusion in the daily practice of nursery care would greatly benefit from emphasizing intercultural education, inclusion, and culturally sensitive pedagogy both in pre-service teacher training and in continuing education. It would be crucial that both the theoretical foundations and practical aspects of these topics are thoroughly covered during training sessions.
- Currently, parents' lack of awareness regarding their rights and entitlements complicates their access to services. It's essential that expectant mothers and families with young children receive regular and comprehensive information about their legally prescribed options and methods for enforcing their rights. Supporting the entire process of legal recourse and ensuring up-to-date information about services and benefits for young children would be necessary.
- The professional quality of nursery care significantly depends on the expectations set and the extent to which these expectations are monitored by the maintainer and institution directors. It would be recommended that professional work be accompanied by supportive and assisting internal and external audits, ensuring that a high standard of professional quality is maintained through continuous follow-up.

Spain



## Analysis of the legislative context

The Spanish state is made up of different Autonomous Communities, including the Basque Country and Catalonia. On the one hand, there are national regulations that affect the whole territory; and on the other hand, each autonomous region has its own regulations. It should be noted that in the case of the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country (ACBC) and the Catalan Community (CC) there is a transfer of administrative competences. It is therefore necessary to specify the state of affairs both in Spain in general and in the Autonomous Communities participating in this project.

### Access

*Is ECEC education available and affordable for all? Does it encourage participation and strengthen inclusion, embracing diversity?*

### Current situation

At the **state** level, Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) is voluntary. The Organic Law 3/2020, of December 29, which modifies the Organic Law 2/2006, of May 3, on Education, states that the Government will work in collaboration with the different educational administrations, and that it will tend to the progressive implementation of the 0-3 years stage of ECEC through a sufficient public offer and the extension of its gratuity, prioritizing the access of students at risk of poverty and social exclusion and the situation of low schooling rate.

In this sense, with the aim of guaranteeing the principles of equity and inclusion, the planning, management and development of ECEC will address the offsetting of the effects that inequalities of cultural, social and economic origin have on infant's and toddler's learning and development, as well as the early detection and attention to specific educational support needs.

In the context of the **Basque Country**, the new Basque Education Law has recently been approved, which includes the conditions of accessibility to education in general, and to the 0-3 years stage in particular.

This stage is developed through the Haurreskolak consortium and is defined as a universal, quality and free public service. The absolute gratuity of education at this stage is a novelty of this renewed Law, since until then it was paid on the basis of family income. Therefore, and as stated in both the Law and the regulations, the Haurreskolak consortium service will be free of charge for the 2024-2025 academic year.

The criteria for admission to the Haurreskolak consortium are as following:

1. Fathers, mothers, guardians or legal tutors of children born in 2023 and 2024 can apply for a place in any of the centers of the Haurreskolak consortium.
2. A minimum of three children will be necessary for the opening of a Haurreskola.
3. In the event that there were not available places for all the applications, the following criteria will be considered: concurrence of siblings already enrolled in a Haurreskola; proximity of the domicile; family work situation; family income; disability in the child and/or responsible

relatives/guardians; victim of gender violence; victim of terrorism; large or single-parent family; and child in foster care.

4. Unsuccessful applications will be placed on a waiting list.

Regarding the principles of access, there is no mention in the documents related to the Haurreskolak consortium. On the contrary, Article 28 of the Basque Education Law specifies the characteristics of this access to education in general, at all stages. Specifically, it sets out the guarantees for inclusive schooling. Among them, it highlights that:

- 1- The process of access and admission shall be governed by the principles of equity, educational inclusion, promotion of social cohesion and respect for the right to choose a center within the available educational offer.
- 2- To develop guarantee mechanisms in the access and admission of students, for an inclusive and balanced schooling, favoring greater coexistence and social cohesion.
- 3- The supply of school places shall be adapted to the real needs of schooling, avoiding undersupply or oversupply.

In the **Catalan** context, within the framework of the educational system, ECEC is a voluntary educational stage with its own identity, which serves children up to the age of six. This stage is organized in two stages: the first stage, from zero to three years of age, and the second, from three to six years of age.

### Intercultural and sustainability perspective

In general terms, in the regulations consulted, we have not found any information specifically related to Interculturality or Sustainability.

In the case of the ECEC, we would like to point out that in the case of the Haurreskolak and in accordance with the principles of access, it is stated that both the planning of the offer and the mechanisms which regulate admission should contribute to a balanced distribution of diversity and vulnerability among all the centers supported with public funds, in order to avoid the segregation of students for socioeconomic or other reasons.

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- Law 17/2023, of December 21, on Education of the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country.
- Regulations and criteria for the admission of boys and girls to the Haurreskolas. Agreement 04/03-2024 of March 6, of the Steering Committee of the Haurreskolak Consortium, which approves the offer of places, operation and regulations and criteria for the admission of children for the 2024-25 academic year.
- Decree 21/2023, of February 7, on the organization of the teaching of infant education.

## Staff

*What is the working condition of the ECEC staff? How is leadership in the country dealing with this type of education?*

### Current situation

In the Spanish context, Order EPT/608/2022, of June 29, states that the pedagogical proposal within the early childhood stage will be the responsibility of a professional with the title of Early Childhood Education Teacher or equivalent degree. EURYDICE points out that in the first stage (0-3 years) the minimum qualification to exercise the profession will be the Higher-Level Training Cycle in Early Childhood Education.

In the Spanish context, Order EFP/608/2022, of June 29, states that the pedagogical proposal within the early childhood stage will be the responsibility of a professional with the title of Early Childhood Education Teacher or equivalent degree. EURYDICE points out that in the first cycle (0-3 years) the minimum qualification to exercise the profession will be the Higher-Level Training Cycle in Early Childhood Education.

In the case of private education centers of general regime or regulated education without any concerted or subsidized level, the XI Collective Agreement (agreement code no. 99001925011986) states that, for teaching staff, the weekly teaching day will be referenced in 27 hours. The basic salary of the early childhood educator will be 1,138.78 €.

In the case of educational centers supported totally or partially with public funds, the VII Collective Agreement of private education companies (Agreement code no.: 99008725011994), the maximum weekly working week will be 32 hours in the case of teachers and 38 hours for early childhood educators. The basic salary of the early childhood educator will be 1,696.01 € in the case of the teacher profile, and 1,294.95 € in the case of the technical profile.

In the context of the **ACBC**, Decree 215/2004, of November 16, 2004, establishes the minimum requirements for Nursery Schools for children from 0 to 3 years old, maintaining the validity of certain articles of the previous Decree (2002-2003 and 2003-2004). Nursery Schools for children from 0 to 3 years old must have qualified professionals for the adequate educational and welfare attention to children of these ages, requiring one of the following degrees: a) Teacher's Degree, specializing in Nursery Education or any of its equivalents, or b) Higher Technician's Degree in Nursery Education or any of its equivalents.

The Schools that attend to the educational and assistance section from 0 to 3 years old must have qualified personnel, at least, in a number equal to the number of units in operation. These units must comply with the maximum ratios of boys and girls per unit that must be met by the Nursery Schools with an educational and assistance nature (in practice, two educators are assigned per full or almost full classroom).

The Resolution of July 17, 2008, which includes the labor agreement, states that among the functions of the educational personnel from 0 to 3 years old are: the organization, planning of activities and evaluation processes, as well as the daily management of each Haurreskola;

the organization and planning of the activities of the unit for which they are responsible; the attention to the situations of the integral development process of the infants and toddlers; the attention and information to the families of the educational process of their infant or toddler; the participation in the training activities organized by the Consortium.

The standard annual workday for the staff is 1570 hours. The person designated as coordinator of the center of each Haurreskolak will design the distribution of the hours. The daily working day of the educational staff with a full-time contract will be 7 hours, of which 6 hours and 15 minutes per day will be for direct attention to the children and 45 minutes for preparation.

The Consortium considers the permanent training of its staff, both as a guarantee of the service that Haurreskolak intends to provide, and as a contribution to the improvement of employability. For their part, the staff is obliged to take advantage of all the training initiatives established by the management.

The basic monthly salary (data updated to 2024) is 2,478.32 €. The three-year bonus is €46.35 and the coordination bonus is €63.89.

Within the **Catalan** context, it should be noted that educators in this stage must hold the title of specialist teacher in early childhood education or the equivalent degree, or that of advanced technician in early childhood education, or any other title declared equivalent, academically and professionally, to any of the above.

The staff of classroom is:

- a) The teacher: is the one who elaborates and executes the planning of the center or stage; exercises the integral educational activity in the center or stage, developing the curricular programs. It will also carry out activities related to health, hygiene and nutrition in the center or cycle.
- b) The Early Childhood educator: prepares and executes the planning of the classroom and carries out the educational activity within the classroom, developing the curricular programs, including the activities related to health, hygiene and nutrition in the center.
- c) The support assistant: helps, assists or supports in the daily tasks of the classroom that are entrusted to them, including, among other tasks, those derived from the order, security, entertainment, feeding, grooming and personal attention to infants and toddlers.

The XII Collective Agreement states that the maximum annual working days shall be: in the case of teachers: 1,398; in the case of educators: 1,661; and in the case of the rest of the personnel: 1,704. The annual salary (including 14 payments) for teachers is €19,183.92; €13,020 in the case of early childhood educators and €12,600 in the case of assistants.

### Intercultural and Sustainability perspective

In general terms, the regulations consulted did not contain any information specifically related to Interculturality or Sustainability.

## Documents analyzed and sources

- (SP.) Order EFP/608/2022, of June 29, establishing the curriculum and regulating the organization of Early Childhood Education within the scope of management of the Ministry of Education and Professional Training.
- (SP.) EURIDICE. Official website of the European Union.
- (SP.) Resolution of March 28, 2022, of the Directorate General of Labor, which registers and publishes the XI National Collective Agreement of private education centers of general regime or regulated education without any concerted or subsidized level.
- (SP.) Resolution of September 15, 2021, of the General Directorate of Labor, which registers and publishes the VII Collective Agreement of private education companies totally or partially supported with public funds.
- (ACBC) Decree 215/2004, of November 16, by which the minimum requirements for Nursery Schools for boys and girls from 0 to 3 years old are established.
- (ACBC) Resolution of July 17, 2008, of the Director of Labor and Social Security, by which the registration, publication and deposit of the Collective Agreement of the Haurreskolak consortium (agreement code n.º 8602535) is ordered.
- (CATALONIA) Decree 282/2006, of July 4, which regulates the first cycle of early childhood education and the requirements of the centers.
- (CATALONIA) XII Collective agreement for child care and education centers (state level).

## Governance & funding

*Is the value and importance of ECEC recognized? Do they have clear rules and expectations on the quality of ECEC structures? Are there enough investments on ECEC?*

### Current situation

#### Governance

At the **state** level, in accordance with Royal Decree 95/2022, of February 1, which establishes the organization and minimum teachings of ECEC, the autonomy of the centers is specified. This autonomy is both pedagogical and organizational, in order to be able to adapt and complete the curriculum to work with the students, according to the needs of the youngest children and their socio-educational reality. Although in Spain ECEC is mainly developed in educational centers, there is also home schooling. This educational modality is developed in the home of the person providing the service, adapting to the needs of the child and toddler.

In addition, there are also other organizational options and alternative educational structures to meet the diversity of the population. These alternative structures, according to the current educational law (Organic Law 3/2020; LOMLOE), will be given special attention to meet their particular needs and guarantee equal opportunities. The following structures could be specified:

- Early childhood education in rural schools, which aims to offer educational services in geographic areas with low population densities.
- Bilingual education, this teaching model aims to train students to be able to function fluently in different cultures and languages in the context of a multicultural and multilingual Europe. Taking into account the geographical proximity between Spain and Portugal, there is also a Portuguese language and culture program.
- In the case of prison classrooms, Spanish legislation provides for the right of mothers to keep their children with them until they are three years old. The objective of this program is that children who are with their mothers in prison receive schooling according to their age (prison nursery schools).

At the autonomous level, in the ACBC, following the Basque Education Law, certain aspects are specified. On the one hand, in accordance with the bilingual context, it specifies the need to promote, from an early age, the appropriate conditions to guarantee a balanced bilingualism in the two languages of the ACBC, as well as to carry out educational activities in a foreign language.

On the other hand, although ECEC is voluntary, it specifies the need for educational institutions to promote the systematic early detection and identification of barriers to access, participation and learning. Promoting identification processes to be carried out in coordination with health and social services.

For all this, within the context of the ACBC, since 2004 there are specific procedures to authorize the opening of private Nursery Schools by the Department of Education. Both these and those that are nursery schools must always comply with certain specific requirements that will be

supervised and controlled by the Education Inspection.

Along the same lines, in **Catalonia**, within its new decree for the organization of Nursery Schools, it specifies the need to guarantee the principles of equity and inclusion. It is directly emphasized that planning, management and development at this infant stage must compensate for the effects of inequalities of cultural, social and economic origin, and must ensure the detection and early intervention of educational needs, in collaboration with families.

#### Financing

The financing of education in Spain comes from public funds and from private and citizens' contributions. The public funding system is organised in a decentralised manner and educational autonomy in Spain. Most public funds are provided by the Ministry of Education, Vocational Training and Sport and the regional education administrations. The General State Budget establishes annually the amounts allocated to education and their distribution. The regional governments manage the funds by deciding on the amounts and their distribution among the different educational programmes. These funds come mainly from taxes and transfers from the State, based on different parameters, mainly population. Local administrations collaborate in the construction and maintenance of school buildings. Their funds also come from taxes and transfers from the State and the Autonomous Communities. Finally, it should be noted that public schools may obtain additional resources from other sources, including local government, the European Union, donations and agreements with entities.

Specifically, in the Basque Autonomous Region, in order to obtain suitable facilities for educational practice, by virtue of the protocol signed between the Basque Government and the association of Basque municipalities on nursery schools, each Town Council will make suitable facilities available to the nursery school consortium. The consortium of nursery schools will be responsible for maintenance, cleaning and surveillance.

In relation to the amount of the general budget of the Basque Country earmarked for 0-3 year old pupils, in 2023 it was 65,986,000€ and for 2024 it has risen to 76,942,000€.

Public funding of subsidised private schools will be conditional on compliance with the requirements, principles and criteria set out in the law and its regulatory development, so that those schools that comply with them will receive public funding and, consequently, will form part of the group of schools that offer the Basque Public Education Service.

The Catalan Education law specifies the need for funding to be in line with European levels in order to guarantee the right to education and its harmonisation to cater for diversity and specific educational needs. For all this, the specific funding per place in municipal nursery schools in the academic year 2019-2020 will be 1300€, in the academic year 2020-2021, it will be 1425€ and from the academic year 2021-2022 to 2028-2029 it will be 1600€.

Although the above specified amount is the standard amount, the department of education provides additional funding for schools in order to ensure equity and make it possible to improve educational outcomes. This additional amount will allow for the total gratitude of the school timetable. The education department may also enter into agreements with local authorities to carry out socio-educational programmes and extracurricular activities, providing grants and aid to avoid discrimination.



## Intercultural and Sustainability perspective

According to the state law that regulates early childhood education studies, Royal Decree 95/2022 of February 1st, it is generally specified that the educational intervention must contemplate the diversity of the students, adapting the educational practice to the personal characteristics, needs, interests and cognitive style of the children and identifying those characteristics that may have an impact on their school evolution. In this way, it is emphasized that such differences are not only focused on special educational needs, extending this perspective to diverse socio-cultural realities.

In order to ensure equal opportunities for access to education, the competent administrations offer different types of aid to families with children under 18 years of age, including direct, fiscal and specific aid. Likewise, families with special educational needs can receive social and schooling-related aid, including grants from the Ministry of Education and regional aid for complementary services such as canteen and school transport.

Likewise, in terms of improving education and reducing inequalities, the Ministry of Education manages territorial cooperation programs that include the creation of early childhood education places, educational guidance, support for students in vulnerable situations, aid for textbooks, inclusive education and emotional wellbeing. Likewise, these programs are funded by the Ministry and the autonomous administrations.

In line with the state educational law, the ACBC educational law specifies certain aspects to be dealt with according to its reality. This law, without specifying the educational stage, specifies that all students in their interaction with their environment may encounter barriers that hinder their access, participation and learning, which will require the adoption of measures and support to achieve the greatest possible development of educational competencies. It is specified that access barriers are all those that limit participation derived from disability or any other condition of personal, socioeconomic, health, gender or functional vulnerability, as well as those derived from their context.

In order to face this diversity, the center will have the autonomy to adapt measures and support so that the educational staff can offer comprehensive attention. Likewise, the autonomous department of education will determine, through regulatory development, the policies and strategies that respond to the different needs of students, within the framework of an educational system based on the principles of comprehensiveness and equity. Specifically, the ECI (educational complexity index), with its components and applications, will be publicly regulated for making educational policy decisions regarding equity. This regulation will include the establishment of rebalancing mechanisms, which will be included in the program contracts with the centers and which may have material and personal resources; likewise, the necessary transition periods will be established to correct the situation of the centers of very high complexity and of very low complexity, measured according to the ECI.

In accordance with the sociolinguistic context of Catalonia, the educational law specifies that the curriculum must guarantee full mastery of the official Catalan and Spanish languages. In the event that a student does not have a good command of these languages, he will have the right to receive specific linguistic support.

In general terms, the aforementioned law emphasizes that the city council, together with the center located in the same municipality, may jointly develop socio-educational plans and programs, thus promoting coexistence and citizen participation so that students have the opportunity to participate in educational activities in conditions of equity, without discrimination for economic, territorial, social, cultural or capacity reasons.

To this end, the law specifies certain pedagogical principles that must be fulfilled within the centers of the Catalan educational network. Among them we can highlight; the inclusion of students from different groups, the development of students' abilities that allow them full social inclusion, the adequacy of teaching processes by applying inclusive educational practices and the involvement of families in the educational process.

## Documents analyzed and sources

- (SP) Royal Decree 95/2022, of February 1, which establishes the organization and minimum teachings of Early Childhood Education.
- (SP) EURYDICE. Report of the European Commission Educación Infantil (europa.eu) (<https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/es/national-education-systems/spain/educacion-infantil>)
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- (CAT) Law 2/2021, of December 29, of fiscal, financial, administrative and public sector measures.
- (CAT) DECREE 21/2023, of February 7, on the organization of early childhood education.
- (CAT) Law 12/2009, of July 10, 2009, on Education.

## Analysis of curricular structure and programs

### Curriculum

*Are curricula locally determined or are they determined at regional and at system level? Are curricula holistic and flexible? Are they supervised regularly? Have they developed curricula taking into account the diversity and resources in the local environment, and the sociocultural backgrounds of children and their parents?*

### Spain

#### Current situation

The Organic Law 3/2020, of 29 December, which modifies the Organic Law 2/2006, of 3 May, on Education (LOMLOE), is in charge of regulating the curriculum of Early Education in Spain.

More specifically, it is Royal Decree 95/2022, of 1 February, which establishes the organisation and minimum teaching of Early Childhood Education.

#### Intercultural and Sustainability perspective

Pedagogical principles will include education for responsible and sustainable consumption and health promotion and education.

##### Area: Growing in harmony

Specific competence 3: Adopt models, norms and habits, developing confidence in their possibilities and feelings of achievement, to promote a healthy and eco-socially responsible lifestyle.

##### Area: Discovery and exploration of the environment

Specific competence 3: To recognise elements and phenomena of nature, showing interest in the habits that affect it, in order to appreciate the importance of sustainable use, care and conservation of the environment in people's lives.

##### Area: Communication and representation of reality

Specific competence 5: To value the linguistic diversity present in their environment, as well as other cultural manifestations, in order to enrich their communicative strategies and their cultural background.

### Documents analyzed and sources

- Organic Law 3/2020, of December 29, which amends Organic Law 2/2006, of May 3, 2006, on Education.
- Royal Decree 95/2022, of February 1, which establishes the organization and minimum teaching requirements for Early Childhood Education. For the first time, the first cycle of Pre-school Education is of an educational nature.

### Autonomous Community of the Basque Country

#### Current situation

The Decree 75/2023, dated 30 May, establishes the curriculum for Pre-school Education and its implementation in the Basque Country. It is the continuation of the previous pedagogical framework established by Heziberri (2020). From this, this inclusive competence model has been generated, which is defined through key competences and specific competences.

The curriculum based on competences (basic and specific) is oriented towards deep and functional learning, enabling problem solving in real situations. Accessibility is guaranteed for all, with a commitment to universal design for learning, with the aim of achieving effective inclusion and participation, reducing barriers to learning and increasing students' learning opportunities.

Early Childhood Education is an educational level in which there is a rapid and complex evolutionary development on a personal, emotional, intellectual and social level and to which attention must be paid. The participation and involvement of the educational community, and especially coordination between teachers and families, are considered essential at this stage.

This is a voluntary stage, which includes the education of children from 0 to 6 years of age, divided into two cycles (0-3 years and 3-6 years). Both have a global and included character. For the first time, the first cycle has an educational character.

In the first cycle, a universal public offer of quality and free of charge will be promoted.

The centre's educational project will incorporate the curricula established by the department of education.

The key competences are the following: linguistic communication; multilingual; mathematics and competence in science, technology and engineering; digital; personal, social and learning to learn; citizenship; entrepreneurship; cultural awareness and expression.

The interrelated areas of Infant Education are: growth in harmony; discovery and exploration of the environment; communication and representation of reality.

## Intercultural and Sustainability perspective

Education must provide the child with experiences, figures and different types of learning from a global and intercultural perspective, which is adapted to the developmental stage and to the work and learning rhythms of each child. In the competences to be developed, some essential skills have been included, such as intercultural skills, which will allow the child to know and understand his/her reality. These competences include "competence in cultural awareness and expression" and "multilingual competence".

Children need to be aware of diversity in their sociolinguistic and cultural environments, and will do so through games and activities that critically address cultural customs and traditions, while encouraging assertive communication of one's needs and active listening to the needs of others.

On the other hand, Early Childhood Education should enable children to begin to explore and get closer to their natural environment, also raising awareness of responsible and sustainable consumption. Sustainability is mentioned in the "citizenship competence", which refers to the need for active engagement with sustainability values and practices. In this context, school life is organised around routines based on the needs and biological rhythms of the pupils, in which the children develop healthy habits in terms of food, hygiene and rest. The aim is for them to acquire "sustainable and eco-socially responsible habits". Work will be done so that the pupils begin to appreciate and value the diversity and richness of the natural environment, in order to create in them attitudes of respect towards the environment and the surroundings.

### Area 1. Growth in harmony.

Basic knowledge includes the discovery and recognition of one's own image and that of others, identifying and respecting differences. Healthy living habits for the care of oneself and the environment are also established as basic knowledge. The habits acquired must be sustainable and eco-socially responsible. Finally, children should learn to establish relationships of affection and respect, as well as to know the celebrations, customs and ethno-cultural traditions found in the environment that surrounds them.

### Area 2. Discovery and exploration of the environment.

Children should begin to carefully and respectfully investigate and explore the physical and natural environment. This involves making them aware of the possible effects of their actions on the physical and natural environment, but also allowing them to experiment with the environment. It will be essential to encourage respect for nature, living beings and animal rights, but also for cultural heritage.

### Area 3. Communication and representation of reality. Basic knowledge.

Students should know the linguistic reality of both the group to which they belong and their environment, acquiring expressions or words related to their needs or tastes. Likewise, it will be important to bring literary education closer to the classroom, allowing children to develop values about the culture of peace, gender equality, their rights or ethnic-cultural diversity.

## Documents analyzed and sources

- Decree 75/2023, of May 30, on the establishment of the Early Childhood Education curriculum and its implementation in the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country.

## Autonomous Community of Catalonia

### Current situation

From the 2022-2023 academic year, decree 21/2023, of 7 February, regulates the teaching of early childhood education in Catalonia. It repeals decrees 101/2010 and 181/2008, which regulate the teaching of the first cycle and the second cycle of early childhood education, respectively. Therefore, both regulations are now unified and there is a single system for the entire period.

The curriculum considers that the child is linked to the world from him/herself, through a diversity of contexts, cultures and languages. These will provide them with experiences, knowledge, values and learning, and it will be the school that will be responsible for making children participants in the society in which they live. In early childhood education, children will develop the competencies that will enable them, among other things, to be part of a multicultural society. From this, the objective of the stage is established: to observe and explore the immediate natural, social and cultural environment, with an attitude of curiosity, inquiry and respect.

## Intercultural and Sustainability perspective

With regard to interculturality, the need is established for pupils to develop communicative and linguistic competence, from which respect for linguistic and cultural diversity is fostered, as well as interest in learning and knowledge of different languages. On the other hand, the competence in "cultural awareness and expression" seeks to enable children to build and enrich their identity through different languages and artistic forms. This will promote the development of cultural awareness. Furthermore, living in an ethnically and culturally diverse environment offers an open and inclusive view of social relations, as the opportunities it provides allow for the development of attitudes of respect, recognition, acceptance and equality towards diversity. Finally, teaching materials should have a global and multicultural outlook.

Children begin to relate to the environment from the time of their early childhood, and it is essential to maintain this link between human beings and nature, and it is the school's task to enable this approach. During this stage, pupils will acquire habits of sustainability, such as responsible consumption, through the adult. Later on, it will be he or she who will be able to act autonomously. These actions will lead the child to value the opportunities and resources offered by the environment. The child will be the one to explore and recognise the elements or phenomena of the natural world, relating his or her actions to the consequences they have.

The axis of the stage is organised around three specific competences, the last of which involves a respectful approach to the natural world in order to raise awareness of the need for sustainable use. In both cycles, the following specific competences are included as specific competences:

- The promotion of habits to promote health and wellbeing, and responsible and sustainable consumption, starting from close and everyday situations.
- Developing attitudes that promote equality between all genders, health, care, responsible consumption, sustainable habits and respect and appreciation of diversity.

### Documents analyzed and sources

- Decree 21/2023, of February 7, on the organization of early childhood education teachings

## Evaluation & Monitoring

*Are evaluations regular and transparent? Are they done in the best interest of the child? Is monitoring used in effective ways for policy development?*

### Spain

#### Current situation

The Ministry of Education and Vocational Training publishes statistics including the Pre-school Education stage, collecting various data such as pupils enrolled by entitlement, Region/Province, sex and cycle; educational support needs, etc. There is also the National Statistics Institute.

The Organic Law 8/2021, of 4 June, on the comprehensive protection of children and adolescents against violence (hereinafter LOPIVI). From a didactic perspective, it gives an essential priority to prevention, socialisation and education, both among minors and among families and civil society itself.

The purpose of the Childhood Observatory is to work in a network for the defence and promotion of children's rights, collecting statistics, reports, research and technical documents.

**Quality assessment in Early Childhood Education** (<https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/es/national-education-systems/spain/evaluacion-de-la-calidad-en-la-educacion-infantil-primaria-y>):

#### 1. Responsible agencies

- State High Inspectorate
- National Institute for Educational Evaluation of the Ministry of Education and Development (MEFD)
- Education inspectorate of the regions
- Bodies that evaluate the education system in the Autonomous Communities.

#### 2. Approaches and methods for quality assurance

- State level
  - Evaluation of the education system as a whole
    - \*State System of Educational Indicators (SEIE)
    - \*External evaluations at the end of the primary and compulsory secondary education stages
    - \*Participation in international evaluation studies.
  - Autonomous Community level
  - Evaluation of the education system in its area of management
    - \*System of Education Indicators
    - \*Diagnostic evaluations (external evaluations in primary education and compulsory secondary education)
    - \*Participation in international evaluation studies
  - Evaluation of schools
    - \*External evaluation of schools
    - \*Internal evaluation of schools

- Evaluation of the teaching and management function
- Local level (school)

Early childhood education has two different ways to carry out quality assessment: educational evaluation and inspection, as stipulated in Titles VI and VII of the inspection, as stipulated in Titles VI and VII of Organic Law 2/2006 on Education (LOE), modified by Organic Law 3/2020 (LOMLOE). The evaluation is considered a fundamental element for the improvement of education and for the increase of transparency of the educational system. For its part, the inspection of these stages is also an inspection of these stages that also contributes to improvement, supporting key aspects to achieve this progress.

The agencies responsible for the evaluation of the quality of the educational system at this educational stage are the following:

- High State Inspection;
- National Institute of Educational Evaluation (INEE), under the Ministry of Education, Vocational Training and Sports (Ministry of Education, Vocational Training and Sport MEFD);
- educational inspection agencies of the autonomous communities;
- organizations that evaluate the educational system in the autonomous communities.

At the state level, the evaluation of the whole educational system in these stages corresponds to the National Institute for Educational Evaluation (National Institute of Educational Evaluation INEE), in collaboration with the educational administrations of the autonomous communities. This evaluation is carried out through different mechanisms:

- the State System of Education Indicators (State System of Education Indicators SEIE);
- external evaluations at the end of the primary and compulsory secondary education stages;
- participation in international evaluation studies.

## Intercultural and Sustainability perspective

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted in 2015 by 193 countries, sets out 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that the international community has to achieve for all people.

The LOMLOE includes several principles related to the SDGs - making it a pioneering law today. Thus, two key focuses of the five pillars on which it is based are sustainability and gender equality, as stated in the preamble (the other three are: children's rights, personalisation of learning and digital competence).

ESenRED (Escuelas hacia la Sostenibilidad en Red) is the national network of networks of non-university sustainable education centres promoted at the initiative of public administrations (Autonomous Communities, City Councils, Provincial Councils...).

LOE/LOMLOE article 110. Accessibility, sustainability and relations with the environment.

In order to promote a culture of environmental sustainability and social cooperation to protect

our biodiversity, the educational administrations will favour, in coordination with the institutions and organisations of their environment, the sustainability of the centres, their relationship with the natural environment and their adaptation to the consequences of climate change. They will also guarantee safe school routes and promote sustainable travel in the different territorial areas, as a source of experience and vital learning.

The centres, as spaces open to society of which they are a core element, will promote work and coordination with the administrations, entities and associations in their immediate surroundings, creating open educational communities, motors of social and community transformation.

## Documents analyzed and sources

- Organic Law 3/2020, of December 29, which amends Organic Law 2/2006, of May 3, 2006, on Education.
- Royal Decree 95/2022, of February 1, which establishes the organization and minimum teaching requirements for Early Childhood Education. For the first time, the first cycle of Pre-school Education is of an educational nature.

## Autonomous Community of the Basque Country

### Current situation

The Education Inspectorate, regulated in Decree 98/2016 seeks to guarantee the rights and duties by promoting the improvement of the education system. A quality management system is defined that is based on the UNE-EN ISO 9001:2015 standard with a process vision. For example, the Triennial Plan (Basque Government, 2023) aims to create a quality culture by optimizing processes and based on the interests and satisfaction of the Inspectorate's stakeholders.

The Department of Education collects different statistical data, including the Early Childhood Education stage, such as enrollments by centers, level and network; etc. ISEI-IVEI is the Basque Institute for non-university educational evaluation and research, considering context, resources, processes and results indicators. EUSTAT is also the Basque Institute of Statistics as a public body that produces, develops and disseminates official statistical information of the community.

It should be noted that the UN has recognized the Early Intervention Model for the Basque Country as a good practice worldwide. Specifically, it is a protocol for monitoring child development coordinated by the health, educational and social systems with the aim of responding to the educational needs of students as early as possible. Through the first phase, called routine developmental surveillance, which promotes this protocol, it is possible to detect developmental difficulties of students, as well as signs of high abilities, in the classrooms of 2 and 3 year olds (it is carried out up to 5 years of age) using the scales of observation of child development. The second phase of specific detection will be initiated in the case of developmental difficulties or warning signs.

In the Basque Country, there is a Decree 185/2015 on the portfolio of benefits and services of the Basque social services system which establishes the social intervention service in early care; the social information service for children in a situation of lack of protection, among others.

Decree 13/2016 on comprehensive intervention in Early Care in the Basque Autonomous Community aims to guarantee a comprehensive and effective coordinated model of the health, educational and social systems.

The Basque Council of Social and Health Care is a body that promotes social and health care coordination with a sustainable, comprehensive and inclusive approach.

The V Basque Inclusion Plan states that it wants to invest in early childhood in order to increase the rate of child schooling, especially among boys and girls aged 1 and 2.

In the Basque Strategy against violence, an approximation of some data collected and resources and strategies to prevent or intervene in these situations are presented.

El Instrumento BALORA se elaboró en 2010 para valorar situaciones de riesgo y desamparo y se actualizó en 2017.

Law 2/2024, of February 15, on childhood and adolescence recognizes children as holders of rights (understanding children from birth to 12 years of age).

Decree 75/2023 contains the evaluation criteria that serve to know the expected performance levels of the students in the activities or situations related to the specific competences of each area at a specific moment in the learning process. Formative evaluation is used to detect progress and difficulties of the students and to adapt the didactic process. As for the evaluation of teachers' competences, it will be carried out by the department responsible for educational matters with the participation of the teaching staff, in order to promote the improvement of professional development and to be able to plan training actions based on this evaluation. The tutor issues an individual school guidance report to inform the families or legal guardians at the end of Early Childhood Education or when extraordinary circumstances require it, as in the case of non-promotion of students with special educational needs. The official evaluation documents are the academic record, the end of cycle evaluation reports, the academic record and, if applicable, the personal report for transfer.

The Education Inspectorate supervises the development of the evaluation process of children and teaching, paying special attention to the individualized action plans for children with specific educational support needs or any situation that requires the development of these plans. Confidentiality will be respected based on the current legislation on the protection of personal data.

### Intercultural and Sustainability perspective

In the Education Strategy for Sustainability of the Basque Country 2030, in accordance with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, it is highlighted that the school Agenda 21 is

a consolidated program for sustainability; the Ingurugela are agents of reference, however, the lack of coordination channel or common work between the education facilities for sustainable development is pointed out. In addition, it is difficult to find an offer of content for children's education in the facilities available to the Basque Government for education for sustainability.

IRAES 21 is the network of the centers of Euskadi that have obtained the recognition of "School towards sustainability". The aim is to recognize the work and outstanding experiences in the Agenda 21 program, therefore, a minimum of 5 years in the Agenda 21 project is required in order to have the opportunity to obtain the "School towards Sustainability" certificate. The centers that obtain this certificate are part of IRAES 21, among them some of them are in Early Childhood Education and specifically also in the first cycle.

The VI Intercultural Plan for citizenship, immigration and asylum 2022-2025 seeks to advance a Basque model for the management of cultural diversity in the field of international migration and asylum.

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- Decree 98/2016, of June 28, on the Education Inspection in the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country.

- Decree 152/2017, of 9 May, approving the update of the Instrument for the assessment of the seriousness of situations of risk and neglect in the Municipal and Territorial Social Services for the Care and Protection of Children and Adolescents in the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country (Balora).
- Decree 150/2022, of December 7, on the social and health governance of the Basque Country.
- Decree 75/2023, of May 30, on the establishment of the Infant Education curriculum and its implementation in the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country.
- Law 2/2024, of February 15, on childhood and adolescence.

## Autonomous Community of Catalonia

### Current situation

According to Decree 21/2023, the evaluation is continuous, global and formative, being the observation and analysis of the children's development and learning process key for the follow-up.

According to Decree 282/2006, the city council can establish the necessary controls and supervisions, being able to request the action of the Educational Inspection (Article 20).

### Documents analyzed and sources

- Decree 21/2023, of February 7, on the regulation of early childhood education.
- Decree 282/2006, of July 4, which regulates the first cycle of early childhood education and the requirements of the centers (DOGC of July 6, 2006).

## Third Section: Policy Recommendations

In relation to the access of students and their families to an inclusive and quality ECEC, it is recommended that the different administrations clearly commit to a balanced distribution of diversity, and that this strategy be explicitly included in the regulations that govern them. In addition, in line with the recommendation of the European Commission, which points out that ECEC provision needs to be equally distributed across urban and rural areas, affluent and poor neighborhoods and regions, in order to widen access for disadvantaged groups. Availability and affordability of high-quality services in neighborhoods where poor families, minorities or migrant or refugee families reside, is reported to have the biggest impact on supporting equity and social inclusion (European Commission, 2020, p. 15)

In general terms, and as pointed out in the European Commission report (2020), there is a need to promote and reinforce the training of ECEC teachers on the processes of inclusion and exclusion and how these affect children and their families, it is important to specifically emphasize the attention to all intercultural keys, the European Union points out in this regard the enormous opportunity for growth and learning that comes from having families from other cultures:

ECEC has an essential role to play in learning to live together in heterogeneous societies and notes that ECEC services can strengthen social cohesion and inclusion in several ways. They can serve as meeting places for families and contribute to developing language competences of the children, both in the language of the service and the first language (pp.115-116).

In terms of evaluation and monitoring, it is recommended that the processes that report on the development and effectiveness of ECEC be improved. That is, it is a matter of implementing adequate quantitative and qualitative quality assessment. For example, a national ECEC evaluation system can be created in which different quality indicators are reflected and different interviews, observations, etc. are carried out, remembering the importance of listening to children and their families. In this line, it is necessary to have information on different indicators related to ECEC and specifically to sustainability and interculturality. The OECD Starting Strong III report has identified seven common objectives of evaluation exercises: child development; staff performance; service quality; regulatory compliance; curriculum implementation; family satisfaction; labor supply and working conditions (cited in European Commission, 2020).

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# Conclusion

This comprehensive guide built by the SUSIEE project Consortium has been developed with the aim of painting a picture of the ECEC system in Italy, Hungary, and Spain. This has been done by showing what is already in existence inside the childhood education ecosystem and how it is possible to draw inspiration from some existing methodologies both inside and outside these countries.

Additionally, the guide includes a detailed analysis of legislative contexts and curricular structures in Italy, Hungary, and Spain, providing policy recommendations to enhance access, staff training, and curriculum development.

Based on an in-depth analysis of sustainable and intercultural early childhood education and care (ECEC) within the EU Quality Framework, several key policy recommendations emerge.

Firstly, governments should ensure equitable access to inclusive ECEC by integrating diversity distribution into regulatory frameworks. This includes providing balanced access across urban and rural areas, addressing both affluent and disadvantaged neighborhoods. Priority should be given to areas with populations in a situation of vulnerability to foster equity and social inclusion.

Secondly, enhancing the intercultural competencies of ECEC staff is crucial. This requires prioritizing training programs focused on inclusion and intercultural skills. Equipped with these competencies, educators can effectively engage diverse families, promoting social cohesion and enhancing language development among children from diverse cultural backgrounds. Continuous education and practical training are essential for consistent and effective implementation of inclusive practices.

Lastly, improving evaluation and monitoring systems is essential for enhancing ECEC quality and effectiveness. Establishing strong national evaluation frameworks that include both quantitative and qualitative assessments is pivotal. These systems should encompass sustainability and interculturality indicators, ensuring comprehensive feedback from children and families. Aligning monitoring practices with international standards supports ongoing improvements in ECEC quality, reinforcing its commitment to equity, diversity, and high-quality education.

Conducting this type of research has proven to be fundamental as not only do we aim to gather and conceptualize essential terminology and practices, but also to set a framework for future practices, ensuring that ECEC evolves to meet the demands of a diverse and sustainable society. The dissemination of these findings and recommendations is expected to have a significant impact on ECEC professionals, policymakers, and academic communities, fostering inclusive and sustainable educational environments across Europe.

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## Partner's Info

### Euskal Herriko Unibertsitatea / Universidad del País Vasco [www.ehu.es](http://www.ehu.es)



The UPV/EHU, founded in 1980, is a public research university which sets out to create knowledge and convey it to society amid an intense process of globalisation, which is compatible with close links to Basque culture. Its goals are magnificently symbolised in the logo devised by the great artist Eduardo Chillida, along with a verse from "Gernikako arbola" (The Tree of Gernika), a song by 19th century bard José María de Iparraguirre: EMAN TA ZABAL ZAZU (MUNDUAN FRUITUA) Give and transmit (your fruit to the world). The Faculty of Education in Bilbao (UPV/EHU) currently offers Bachelor's Degrees in Primary Education, Trilingual Primary Education, Infant Education, Trilingual Infant Education and Social Education. There is also a broad catalogue of Master's Degrees and Post-Graduate programmes that encourage both the training and development of future researchers in education, such as the ongoing training of professionals. The SUSIEE project is part of the consolidated KideOn research team. KideOn is a consolidated research group of the Basque Government (category A/ IT1475-22). It was created in 2018 with the aim of bringing together and promoting, through research, innovation and transfer, the work carried out by UPV/EHU teaching staff in research into Social and Educational Inclusion.

### Consortio Haurreskolak [www.haurreskolak.eus](http://www.haurreskolak.eus)



Haurreskolak is a consortium formed by the basque government and the municipalities, created in 2003 in order to attend all the children between the age 0-2 in the Basque Country aiming to promote, in collaboration with families, the comprehensive development of children from the perspective of respect to the rights of the child, his/her psychophysical well-being development of all their potentialities: affective, sensory-motor, cognitive, relational and social; provide a care service to families through the care and attention of children under three years of age, understanding this service as part of the preventive and compensatory education for inequalities, seeking in a special way, attention to the most socially or personally disadvantaged in search of equity; Provide an assistance Plan for families with children as a measure of conciliation between family and work life; enable access to education and assistance services for the population in rural areas; and provide the appropriate conditions to guarantee the bilingualism in the two official languages of the Basque Community.

### La Xixa [www.laxixa.org](http://www.laxixa.org)



La Xixa - Creative Social Innovation is a non-profit organization created in 2010, oriented towards the research, development and multiplication of theatrical tools and popular education as a means of social transformation. La Xixa carries out workshops for diverse groups, training of trainers and artistic actions at local and international level around five main axes:

- Coexistence and active citizenship
- Interculturality, racism, xenophobia and social inclusion
- Education, school dropout, prevention of risky behaviours among young people
- Gender, equality policies and sexual diversity
- Heritage, sustainability and the fight against climate change

The mission of La Xixa Teatre is to facilitate the creation of empowerment spaces through Participatory Methodologies, Artistic Mediation, Process-Oriented Psychology and the Theatre of the Oppressed to generate processes of individual and collective transformation.

CESIE ETS is a non-profit and non-governmental organisation based in Palermo (Italy) and established in 2001, inspired by the work and theories of the sociologist, activist and educator Danilo Dolci (1924-1997). Our mission is to promote educational innovation, participation and growth. CESIE is structured in 6 main units:

- Higher Education and Research: fostering progress, sustainable and responsible research and innovation in Higher Education and Research Systems;
- Rights and Justice: promoting equality, protecting the rights of people, preventing and developing responses to violence and discrimination;
- Adult: upgrading lifelong learning in adult education, boosting innovative practices and developing key competences for adults;
- Migration: developing effective and inclusive approaches for asylum seekers, refugees, and migrants;
- School: improving quality and efficiency in school education;
- Youth: enhancing active citizenship, training, education, and mobility of young people.

CESIE staff is composed of 70 people with a wide range of qualifications, skills, professional profiles and origins, united by a deep sharing of ideals that lead our activities. CESIE relies also on 150+ external experts that collaborate for specific activities and projects. Equally important is the contribution from dozens of interns and European and international volunteers engaged in internships at our organisation per year.

### **Associazione di promozione sociale Naturalmente**

[www.facebook.com/people/La-Piccola-Casa-nel-Bosco-crescere-in-natura/](https://www.facebook.com/people/La-Piccola-Casa-nel-Bosco-crescere-in-natura/)



L'associazione di Promozione Sociale Naturalmente (APS Naturalmente) was born in 2017 with the creation of the first kindergarten in the woods within the territory of the city of Palermo through the project called "La piccolo Casa nel Bosco". The project was created to provide opportunities for sharing and knowledge of nature to children aged 0 to 6 years. The project involves the use of Nature as the main learning tool. We use an approach linked to the union of different already consolidated methodologies (Montessori method, Steiner method, principles of outdoor education, nonviolent communication) in order to allow the child to respect his own development times and experiential learning times. In 2020 we expanded the project by successfully introducing primary school up to 10 years.

### **Partners Hungary Foundation**

[www.partnershungary.hu](http://www.partnershungary.hu)



Partners Hungary Foundation builds connections between people and communities since 1994. Our vision is a colourful and inclusive society, where cooperation and dialogue between the individuals, within the communities and between the communities are working. How do we work? We help to find your own solution – with mediation. Through mediation and restorative practices, we support individuals and communities to have effective tools to overcome conflicts, seeing them as an opportunity to develop a framework that works for everyone. We create equal chances and possibilities – through social integration. We do not just work for those involved, we work together WITH them: this way they can build real connections with each other. Progress built on common decisions and agreements is more successful, more permanent and sustainable. Together with other core values such as diversity, acceptance and openness, and equal opportunities, it guides our work with vulnerable groups, with a special focus on disadvantaged Roma people and refugees from war. We work for happier nurseries, kindergartens, and schools. With our anti-aggression and anti-bullying programs for kindergartens and schools, we work to build strong communities, where instead of a punitive approach, a restorative-cooperative approach makes the days of the children and teachers better. It is important for us that professionals working with children are able to create the conditions necessary for children to develop optimally, with a special focus on disadvantaged children using a trauma-informed and

child-centred approach and tools. We support the wellbeing and healthy development of children through non-formal educational services. We support the establishment and operation of Play and Learning Hubs working with the TOY for Inclusion methodology developed by ICDI (International Child Development Initiatives). We make common decisions in our common issues – through social dialogue. With the help of social dialogue models, we find common points, confront the different ideas and take new aspects into consideration. We analyse the cases together, go into the depth and learn from each other for the sake of better understanding and change.

### **United Nurseries of Jozsefváros: Bölcsőde VIII. kerület Budapest - Józsefvárosi Egyesített Bölcsődék ([www.bolcsode-bp08.hu](http://www.bolcsode-bp08.hu))**



United Nurseries of Józsefváros (JEB) was founded in 1994 by the municipality of the VIII district of Budapest, a district in which the minority population is particularly relevant.

It consists of 7 nurseries operating in which work 202 persons, an average 70 students in dual training. The number of children attending the nursery is around 492 children from 0 to 3 years of age. JEB's nursery schools provide users with basic mandatory services, as established by the Local Public Administration, and additional services. The educational mission of JEB is to promote the balanced psychophysical development of children aged 0-3 years, thanks to favorable environmental conditions, the specific training of the staff, offering to children the opportunity, feel comfortable, have a healthy lifestyle and adequate cognitive and social stimuli. United Nurseries of Józsefváros works in collaboration with families, respecting their right to privacy, and engaging them in the education of children so that children become open to the world, independent, healthy and accept the fundamental rules of coexistence.

The environment is familiar and is suitable for current professional requirements.

United Nurseries of Józsefváros aims to constantly improve the quality of its training offer, also thanks to the exchange between professionals, training, knowledge of successful experiences in other countries and participation. Thanks to the participation in the Erasmus+ KA2 MECEC+ project, Erasmus+ KA2 I.ECEC project, Erasmus+ KA2 FINE! project, Erasmus+ KA2 FIRST STEPS project JEB started to develop its European strategic plan, with satisfaction, and intends to continue on this path because the positive impact on the organizations and on the staffs, which has shown great interest in the meetings and exchanges of experiences with colleagues from other European countries. In addition to day care, we also provide special counselling, temporary child care and other services supporting families in parenting.

The following services are provided against a fee:

- temporary child care service (according to your individual needs, in all of our 7 crèches).

The following services are provided free of charge:

- playhouse, family afternoon,
- development tools, rental of basic child care equipment,
- preventive development programs,
- counselling by a psychologist,
- child care at home,
- services provided by the Biztos Kezdet Gyerekház (Safe Start Children's House).



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