Inclusion

in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC)

Building partnership with parents in inclusive ECEC

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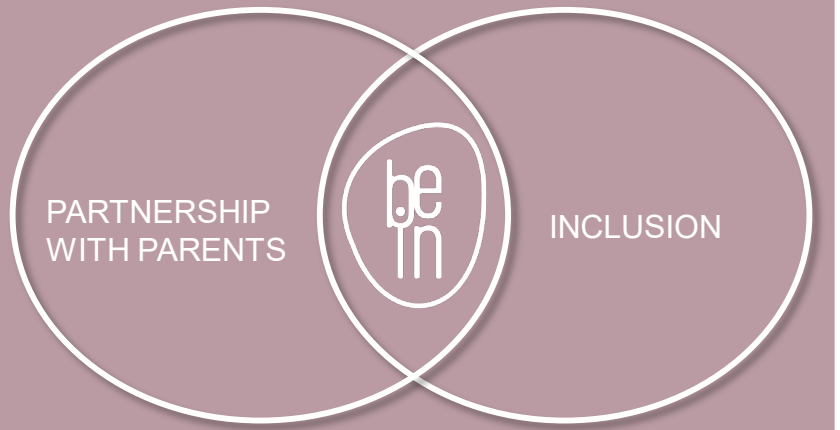
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A literature review in a ready-to-share format

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The partners from the **Erasmus+ project Be-In** worked during three years at the intersection of those those important aspects of ECEC: inclusion and partnership with parents. Coming from three different contexts (Iceland, Belgium and Portugal), it was necessary to give us a common framework to align our work in the same direction and allow in-depth discussion between the partners. The partners from Ghent University conducted a scoping literature review on both topic to provide all partners with definition of important concept, and a conceptual framework to start working from. They presented their literature review in two presentations, one on each focus topic, during the Be-In training week in October 2022, in Águeda, Portugal. This format allowed all partners to translate and use the presentation slides with their own teams, partners and students back home. As such, we decided to share it in that same ready-to-share format.



This presentation is therefore meant to be used, shared, adapted.

- Onder each slide, in the presentation notes, we'll find extended explanations and extra references on what is presented on the slide.
- You can adapt the slides easily to another presentation format, most titles, text and color should adjust automatically.
- Please always mention the reference and logo:

Adapted from De Schauwer, E. & Daelman, S. (2022). Inclusion in ECEC. Be-In Eramus+ project. http://vbjk.be/en/project/be-in

Defining 'Inclusion in ECEC' (IECEC)

UNESCO (2008)

An **ongoing process** aimed at offering quality education for all while respecting diversity and the different needs and abilities, characteristics and learning expectations of the students and communities, eliminating all forms of discrimination.

European Agency for special needs and inclusive education (2017)

A systemic approach to providing **high quality education** in mainstream schools that effectively meets the academic and social learning needs of all the learners from the school's local community



Inclusion is..

Systemic - Individual - Processual

“ Inclusion not only means accessing and being present in ECEC, but also belonging, being engaged, and learning”

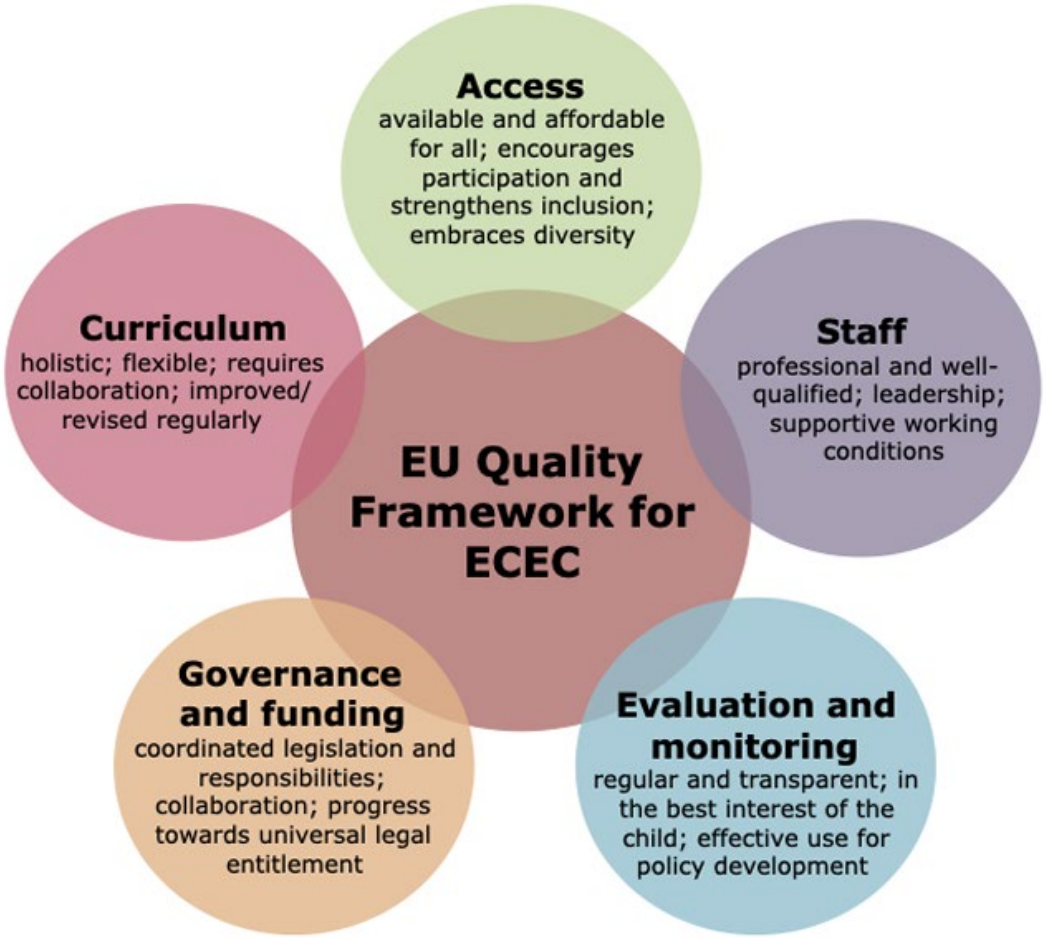
(EA, 2017)



Red threads

European Quality framework for ECEC (CEU, 2019)

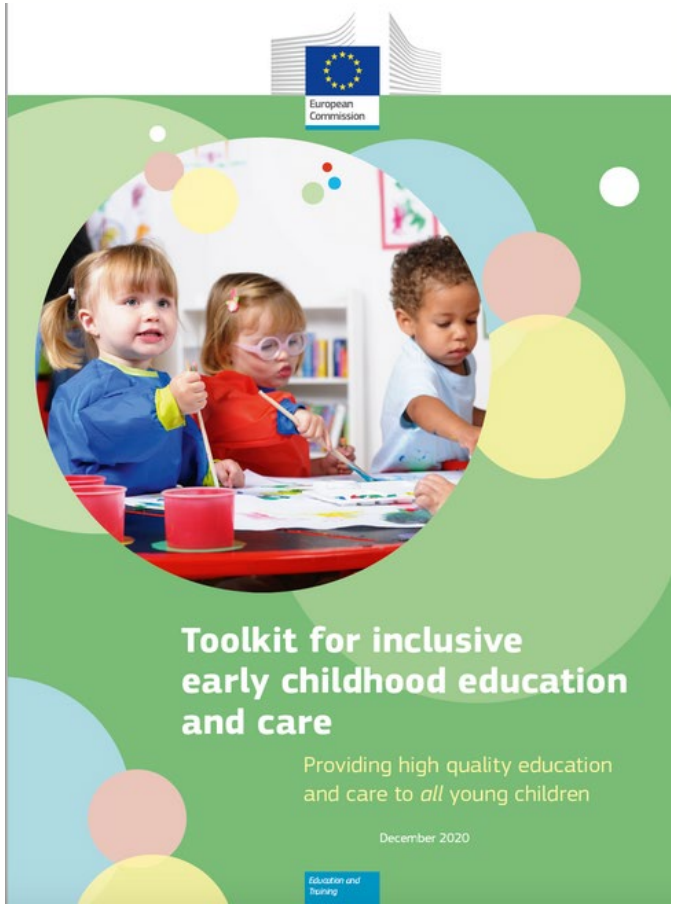
- Quality framework for ECEC
- Recommendations for High-quality ECEC systems
- Support their member states to work for a higher quality and more inclusive ECEC system.



Red threads

European Commission's Toolkit for inclusive ECEC (EC, 2021)

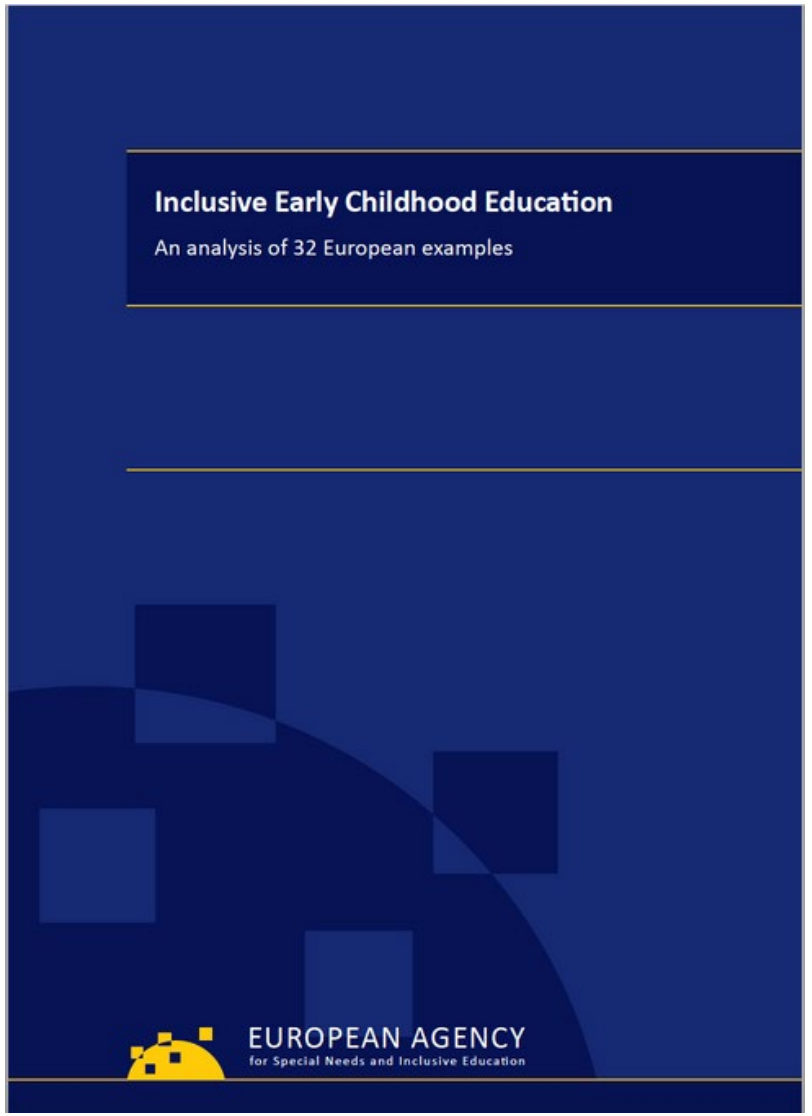
- Exchange of best practice, input of experts
- 'How to work for higher quality and more inclusive ECEC system?'
- Examples of ECEC form age 0-5 in 34 countries
- Practical solutions to inspire policy and practitioners



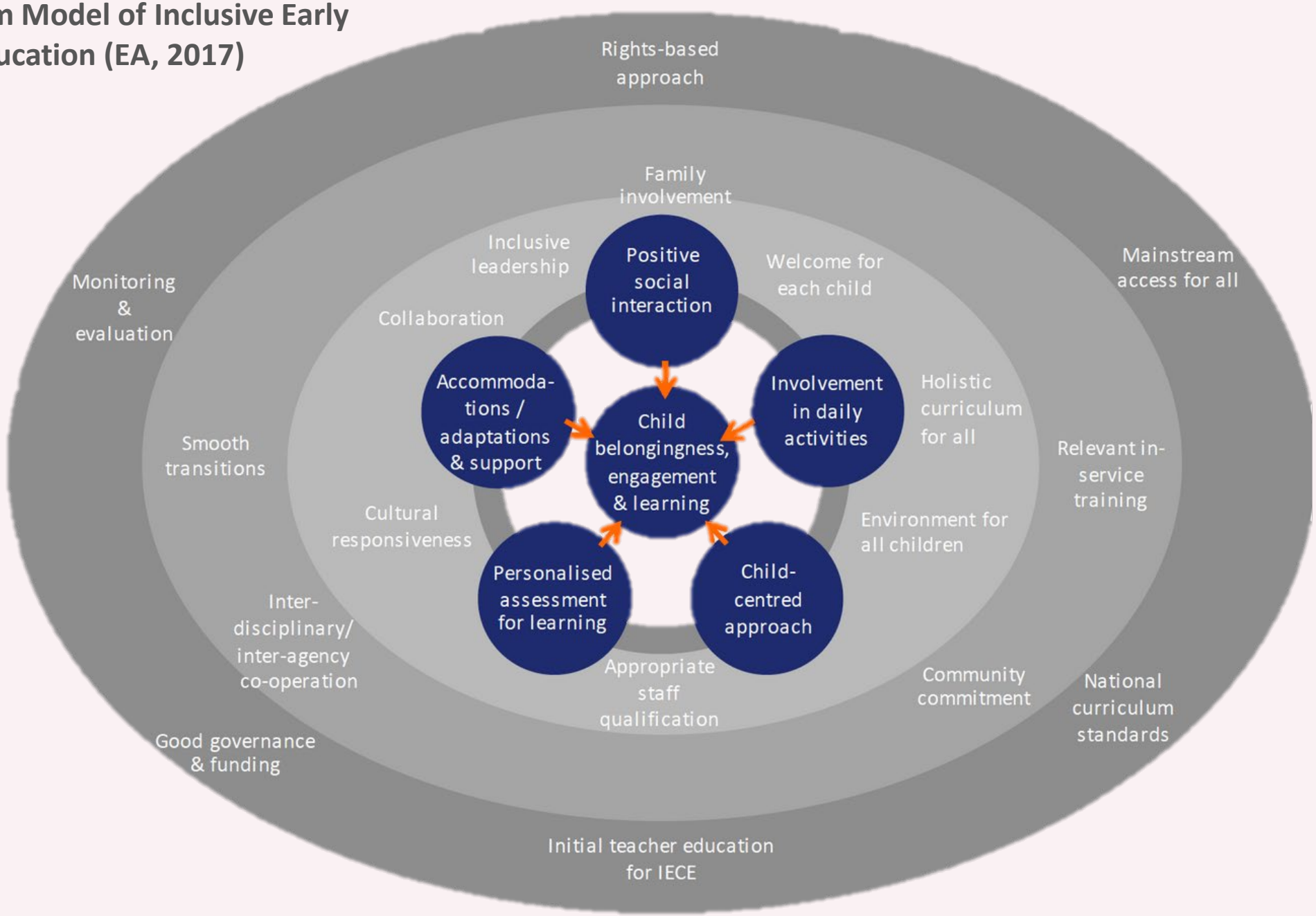
Red threads

European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (2017)

- Identify and promote the characteristics of quality in IECEC
- Qualitative analysis of 32 examples of IECEC services across Europe
- How do European ECE practitioners perceive inclusion and how are they trying to make their provision more inclusive?
- 25 themes which could be clustered in 5 aspects



The Ecosystem Model of Inclusive Early Childhood Education (EA, 2017)



At the core

Child belonging, engagement and learning

- presence
- attendance
- being welcome
- to belong
- engagement
- involvement
- learning
- personal growth

"Education and upbringing in our day-care facility are successful when we are able to provide the children and their parents with a solid foundation from which they can face the challenges of the future with a spirit of optimism and confidence." [In Germany]

(EA 2017)



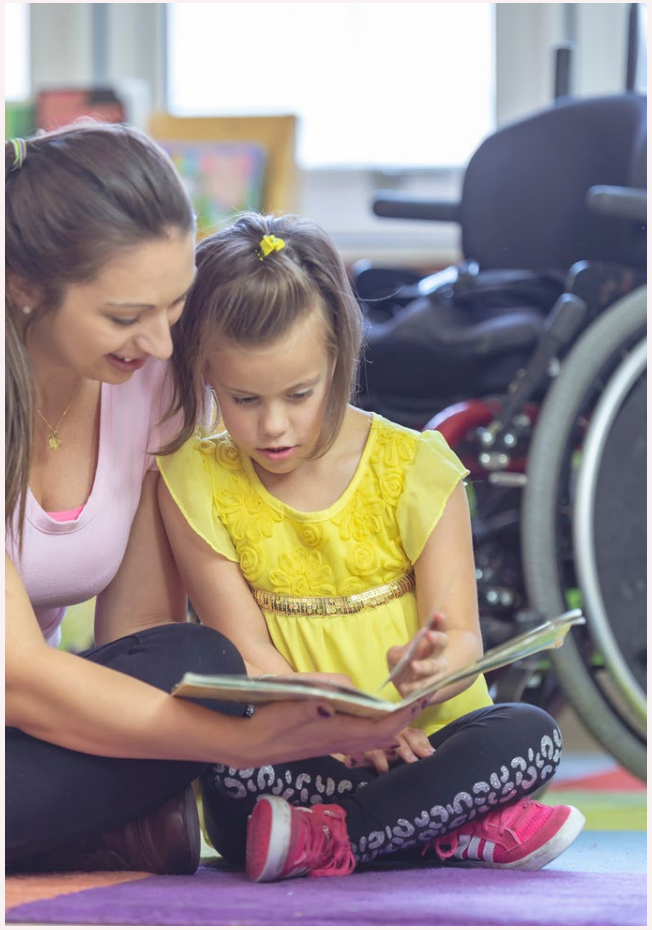
1st circle

Processes involving the child's direct experience in IECE:

- Positive social interaction and relations with staff and peers
- Ensuring active involvement in daily activities and learning
- Using a child-centered approach
- Using a personali!zed and flexible assessment for learning
- Providing accommodations, adaptations and support.



1st circle
Positive social interactions with staff and peers

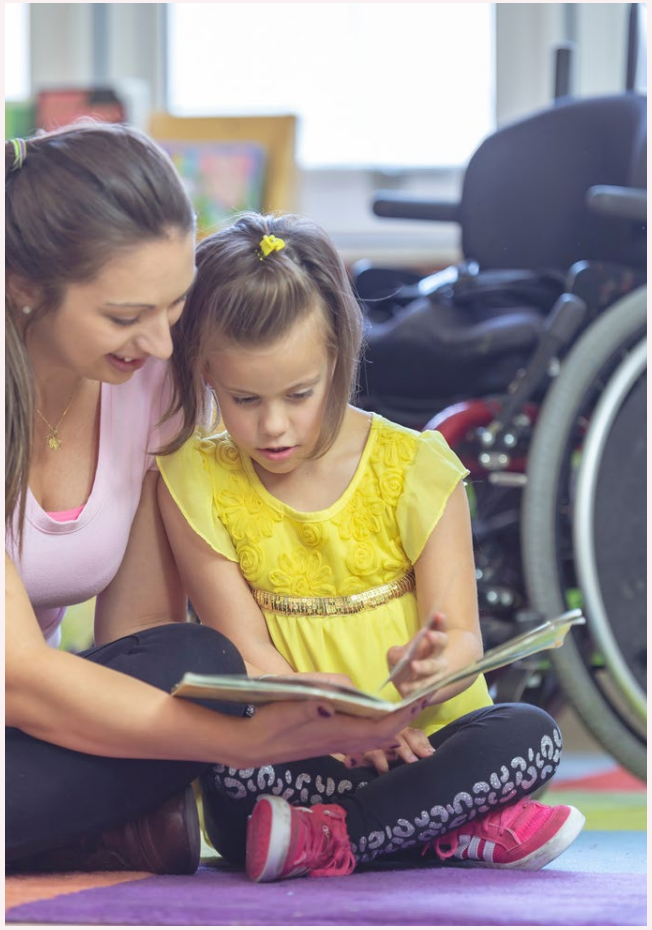


- Recognizing and acknowledging the capacities of every child
- Multiple identities – same AND different
- Investing in positive and creative relationships

" Games allow the development of strong relationships, bonding and socialising. In addition, teachers always participate in these games in an effort to minimize the distance between themselves and the children" [in Cyprus]. (EA, 2017)

"Whenever a child is on its own, I try to arrange the space around him/her in order to invite other children in and form a group. This is important because it enables that child to carry out an activity, or at least to be with other children during free-play and work alongside them."[in Cyprus]. (EA, 2017)

1st circle
Positive social interactions with staff and peers



- Facilitating inclusive peer relationships among children

"It is very important to recognise and develop a child's strengths and to show these strengths to peers. Playing together and learning together enable … the creation of mixed-age groups as an optimal organisational formula to include children with special educational needs in their peer groups". [in Poland] (EA, 2017)

Relationality, support and attunement rather than a focus on individual change.

1st circle
Using a child-centered approach

- Ensuring active involvement in learning and play
- Balancing standard goals with individual strengths and needs
- Use daily routines & structures in flexible ways
- Creating opportunities to express themselves
- (Learning to) Be able to make choices

"It is therefore necessary to find solutions for the organisation, methodology, adaptation of the curriculum, etc., in order to give the most adequate, diverse and creative response which facilitates the optimal development of all the competences in each and every one of the learners at the precise moment." [In Spain] (EA, 2017)





1st circle
Personalized and flexible assessment



- Assessment goes hand in hand with ACTION
- Observational and activity-based
- In collaboration with parents, early intervention programs, therapists or special educators
- Ongoing, never complete

Daily diaries are used to note down (by hand or with recordings, photographs, video recordings) critical events in the children's development process and the educational process is observed by the psychologist and the teachers themselves. Fortnightly teacher observations take place with inter-disciplinary staff, the psychologist and specialist teacher. [In Greece] (EA, 2017)

1st circle
Accommodations, adaptations and support

Reasonable accommodations in the environment:

- Accessible, safe and welcoming environment
- Understandable, predictable
- Encourages play, development, learning and exploration
- Specialized equipment
- Range of adaptive materials
- Areas with different characteristics



1st circle

Accommodations, adaptations and support

Reasonable accommodations with focus on the needs of child:

- Communication in different modalities, visual signals or use of pictograms and SMOG, tactile markings on the floor, multisensory activities and toys, structured overview of the course of the day...
- Specific aids and adaptations for children with specials needs.
- Partnership with parents and period of adjustment.



1st circle
Accommodations, adaptations and support

Providing accommodations can be something small:

"He cannot gather Easter eggs, so they put the basket with him, between his legs. All the children then came and brought the eggs to him and ... these are the little things that give us the feeling that our son is involved."
(Mother of L.)

Or larger :

- Use of assistive technology , use of alternative and augmentative communication
- Alternative program such as assistance class dog, communication based on music and art
- Buddy system... personalised systems for rewarding positive behavior...





2nd circle

Inclusive structures in ECEC:

- Warm welcome for each child and family
- Working in partnership
- Holistic and personalized curriculum for each
- Environment accessible and engaging for all
- Appropriate staff qualification
- Continuing professionalization
- Cultural responsiveness and respect for diversity and background
- Inclusive leadership
- Shared responsibility and collaboration





2nd circle

Warm welcome for each child and family

- Procedures and structures for each child
- Based on exchange with parents
- Inviting parents
- Children with SEN more individualized approach

To support the transition we organise protocol meetings with parents/guardians and the local early intervention team and all other relevant stakeholders. These meetings give parents and staff an opportunity to exchange key information about a child's individual needs and how the service can effectively meet these. [in Ireland] (EA, 2017)



2nd circle

Inclusive curriculum

Personalised

- Outcome of collaboration
- Goal is participation
- Acquires documentation and updating
- High expectations!

Holistic

- Focuses on learning and personal competences
- Physical, social, emotional , language and ethical
- Play, activities, exploration
- Nature, arts, music, community



2nd circle

Appropriate staff qualification

- Attitudes, perception and competences of staff
- Uncertainty, fear, discomfort
- Necessary specialised knowledge and expert skills?
- Continuous in-service training, coaching and collective reflection
- Visiting other services

"What you don't know is more than what you do know. Nothing in our profession is blackand white, which underlines the need for curiosity. No quick judgments; the intention and the effects of any action are important." [in The Netherlands] (EA, 2017)



2nd circle

Appropriate staff qualification

What staff competences represent the baseline for high quality ECEC?

- Willing to accept diversity in society
- Being non-judgemental
- Having an open mind
- Having empathy and understanding
- Showing flexibility and adaptability
- Being sensitive and responsive
- Supporting a sense of belonging
- Having enthusiasm
- Being creative in order to find solutions
- Showing warmth



2nd circle

Continuing professionalisation in IECE

- Being and becoming competent
- Good reflective skills
- Buffer against negative attitudes
- Adds to diversity thinking
- Awareness of social complexities

The project Little Children, Big Opportunities is a collaboration aiming to better equip students in teacher training institutes in dealing with poverty, diversity and social equity in pre-primary and primary education. The project demonstrates a clear understanding of child poverty and how to work with children and families in poverty. [In Belgium] (EA, 2017)

2nd circle

Responsiveness to backgrounds and context

- Different ethinic, religious, social and financial backgrounds
- Minority and disadvantaged groups belong in the setting and feel invited
- Multilingual programes, flexible communication
- Diverse staff composition
- Celebrating feasts, bringing food, music or books



"The kindergarten also includes other children who have different difficulties and the need for individual programme adjustments, such as children of immigrants, socially disadvantaged children and children from foster families and safe houses." [In Slovenia] (EA, 2017)



2nd circle

Inclusive leadership

- Carrying inclusive vision
- Creation of networks
- Forms and structures of collaboration and communication



Experts

- In Flanders (Belgium): Inclusion coach raises awareness, invests in partnerships and provides support
- Sustainable and shared responsibility... not a matter of expertism!



2nd circle

Shared responsibility, collaboration

The success of IECE is about relationships between adults...

- Sharing accessible and transparant information
- Informal and formal ways of exchanging
- Sharing experiences
- Debriefing from management floor towards educators
- Shared goals and philosophies
- Continuity in relationships
- Joint planning
- Administrative support
- A safe space

3rd circle

Structural factors in the ECEC environment

- Family involvement and collaboration
- In-service training for staff
- Interdisciplinary and inter-agency cooperation
- Community commitment and support
- Arrangements for smooth transitions



3rd circle
Interdisciplinary cooperation

- Collaboration with various experts
- Relationships across education, health, care, and social services
- Supporting assessment, planning, design and accommodation of (individual) programs
- Therapy: physical and motor, psychological, language, speech and communication, eating
- Puzzling...
- Attunement towards support of vulnerable children
- Also linking with labour and social policy



"The rule that 'the therapist goes to the child' not 'the child goes to the therapist' means that children enter the therapists' offices as little as possible. The nursery therapists always prefer to work with the children in their natural environment" [In Poland] (EA, 2017)

3rd circle

Arrangements for smooth transitions

- Transition to compulsory school receives little attention
- Importance of sharing information and planning!
- Navigate differences in systems, locations and responsible staff
- More intense with children with SEN

“”Throughout the school year, pre-school teachers plan activities to facilitate the transition of pre-school children to first grade (e.g. by carrying out joint activities between pre-school children and primary school children).” [Portugal] (EA, 2017)





4th cicrle

Regional and national Structural factors surrouding ECEC

- Rights-based approach
- Mainstream acces for all
- National curriculum standards
- Initial teacher education for IECE
- Good governance and funding
- Regular monitoring and evaluation



4th circle

Rights-based approach

The principal describes her vision as being an equality- and human rights-based approach and the pre-school as being a learning community where both staff and children learn from each other. [Iceland] (EA, 2017)

Article 2, UN-Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)

All children and adults have the right to evolve and to develop in a context where there is equity and respect for diversity. Children, parents and educators have the right to good quality in early childhood education services, free from any form of - overt and covert, individual and structural - discrimination due to their race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.



4th circle

Access for all

Affordability

- Funded or not?
- Adaptation of fee for vulnerable families

Availability

- Sufficient infrastructures and staff
- Extended and flexible opening hours

Accessibility

- Physical obstacles
- Privilege, relationality and exclusive characteristics
- Priority to vulnerable families

- IECE as obligatory or as suggested by policy
- Impact of raising/lowering age of compulsory education



4th circle

Monitoring and assessment

- Quantitative measures, interviews, observations, ratings
- Tool to improve policy design
- Tool to inform parents about quality
- Include parents' perspectives
- Participate in self-reflective practices

ECEC as learning organisations in continuous transformation.

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