



# CASE MATERIAL

Social Inclusion, Education and Urban Policy for  
Young Children

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## Summary

Inside you will find cases that describe both kindergarten and municipality perspectives on dilemmas in relation to social inclusion for young children in the age of 0-8 years old. The cases are produced in a collaboration between stakeholders within 6 European cities; Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Ljubljana, Berlin, Ghent and Copenhagen

## Table of Contents

<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Reading guide.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Slovenia.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Introduction to 2 cases from Hans Christian Andersen’s Kindergarten .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Case about inclusion of a child with physical disabilities .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Case about a child of immigrants in our kindergarten .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Municipality Case of Ljubljana Case – care for children with special needs: .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Germany.....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Case about Jelani Meier – a boy in a German Kita.....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Municipality Case of Berlin - The Situation of Refugee Children and Political Responsibilities.....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Denmark .....</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Case about relations and social inclusion in Stenurten day care institution.....</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Case about language and social inclusion from Sølund Kindergarten in Copenhagen. ....</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>Municipality Case of Copenhagen, Nørrebro / Bispebjerg area .....</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>Appendix to Municipality Case Copenhagen .....</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>The Netherlands.....</b>	<b>76</b>
<b>THE PACT Project .....</b>	<b>79</b>
<b>Cases from a kindergarten in Amsterdam .....</b>	<b>88</b>
<b>A Municipality case from Rotterdam: "Harmonisation" .....</b>	<b>92</b>
<b>Belgium.....</b>	<b>98</b>
<b>Municipality Case Ghent - Out of school care.....</b>	<b>100</b>

## Introduction

This comprehensive case material has been developed as part of the Erasmus+ project *Social Inclusion, Education and Policy for Young Children 2016-2019*. The Erasmus+ project has focused on social inclusion for young children (0-8 years) in urban areas. By recognising the complexity and diversity both culturally, economically, socially, ethnically etc. within urban areas, the project has in particular been focusing on how an urban context provides new challenges and demands in relation to social inclusion for both professionals in their daily work and for municipalities framing the work of professionals and conditioning inclusive environments.

The case material is produced by different stakeholders from both a municipality and an institutional/professional level within the six European cities of Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Ljubljana, Berlin, Ghent and Copenhagen. These cities all share ambitions for inclusive urban environments, but they also represent very different contexts, i.e. different history, demographics, economy, structure, professional traditions, etc. Therefore, experiences and practises from one case to another are of course not directly transferable across nations, cities and institutions. Nevertheless, there are indeed lessons to be learned.

Through an investigation of cases on social inclusion in urban areas, our ambition is to support such learning processes of professionals and future professionals, as they aim towards providing an inclusive environment for children. The material consists of (1) cases from various day-care institutions where professionals approach and deal with complex dilemmas of social inclusion on a daily basis, and (2) cases from a municipality level where various approaches towards conditioning social inclusion on a more structural level can be identified.

Working with these cases, either individually or through cross readings, we argue that the case material can be used as a didactical tool that will support and strengthen inclusive competences. Especially because the cases highlight central dilemmas that are not easily solved – dilemmas that are also often shaped by for instance local culture, professional traditions, structure, economy etc. The cases therefore support reflections and understandings of the complex practices of social inclusion – a complexity which it is key, that professionals are able to investigate, analyse and understand in order to strengthen their inclusive practice.

We therefore hope that this comprehensive case material is relevant and will be used for various educational purposes raising the quality of social inclusion across Europe.

## Reading guide

The case material is divided by country, and below each of the five country chapters are in general structured as follows:

1. **A short country description.** This section can be used to gain some general information of each country allowing you to understand the framing of the specific cases and the dilemmas they represent.
2. **A short description of the day care instituton(s).** Here you will find information on how the specific day cares that are the objects of the case dilemmas are organised.
3. **Cases.** Then you find the actual case description, which consists of dilemmas presented by different day care institutions on social inclusion. For some of the countries, you will also find a municipality case that presents various problems viewed from a municipality level.
4. **Reflection questions.** Each case is followed by reflection questions in order to support reflection and discussion.

Finally, we would like to recommend, that the case material is used in divided parts. It is a complex process to learn more about for instance a social inclusion dilemma in a Slovenian day-care institution. Having to compare various cases is even more complex, and therefore it can be an advantage to select various part of the case material for educational purposes, so that not all cases are used at the same time.

## Slovenia

Slovenia is a small European country that stretches over an area of 20 273 km<sup>2</sup> between the Alps, the Adriatic Sea and the Pannonia Plain. According to the last census (of 2002), Slovenia had the population of 1 964 036, by 1 January 2016, the number had increased to 2 064 188. Population density is 101.6 people per square kilometer. The ethnic population breakdown is as follows: the majority, 83.1 %, is Slovenian; members of the Hungarian (0.3 %) and Italian (0.1 %) national communities are recognized national minorities. In the census of 2002, every sixth person in Slovenia (16.5 %) declared themselves members of a different ethnic group: nearly 2 % as Serbs; 1.8 % as Croats; 1.1 % as Bosnians, of which 0.53 % declared themselves as Muslims and 0.41 % as Bosnians; 0.31 % as Albanians; 0.2 % as Macedonians; 0.14 % as Montenegrins and 0.17 % as Roma.

In the Republic of Slovenia, the education system is organized mainly as a public service rendered by public and private institutions and private providers holding a concession who implement officially recognized or accredited programs. By law, public schools are secular and the school space is autonomous; in public schools, political and confessional activities are prohibited. By law, it is allowed to establish private educational institutions that provide their own programs, thus one may opt for education in line with ones worldview.

Public upper secondary schools, short-cycle higher vocational colleges, higher education institutions, educational institutions for SEN children and residence halls for upper secondary and tertiary students, as well as supporting professional institutes in education are founded and financed by the state. Public kindergartens, basic schools, residence halls for pupils, music schools and adult education organizations are founded by municipalities.

Pre-school education is aimed at children aged one to six or the starting age of compulsory primary education and it is not compulsory. Public kindergartens welcome children aged 11 months or more. Children remain and receive pre-school education and care in the same institution until they start basic school. Kindergartens provide Education and care in two age groups:

- first age group: children aged 1 to 3 years and
- second age group: children aged 3 years to basic school age.

Education and other professional staff of public and private kindergartens that hold a concession adhere to the Kindergarten Curriculum, that is, the essential program document adopted in 1999 that specifies pre-school education as part of the education system.

Primary and lower secondary education is organized in a single-structure nine-year basic school attended by pupils aged 6 to 15 years. It is provided by public and private schools (less than 1 % of pupils attend private basic schools), as well as educational institutions for SEN children, and for adults adult education organizations. As specified by the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia, basic school education is compulsory and state-funded. Local communities set up basic schools. A widely branched out public network of basic schools gives all residents of Slovenia access to education. The basic school program is divided into three educational cycles; each cycle covers three grades. According to norms and standards that apply to basic schools, there may be no more than 28 pupils in one class. The next stage after nine years of compulsory basic education is two to five year non-compulsory upper secondary education that begins at the age of 15.

More info about the education system in the Republic of Slovenia:

<http://www.eurydice.si/images/publikacije/The-Education-System-in-the-Republic-of-Slovenia-2016-17.pdf>

In Slovenia, pre-school education goals in kindergartens seek to develop the ability to understand and appreciate oneself and others; develop the ability to debate and resolve, appreciate diversity and cooperate or interact in a group; develop the ability to recognise emotions and encourage emotional experience and expression; foster curiosity, exploratory spirit, imagination and intuition, as well as develop critical thinking; nurture language development for effective and creative use of speech, later also reading and writing; cultivate appreciation of artistic works and the artistic expression; share the knowledge of different scientific fields and everyday life; motivate physical and locomotive development, and develop sovereignty in keeping personal hygiene and care for one's health.

Kindergartens provide education and care for all pre-school children. Parents have the right to decide on the pre-school programme and kindergarten at their own choice. Public kindergartens are established by local communities. Primarily, they are founded by

municipalities, but by the state and parents, too. The fees are subsidized for all and vary according to the family's economic situation. Last year there were 78,7 % of all children aged 1 to 6 years enrolled in kindergartens. 95 % of enrolled children attended public kindergartens.



## Introduction to 2 cases from Hans Christian Andersen's Kindergarten

**Hans Christian Andersen's Kindergarten** is in Ljubljana, which is the capital and the largest city in Slovenia. Pre-school education in Slovenia is not compulsory. It is aimed at children of eleven months (when maternity and parental leave is over) to six years or compulsory school age. So for 5 years children stay in the same institution. We have private and public kindergartens, we are public. We are open from Monday till Friday, from 6am till 5 pm. A child can stay in kindergarten maximum 9 hours per day – we call this full-day programme. Children have 4 meals - breakfast, fruit and vegetable, lunch and snack. They eat, sleep, play and to other things in the same classroom.

Pre-school education is provided in two age groups:

- First: children aged 1 to 3 and
- Second: children aged 3 to 6 (school age).

In first group we have 14 children. In second group we have 19 children (if they are 3, 4 years old), till 24 (when they are 4, 5, 6 years old).

In one group we have two teachers: pre-school teacher (with bachelor degree) and pre-school teacher assistant (with finished high school).

The core national programming document is the **Kindergarten curriculum**. It defines the pre-school education in kindergartens as part of the education system and so under the auspices of the ministry responsible for education. It defines goals, fundamental principles, characteristics of pre-school children, as well as areas of activities.

The curriculum defines **six areas of activities**: movement, language, art, nature, society and mathematics. It defines also the global objectives and the objectives of individual area of activity, examples of activities for individual age groups and the role of the adults.

The cases from Hans Christian Andersen were written by kindergarten's counsellor (Nadja Koncilja), head teacher (Tina Merčnik) in cooperation with pre-school teachers.

Both cases were written last year (summer 2017). They happened in Hans Christian Andersen's Kindergarten, Ljubljana, Slovenia.

In our kindergarten we have 770 children in 43 groups, from 11 months till 6 years old. We have 40 employees: head teacher, pre – school teachers, pre – school teachers assistants, counsellors, organizers of health-hygiene regime, administration staff, cooks ect. Counselling staff in kindergarten provide support to children, parents, teachers, management and other staff. Head teacher assume two roles: that of an educational leader and that of an administrative manager. Kindergartens are autonomous in the employment and management of their human resources.

We have 29 children with special needs include in groups and one special department for children with more disabilities.

The education of children with special needs in Slovenia is based on the principle of equal opportunity, whilst taking into account the diversity of children’s needs, inclusion, parental involvement, individualised method of work, as well as all other conditions to ensure the best development of the individual child.

Children with special needs in our kindergarten are:

- children with mental disabilities
- deaf children and children with hearing impairments
- blind children and children with visual impairments
- children with speech and language impairment
- children with physical disabilities
- children with problems in specific fields of education
- children with long-term illness
- children with emotional and behavioural problems, and
- children with autistic disorders.

A child with special needs in kindergarten can receive a professional help from special educator (special pedagogue) 1 or 2 hours per week. A child with physical disabilities can have a permanent or temporary assistant after the decision of the National education institute of Slovenia - the institution that we cooperate with, when we (counsellor, pre-school teacher and parents) identify someone as a child with special needs.

For each child with special needs we (counsellor, special pedagogue who works with a child, pre-school teacher, who leads the group and parents) prepare individualized programme, discuss about child's strong and weak areas of development and set goals, we want to achieve with the child. We discuss about adjustments, which are necessary (classroom, special corner for him, chair, materials, changing table ect.).

## Case about inclusion of a child with physical disabilities

### Lev's story

A child, named Lev, with muscle disease, came to our kindergarten when he was 11 months old. He had a muscular dystrophy, that results in increasing weakening and breakdown of skeletal muscles over time. He couldn't walk and move around by himself. Lev didn't have any difficulties with entering kindergarten. For him everything was really interesting, he played a lot by himself and explore different toys, materials, classroom.

Because of his disease and physical disabilities, Lev had a permanent assistant assigned to him. But not from the beginning - first 4 months in kindergarten, despite his diagnosis, he was without an assistant – this is the (bureaucratic) problem in Slovenia: in kindergarten we wait for the decision of the National education institute too long and in this time a child is without any help.

### Lev's Parents

At the beginning of the school year mother told teacher that Lev needs healthy environment and that any kind of disease can be fatal for him. Teacher felt fear, pressure, responsibility for his health and health of others children in the group. Everyday communication between parents and teacher or assistant was necessary. Teacher felt parents' concerns about health and many times, unintentionally, they pressure her.

Cooperation with parents was good, but their demands and wishes about their child were getting higher and higher. They wanted more and more from teacher – they expected to do different exercises with him, physical therapy (even breathing exercising), help him walk with special equipment ect.

Questions in teacher's minds were: How will I protect him, so he won't be hurt? How will I explain to the other children? What kind of approaches, methods, skills will he need? What kind of adjustments will he need?

Who can I ask for help? Do I know somebody with same experience? Is there any literature about it? Some good practice? Special training or seminar, workshop?

How can I adapt the environment and activities in the classroom, prepare room, materials, bathroom, other children in the group, activities outside the classrooms, playground, trips in the nature, later camps, sport activities, the use of a stroller – will it be possible outside, weather conditions ect.), time adjustments, the use of public transport ect.

Slowly, through discussions with colleagues, teachers who already had experience with child with special needs, with kindergarten's counsellor and principal, she found some answers. She needed support, sometimes maybe just someone who said to her: *»You are doing great! You will do it!«*, someone who listened her, found some literature about it, talked with her about dilemmas and helped her open new perspective, view of the problem, gave her some optimistic words and encouraged her not to give up.

### **Preparing the other children**

In this case all children in Lev's group were around 1 year old. They grew up with Lev, he was with them from the beginning.

Later, there were a lot of questions why he can not walk, so teacher had to talk to the children, explain, teach and help them to understand. Children could also try Lev's equipment, chair, »walkie« ect.

Teacher explained and showed them why and how to be careful around him. Some children were eager to assist Lev, but took over and provided too much help.

Teacher encouraged helping behaviors, but also taught children to encourage Lev to do as much as possible on his own. She taught children how to offer help respectfully. They helped him a lot – put the plate closer to him during lunch, poured him a drink, brought him clothes or shoes when he must dress, called the teacher if they couldn't help him by themselves and they were also really careful when he was around them or sitting on the floor. Teacher often saw, encouraged and complimented that kind of behaviours.

During school years new children were entering Lev's group and other children taught them how to behave and help Lev. Lev is socially very opened and communicative, that's why also very popular in the group and others don't see any obstacles when they play and communicate

with him. All children gain a lot – they have an experience, which can help them develop acceptance and understanding toward people with disabilities.

### ***Teacher***

Children learn as much, and sometimes more, from the unintended example that adults set as they do from the learning activities that are planned. The same is certainly true when a child with disabilities is enrolled in the classroom. Children will form their knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes about individuals with disabilities based largely on the attitudes, words, and actions that they see from the adults around them. That's why it is so important to act »appropriately«, opened, not showing your fears and dilemmas.

Important to teacher is reflexion of her work, attitude and evaluation, to think about her own practice, actions, responses (conscious and unconscious), planning activities from and with children, their ideas and thoughts. Look for strengths as well as needs of the children. Provide activities that will support a child's strong points and trough this strengthen weak ones. Every child needs to feel successful and capable. She is thinking what the child is capable of and always push him a little bit forward in his development, trough small challenges, step by step. She is aware that some children are capable to do more, faster and easier, that why she plans individually – she sets goals and activities adjust to individuals. For that she has to observe a lot, write down noticings, get to know the children, what are they good at, what is their weak field of development, what do they like and don't like – for each of them.

Teacher was thinking about environment, physical and emotional, where everyone is invited to participate as much as they want. She listened to the children, answering children's questions with simple, straightforward honesty. She facilitated interactions and play between Lev and other children. Important for her is to give children the freedom to explore their ideas about disabilities trough play and conversation, while guiding them to be aware and respectful of the feelings and perspective of the child with special needs.

Because of the child with special needs in her group she had to plan more, think about activities, adjust programme, sometimes daily routine. She had to be flexible, open, creative, reflective, empathetic and patient.

In relation to the parents she sometimes feels like an »outside« member of the family – objective member who ease parents´ distress, fear and also tell them about their child´s development, behaviour, habits ect. without »too much« emotional involvement.

For Lev´s assistant was difficult to carry him around, when he reached the age of three, four. They thought about new adjustments, but not all were possible – there were financial and material barriers.

There was also a lot of questions from him that needed answers – why can´t I walk? Later Lev started to talk and explain about his disability to the other children by himself.

Teacher knows how important is lifelong learning, team work, impact of her values, beliefs, knowledge and skills, but specially her view of diversity. Each child is unique and she tries to respect, understand and accept.

### **Questions:**

- ❖ *Cooperation with parents of special needs children: How to deal with parent´s expectation, emotions, pressure? How far can we go?*
- ❖ *The role of a teacher: her emotions, lack of knowledge, personal beliefs, values - how to deal with it and overstep them?*
- ❖ *Responsibility (personal, institutional)*

## Case about a child of immigrants in our kindergarten

We have 14 % of immigrant children in our kindergarten. We have no special program for immigrant children or their families. We cope with each family differently. Usually we use internal knowledge and we wait for the family to adopt to our system. We do not have many problems with this yet, but we are aware that “just waiting them to adopt” is not good enough. With these kind of approach families nor teachers feel comfortable.

One of the general principles is the principle of equal opportunities, respect for diversity of children (respect for the specifics of children's culture of origin) and the development of multiculturalism. In our kindergarten we give children opportunity to express in their mother tongue (bring books, read stories, sing songs, listen their music), to show their native language and culture in various activities. We also encourage parents to engage in work life in kindergarten, present their culture, language and habits, but we also respect their privacy, worldview and values. We have some good practice of inclusion in our kindergarten, for example: teacher learned some Albanian words, so she could communicate with a child, we arrange play spaces and activities so that everyone is included, use different non-verbal and visual material, signs, we encourage families to present their culture and language at different events, show us how they celebrate their holidays ect.

But we are aware that we aren't perfect and we try, through discussion and reflexion, overcome different barriers that we have. Sometimes we need to discuss with teacher individually about her approach, behaviour and response. A lot of good practice, good stories and examples depend on teacher's engagement, self – initiative, her personality and beliefs. In this story teacher was very open, emphatic, positive and flexible, but teachers are different and have different values, views and opinions. We often discuss how every child needs individual approach, but practice can be different from discussion.

Important for us is to provide a safe environment and develop safe, secure and trusting relationships. The task of all us involved in education and the community is to ensure with appropriate educational experiences to all children and lead them to experience acceptance, success and satisfaction. A child can include in our environment, but maintain and express his identity. We must ensure him acceptance and safety.



### ***Mark from Macedonia***

Mark came to our kindergarten at the age of two. He and his family are from Macedonia. Before entering kindergarten, teacher had individual conversation with parents about Mark – in Slovenian and Croatian language, which parents understood little. They told her, that Mark speaks Macedonian language. Teacher had a feeling that they are open as a family, but don't understand the whole picture of kindergarten. She spoke Croatian with them, but still there was a big linguistic barrier. At the beginning she thought this will be the only barrier and that they will get used to the kindergarten and its activities.

Soon it was obvious that parents saw kindergarten as a kind of day-care centre, not educational institution, where we try to reach different goals, offer children much more than just protection. For parents it was important that someone is »taking care« of their child and they did not expect more from the teachers.

### ***First days, weeks, months...***

Beginning of the school year. Mark cried a lot. Not just first weeks, but months. He was reluctant to interact with teachers, children. He rejected physical and eye contact. During different activities in the group, he was very absent and restless. Teacher couldn't find anything that Mark would be interested in. He roamed around the classroom a lot. At home, parents did a lot instead of him, so there were things that he couldn't do by himself in kindergarten. First he didn't understand and follow the instructions that teacher gave to the group, later he took the easiest way out. It was difficult for him to connect with other children.

Teacher thought about different methods, activities, ways to come closer to him. Maybe some other teacher wouldn't even notice him, but she tried to help him. She talked a lot about situation with her colleagues, searched information on the internet and read different literature.

After many unsuccessful tries, she started to feel resistance, antipathy towards him, she couldn't establish connection with him. She was aware of her negative emotions. Mark kept refusing any physical, emotional, verbal contact, that's why she felt resistance, frustration,

powerlessness. She gets her energy from children's feedback, their small progress and success, but in this case she was missing it. It was difficult to find something positive.

On her consciousness level she didn't want to feel these emotions, but she did.

### **What now?**

First and the most important step for her was awareness of negative emotions she felt towards Mark. She talked about them with her assistant, but did not find help outside the group. She needed energy to find a solution and it was difficult to find it, since there was no progression in Mark's behaviour. All that she was aware of was that finding a path to the child is her mission, not child's. It was long and lonely psychological way of confrontation with teacher's values, approaches, beliefs and wishes. She was very persistent, thinking and searching what could she do.

He stopped crying after half a year and for parents that was enough, they were satisfied. But Mark didn't feel good in the group, he still refused contacts with everybody. Parents weren't conflictual, they were kind to teacher, but had different opinion, view of education. Later, they started to speak with Mark in Slovenian language, which was too difficult for them and incorrect. Teacher encouraged them to speak with him in their mother tongue. She also asked them to encourage Mark to do things by himself, but often there was no response from them. They didn't attend parent – teacher meetings, so teacher called them, when it was necessary. She often advised them about education and they agreed with it, but didn't follow it.

### **English minutes**

After months of trying, thinking and searching, she found something, where she saw that Mark is interested in. In her group they started with, as they called them, »English minutes« - few minutes per day when teacher speaks with children in English language, sings some English songs, counts, learns some new English words etc. At such activities Mark's face changed. He started to listen, cooperate, even made an eye contact. Teacher saw opportunity to connect with him, that's why she exposed him and encouraged him to be more active.

She found something, that he was interested and good at. After weeks he also became more calm, active, open. Children started to see him differently. Later teacher noticed that he is also interested in arts, especially dance and drama.

### Questions:

- ❖ *How to come close to foreign parents at first or early contact?*
- ❖ *What kind of support does a teacher in such situation need?*
- ❖ *Do you have some ideas how to integrate a child similar to Mark? What if “English minutes” never come?*
- ❖ *How should kindergarten’s protocol/system support child’s and parent’s integration?*
- ❖ *What competences does the teacher have and are good for integrating different children into a kindergarten?*

## **Municipality Case of Ljubljana Case – care for children with special needs:**

Municipality of Ljubljana (MOL) is the founder of 23 public kindergartens which enroll 13.529 children in the school year 2017/2018 (above 90 % children from MOL attend kindergarten), of whom there are 450 children with special needs either with a Placement of Children with Special Needs Act or in the process of acquiring one.

Children's disabilities are mostly expressed in disorders such as motoric difficulties, the development gap in a particular development area, disturbances of attention and hyperactivity, suspected autism spectrum disorders, severe allergies and visual impairment.

According to the degree and variation of the disorder, disability or deficit on the basis of the Placement of Children with Special Needs Act the children are placed either into regular kindergarten groups with additional professional assistance or in the development departments of kindergartens that carry out tailored programs for early childhood education. MOL's public kindergartens have 9 development departments which currently include 54 children. Soon, another development department will be established for children with autism.

In addition to all statutory obligations, MOL carries out a number of additional activities and provides additional funds to raise the quality of life of children with special needs and their families. The children in Ljubljana's kindergartens receive an above-standard support in regular classes in the scope of part-time employees and additional escorts. When the kids who are yet in the process of acquiring the Placement Act attend regular kindergarten classes, the Municipality of Ljubljana will, based on a kindergarten's proposal, provide an additional companion as a form of above-standard services. As an action of an early intervention, children in the process of obtaining the Act are also offered early assistance in the form of a special pedagogue. Additional professional support to the children with the Placement Act or in the process of acquiring one is carried out by professional staff assistants in kindergartens in MOL. Their work is coordinated by a professional advisor for children with special needs.

MOL is also the founder of the Special Education Centre Janez Levec for children with special needs. Within the Janez Levec Centre operates a training centre for professionals, the Educational Centre PIKA, also set up by MOL, following an initiative of the Department for Pre-school Education in 2013. PIKA offers considerable knowledge and experience in the field of



education of children with intellectual disabilities and additional knowledge for the education of children with special needs to the teachers and educators of Ljubljana's elementary schools and kindergartens. There has been additional professional help as well as special mobile pedagogical service available to pupils at schools, but the new centre provides a systematic training of teaching staff, following contemporary humane efforts to qualitatively include more kids with special needs in mainstream schools, as is the case elsewhere in Europe.

The Municipality case **about a little girl with autism** we would like to present opens an inclusion dilemma. The case was written by three employees of Municipality of Ljubljana, Department for pre-school learning and education, working as senior advisers, with the Master's or equivalent level degree. The case was written in 2017.

The case takes place in field of education, namely preschool learning. The institution, from which we took the case, is kindergarten, in the second age group (3 – 6- years). Within the case we are focused on describing the intermediary role of Municipality of Ljubljana (local authority) as founder and main financer of kindergarten.

The case is specific as Municipality usually isn't directly involved in program and activities of kindergartens. Municipality involves as third party when agreement between institution, parents and experts in field of inclusion and children with special needs cannot be reached.

In school year 2016/2017, MOL was presented with a case of a little girl with severe behaviour disturbances. She was on the autism spectrum with hyperactivity outbreaks and occasional aggression and was hard to deal with in the regular department she attended. She was offered all kinds of help that was possible, from additional professional help, pedagogical counseling service, special educators and assistants to the possibility of withdrawing from playgroup, adjustments, special activities, et cetera. Despite all the help that kindergarten could offer, the girl still had problems with inclusion/integration, with life and play with her friends, so the kindergarten felt that she needed different treatment. Her parents were, however, opposed to the idea of transferring her to the development department, although it was explained to them she would feel better in a smaller group with more help, support and adapted curriculum.

In their helplessness the parents turned to MOL and asked for a companion to be granted for their little daughter. MOL was in an awkward position; the kindergarten was against the

companion, in their opinion the companion was not an appropriate solution for the development of the girl, because the whole environment should be adapted to the extent of the girl's optimal development. In the end, the kindergarten agreed to the scheme due to the parents' pleas and the mayor, in cooperation with the competent department, approved additional financial support needed for a companion, but only until the end of school year, which was a little more than three months away. This was a temporary solution, since they all agreed that changing the program and playgroup in the middle of the school year would not be in the girl's best interest. For the new school year, the kindergarten proposed that the girl be included in the development department, which could provide her optimal development with the support of qualified experts. Come school year 2017/18, the National Education Institute Slovenia placed the girl into a development department on the basis of the Placement of Children with Special Needs Act. Her parents are still not happy about it but had at some point agreed to the placement.

### **Dilemmas / discussion points**

One of the problems considering this case is the parents' rights which overrule the rights of the child. Professional pedagogues' opinion was that the girl belongs to a development department instead of a regular one. That would have been the right way to go and the best path for her to follow. But her parents disagreed and until they relented there was nothing that could be done, except maintaining status quo. When the parents express resistance to a certain Placement Act, the whole procedure will usually be temporarily stopped. And even after the Placement Act has been issued the parents have a right to issue complaint. In some cases, they ignore the Placement Act and leave the child where she is; the chance of child's success is thus lower. Sometimes in such cases, competent national institutions will identify child neglect.

MOL's assistance in this case could also be questioned. Kindergarten had already stated that the girl belonged to a special development department, where she would prosper much more than in a regular one. The National Education Institute Slovenia agreed, but because the parents were against it, MOL agreed to the temporary solution. MOL's help was perhaps the

best way to go in given situation, but from the girl's perspective, was that really the best possible course for her? Wouldn't it be better if she was attended to earlier?

Then there is also the problem of a companion. Companions were traditionally educated and trained for the work with children with physical and motoric deficits. Emotional and behavioral issues have become wide spread only in recent years and competences, characteristics, professional knowledge and training needed for children with physical or psychological special needs are vastly different. So the companion's role in the group was mostly just support and help for the teacher – to remove the girl from the group when she had an emotional outbreak, to take care of her safety, to take her for a walk and calm her, when needed, but also to help with other children, who inadvertently caused circumstances that triggered the girl's behavior. The group's educator did receive additional training in caring for children with special needs, but in kindergarten, each child comes into contact with many teachers, those of other groups and those who substitute due to sick leave, even students who haven't finished their training yet. So it is impossible to guarantee complete competence of all who come into contact with a child.

## **Conclusion**

While inclusion of a child with special needs can have a positive impact on other children within the group, in cases of severe deficits the negative aspects prevail. And while moderate disorders are something regular kindergartens (and schools) wish to deal with because it teaches all involved empathy, patience and acceptance, they do not wish and cannot deal with severe cases. Not only are the teachers not sufficiently trained, the environment itself is not supportive enough for the child who will evolve much more in specially and specifically adapted environment, backed up by trained professionals. If children with special needs receive enough suitable professional assistance, they will often learn to control their disorder, even to such an extent it becomes unnoticeable. In such cases, even a normal inclusion to society in adulthood is possible.

Unfortunately, it is the severe cases that often come to MOL's attention, because the parties involved cannot reach an understanding among themselves and need support from an

independent source. We offer support as much as we can, but can't help but wonder – was our support always the right thing to do. For the child, that is.

## Questions

- ❖ Is inclusion always the preferred course of action or would it sometimes better be avoided?
- ❖ Is inclusion only for the sake of inclusion itself still the right way to go?
- ❖ As a municipality, our primary range of work considering pre-school children with special needs is organization, management and financing. We have little to do with concrete cases. From time to time, however, we are asked to act as an independent intermediary. Should the role of local authorities be extended? To which point and in which form?



## Germany

Berlin is the capital and with about 3.5 million the largest city of Germany as well as one of its 16 constituent states. Rules and regulations about child care and educational matters in general are a matter of the German states and the ones in Berlin are therefore not necessarily the same all over the country.

The German government grants parents of newborn children compensation for the loss of income after the birth of a child. This benefit (*Elterngeld*) can be paid up to 12 months and its sum depends on the income before. As this is shared among both parents, it is attractive for both parents to stay six months at home with the child. Also a parent has a right to have a leave from work after the confinement. This leave (*Elternzeit*) may last up to three years after the birth. After this leave employees return to work at the same conditions as before. An employer has no right to refuse this time out.

By German law has every child over the age of 3 since 1996 the right to get a place in early day care (if wanted by the parents) to guarantee a seamless care in early childhood and allow parents to return into the workforce. Since 2013 exists a similar legal right for every 1-3 year old.<sup>1</sup>

### **Day care and preschools in Berlin for infants and children up to age 6**

Child care facilities (in German called *Kindergarten* or *Kindertagesstätte*, short *Kita*) are usually open non-stop from 6 am to 5 or 6 pm, but each *Kita* is free to change their opening hours due to demand.

Local administrations have to ensure that there are enough seats in day care centers for each eligible child available in its municipality.

Day care fees depend throughout Germany on parental income. Since August 2018 child care is free of charge in the federal state of Berlin

Another reason why Berlin became a popular destination for young families. That is why Berlin

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.bundesregierung.de/Content/DE/StatischeSeiten/Breg/Kinderbetreuung/2013-07-19-rechtsanspruch-u3.html>

also increased over the last decade dramatically its child care facilities for children between the age of 6 weeks and 6 years to keep up with the urban migration.

The fees for under 1 year olds still depend on the income of the parent and on how many hours per week the child is present at the day care center. Day care is granted all day as well as in the morning or afternoon only.

In 2006 the Senate of Berlin split the so far state owned child care centers in five independent regional providers (*Eigenbetriebe*) which are still 100% state owned to invoke innovation and quality gains. To keep up with the demand, the Senate of Berlin encouraged private providers to facilitate day care centers that get the same funding as the *Eigenbetriebe*.

## **Schools**

School education is a matter of each federal state in Germany and can differ in many means. It is compulsory for all children aged 6 (grade 1 or grade flex) up to 15 years (grade 9 or 10) to attend school (*Schulpflicht*). The elementary school, *Grundschule*, goes to 4<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> grade, after which pupils choose one of the secondary schools which end with either a vocational training qualification in grade 9 (*Berufsbildungsreife* or *Hauptschulabschluss*), middle school certificate in grade 10 (*MSA* or *Mittlere Reife*) or high school leaving certificate (*Abitur*) in grade 12 or 13.

In Germany, school starts in the morning commonly at 8 am and lasts until 1 or 2 pm. Only the increasing number of all-day schools (*Ganztagsschule*), especially in the big metropolitan areas like Berlin, offer an all-day program comprising at least seven hours per day. They provide therefore after-school activities, lunch and supervision of homework and also allow time for play.

## **Berliner Bildungsprogramm (BBP)**

The "*Berlin education program for daycare centers and children's day care*" (BBP) is the basis for the work of all Berlin Kitas. It offers a binding, scientifically founded and professionally proven orientation framework for the educators.

It describes the basic knowledge, abilities and skills your child needs in order to successfully follow his life path, with what content it is to be made known, and how it is based on its state

of development and its inclinations can be promoted.

The aim of the education program is that all children acquire the best possible conditions for their further education. A regular exchange between Kita and the parent promotes the well-being of each child and its exploration of the worlds.<sup>2 3</sup>

### **Integration/inclusion of children with disabilities in Berlin**

In the field of education, based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, determines the administration of the federal state of Berlin inclusion as an important objective. This objective entitles all people to the highest possible education on the basis of equal opportunities, irrespective of specific learning needs, gender or social and economic conditions.

The concept of the inclusive education recognizes the individuality of each child as well as the diversity of the pupils within a learning group and sees it as an enrichment. The aim of inclusive education is to create lessons and school life in such a way that all pupils – irrespective of their origin and their performance – can live and learn together.

In everyday Kita and school life, inclusion so means the equal learning of pupils with and without disabilities in a learning group of the same content, because disability is only a diversity feature. While previously students with disabilities learned exclusively in special schools, the joint education and education of children with and without disabilities is now a priority, which is laid down in the Berlin education and school laws. Meanwhile, more than half of all students with disabilities in Berlin are learning in regular schools together with their peers.

In cooperation with independent service providers, the children's and youth outpatient clinics, social pediatric centers and the district administrations the Senate of Berlin developed a guidance for the reception and care of children with disabilities in Berlin's daycare facilities, which are considered a binding working basis for the consistent implementation of the legal

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<sup>2</sup> Download BBP brochure in German: [https://www.berlin.de/sen/jugend/familie-und-kinder/kindertagesbetreuung/berliner\\_bildungsprogramm\\_2014.pdf](https://www.berlin.de/sen/jugend/familie-und-kinder/kindertagesbetreuung/berliner_bildungsprogramm_2014.pdf)

<sup>3</sup>The parents' information on the BBP in German:

[https://www.berlin.de/sen/bildung/schule/bildungswege/fruehkindliche-bildung/01\\_bbp\\_elternheft-final.pdf](https://www.berlin.de/sen/bildung/schule/bildungswege/fruehkindliche-bildung/01_bbp_elternheft-final.pdf)

requirements of all Berlin districts.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> **Reference:** <https://www.berlin.de/sen/bjf/inklusion/>

**Download of the guidelines in German:** <http://www.berlin.de/sen/jugend/familie-und-kinder/kindertagesbetreuung/fachinfo/handreichung-aufnahme-beh-kinder-nov-2016.pdf>

**Download of the support plan for children with disabilities in Berlin Kitas (in German):**

<http://www.berlin.de/sen/jugend/familie-und-kinder/kindertagesbetreuung/fachinfo/handreichung-aufnahme-beh-kinder-nov-2016.pdf>

**More detailed information on German social policy in English:** Federal Ministry Family Report 2014

(<https://www.bmfsfj.de/blob/jump/93794/familienreport-2014-englisch-data.pdf>)

## Case about Jelani Meier – a boy in a German Kita

In this case study, the boy Jelani entered his Kita at the age of 2. Jelani developed since then in his preschool group an increasingly aggressive behavior, which resulted in individual care by integration teachers. All his Kita educators, a couple of welfare and care agencies as well as psychiatric institutions gave over 3 years their best to address Jelani's needs but finally failed. Jelani left the Kita at the age of 5 after staying two weeks in a psychiatric clinic for children in September 2016.

This case is written in early 2017 by a pedagogical regional manager of the described day care organization. The case study is based on case files and own interviews of the involved educators as well as the management of Jelani's Kita. The case author also participated in some consultations and conferences of the final year.

### The context – an introduction

Jelani's Kita is situated in the middle of a high-rise housing estate, an industrial area and a new housing estate. The estate's population has a very high renting proportion, many in government housing.

In-between the houses are several small playgrounds and lawns. Next to the Kita is a sports hall with an adjacent sports field. In the immediate neighborhood is an area of allotments adjoining a park, there are also natural reserves around the area. Over the coming years new housing development and modernization measures are planned, putting tension on the families currently living there, due to gentrification.

Housing estates and the Kita can be easily reached by metropolitan trains and several bus lines that stop nearby. One big, low-cost supermarket is the primary source of daily goods. A primary school is close, which will be visited by most of the Kita's children later on. There are 5 other Kitas within a 5 km distance. Most of the children of Jelani's Kita live in the high-rise housing estate. This environment is characterized by a high migrant population from differing cultures and nationalities. Many families are living on a low household income, some depending on government transfer funds. The described Kita runs specific support programs for children and

families with special needs. Some families have enrolled their children in this Kita for three generations.

With many families the Kita educators are in steady contact regarding our welfare system and point out the possibilities of accessing support systems such as the “*Regionale Sozial-Dienst*” (RSD), a social welfare service of the *Jugendamt*, which offers for example immediate family support, a psychological support hotline, consulting services, etc. The *Jugendamt* is a local government agency, translated further on as “*Youth Welfare Office*”, that supervises, plans, grants, controls and finances activities of internal and external service providers and care organizations, which are required to grant and ensure children with special needs or children who need special protection or care their lawful rights according to the German youth welfare and protection acts.

### **Jelani’s Kita**

The Kita was built in the mid-80s and hosts about 185 children in 12 groups. The Kita employs 25 qualified educators of which 9 are part-time employees as well as a management team consisting of 1 day-care manager and 1 deputy manager. A chef, an assistant chef and 2 service staff complement the kitchen team, which cares for daily fresh, home-cooked breakfast and lunches. All educators are state-certified pedagogues. Some of them have additional qualifications, e.g. preschool teacher, integration teacher and sports teacher. One is a certified child nurse and in this respect a specialist for the nursery. External teachers provide early musical education and a non-German language program on a weekly basis.

The Kita looks after children from 8 weeks onwards in 2 nursery groups for babies and toddlers until they turn 3. Then they get transferred into one of the 10 preschool groups in which they stay until their primary school entrance. This results in a diverse age mix in some preschool groups. This Kita gets regularly evaluated and has so far achieved top grades, i.e. certified excellent results in 2017.

The staff ratio for each group depends on the age of the children, the care time period and the group size. The average size of a preschool group is around 15 children aged 3-6. For each child with integration needs the child care ratio is proportionally increased (depending on either “A-Status” or “B-Status”).

The building of the Kita follows an almost circle shape.. Large hallways invite for playing there. Disadvantages of the building are limited door safety and small bath rooms. Each group resides in one specific room. All rooms have a large window front and are therefore bright and friendly. The entire house has nice wooden floors.. On the upper floor there are 2 large playground terraces.

The garden is equipped with climbing frames, sandboxes, a 6-fold swing, soccer field, table tennis table, barefoot path and a fountain. A lot of the lawn area and running area offers the children individual possibilities of exploration.

With the opening of the Kita at 6 a.m., the early morning service welcomes until 8 a.m. the children of all groups on the ground floor and is then continued until 8.30 a.m. in each child's floor area. At 8:30 a.m. breakfast starts in each group. After the subsequent brushing of the teeth, the children begin projects and activities of the *Berliner Bildungsprogramm (BBP)*, the Berlin Education Program. The group size varies according to the activity.

Language studies and observations are also taking place during this period. Lunch starts for the nursery on demand, for the preschool groups from 11.45 to 12.15. Afterwards sleep phases and offers for non-sleeping children take place. Around 2:30 p.m. there is a snack for the children. In the afternoon, at 4-4:30 p.m. the late service begins for all, which takes place in the garden or on the ground floor. This Kita closes Monday to Thursday at 6 p.m., on Friday at 5 p.m.

### **Integrative/inclusive approach**

Jelani's Kita takes integration seriously and interprets it as the involvement of children from all nationalities without prejudice in group activities. For the children, it is an enrichment to get to know and understand the differences and similarities of different cultures at an early stage. They should not live side by side, but live together. The largest groups of children in this Kita are children from Arabic and Turkish speaking backgrounds. They also have children from Russia, Poland, Thailand, Vietnam, Pakistan, Spain, several African countries and Serbia.

Mutual respect and tolerance of different cultures is important to this Kita. It has colleagues with Turkish, Polish, English and French language skills who help with language difficulties. When appropriate, the Kita takes up individual aspects of foreign cultures and develops

projects from them. Furthermore, pork or else is avoided in the meals, to be considerate to specific preferences. A large proportion of its children are growing up with multiple languages. When entering the Kita, some children get intensive contact with German for the first time. The Kita puts therefore particular importance to the promotion of the German language. It tries to reduce deficits of the children in the German language through targeted language promotion, studying picture books, reading and singing. Information to the parents is partly translated into community languages by skilled mothers of each ethnicity. The parents' booklet on the BBP and the *Sprachlerntagebuch*, a language learning logbook for children before school, are available in different languages and is therefore a small guideline for parents with reduced German language skills. The pedagogical policy of the Kita, the so called “Kita-Konzept”, is available in plain German language.<sup>5</sup>

### **Jelani's Case**

The boy Jelani was born in May 2011 in Germany and entered his Kita in September 2013. Jelani's father is originally from a foreign country and was working at the time of the admission as a security guard. Jelani's mother is German and works as a hair dresser.. Jelani's adaptation to his nursery group at the age of 2 was comparatively unproblematic. Jelani's nursery group consisted initially of age-homogeneous 2-year old toddlers. However, even then, there were Jelani's mood fluctuations soon recognizable. He was variously connected and unconnected to his peers and educators, focused and unfocused, aggressive and cooperative, depending on circumstances and his mood. Also his mood fluctuations regularly intensified when his father returned from his native country. From the beginning Jelani has played little with other children. He always had a great urge to move and was reluctant to participate in group activities. He was perceived to be a bright boy, who could benefit from extra support. In the nursery, his toe walk was already noticeable, as he did not run with the whole foot, but only on tiptoes.

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<sup>5</sup> **Download of pedagogical guidelines in German:** [https://www.berlin.de/sen/jugend/familie-und-kinder/kindertagesbetreuung/fachinfo/leitfaden\\_sprachlerntagebuch.pdf](https://www.berlin.de/sen/jugend/familie-und-kinder/kindertagesbetreuung/fachinfo/leitfaden_sprachlerntagebuch.pdf)



In summer 2014, Jelani left his nursery group and was lucky, as he moved up into preschool together with some familiar peers from his old nursery group as well as with both of his experienced and fully trained nursery educators.

Jelani did not cope well with the transition. He couldn't deal with the wider age-mix of his preschool group, especially some elder children in his new group. Playing situations with group members often ended as a competition, he desperately wanted to win. In his preschool group he became therefore much more conspicuous and aggressive. Later on, he then ceased to listen to any authorities, increasingly refused to participate in group activities like painting and crafts and showed also no interest in group games. Instead, he began to seek physical contact with selected children, which he touched persistently on the head.

Starting 2015 the educators sought more extensive contact with Jelani's parents, who began to file complaints. Jelani's mother, for example, complained that her child was not invited to birthdays, he would generally be excluded from the group, and no pictures of him would be exhibited in the group room. Conversely, the other children of his group felt more and more threatened by Jelani and therefore the Kita management got an increasing number of complaints from their parents.

When the educators of the group discussed Jelani's behavior with his parents, they focused on the benefit that Jelani might get through medical testing and extra support. German law requires parental consent for such. Whenever possible the educators praised his "positive" sides, such as his ideas and brightness and his language skills. After lengthy negotiations, his mother finally accepted medical testing, but only at a support center for sufferers of strongly marked hypertonicity of muscles. However, there was no significant finding. Jelani was still in the lower normal range regarding his fine- and gross motor skills and concentration, except under stress, when his muscle tone increased. Therefore occupational (ergo) therapy was organized.

Nevertheless, a so-called "A-status" could be applied by the Kita due to this test and his behavior, which resulted in a weekly 10-hour support position of an educator, specialized in integration (*Facherzieherin für Integration*). As the gap between his development and that of the other children of his group was becoming more and more divergent, he showed a

progressively aggressive behavior (pushing, kicking, scratching and biting). Due to Jelani's rapid bodily growth, other children of his group more often got actually harmed. At that time, he also began to kick and beat adults. He evaded conflict situations by running away.

By January 2016 things had worsened so far, that the Youth Welfare Office got informed and a so called “*child protection form*” was filed. His mother had also stopped to take him to the occupational therapist. The educators worried ever more that Jelani might not get the required support and that he might become progressively isolated in his group. The Kita staff meanwhile tried every possible method that didn't needed explicit parental consent.

In May 2016 the Kita applied for a change of Jelani's status from grade A to grade B to get 20 hours a week of an integration teacher for Jelani. This was granted because his aggressiveness increased enormously and he no longer conformed to any rules, i.e. Jelani tried occasionally to leave the Kita grounds. He once climbed over the garden fence and ran across a busy street, looking back and reassuring that he was seen. He also continually harassed another child of his group by touching and licking his hands. At meals Jelani did not sit any more, but wandered from table to table and sought quarrel with other children. He took food from them and pushed them off their chairs.

He could no longer stand the common brushing of teeth or washing with his group, instead, he raged in the hallways and endangered himself and other children. In pick-up situations, he became increasingly aggressive with his mother. The so called B-Status was granted after a conference with all key stakeholders. So Jelani got half-day intensive care in the Kita by an integration specialist combined with additional afternoon care in the family on 2 days a week. But even if the integration teacher in the Kita stood all the time next to Jelani, he could suddenly turn around and hurt another child. His behavior was completely unpredictably as he showed no warning indications or signals before he acted. Sometimes he hurt himself by pulling of his skin.

Kita staff felt also more and more disrespected by Jelani's parents in their relentless effort to support him. The educators also complained that his parents barely listened to any positive sides they pointed out.

In order to improve the situation for all parties, it was agreed upon a group change in early May 2016 to give Jelani a new chance with fresh educators and peers. The situation improved (after initial problems) in the new group for about 6 weeks, then rapidly worsened again. During the initial 6 weeks, he tended to feel more comfortable in a small group or on a one to one base. So, whenever possible, this was arranged.

Then in mid-July 2016 it was the time for the “*Kita trip*”, a multi-day excursion of Jelani’s group with several overnight stays without any parents. His both educators refused his participation for safety reasons. His parents did not agree with this and also did not want him to be cared for in another group of the Kita. In doing so, they accused the child's exclusion and discrimination, demanding their rights. Kita staff felt disrespected and reduced to sheer service providers and not seen as people interacting with Jelani and caring for his welfare. For this reason, the Kita management urgently pressed for a diagnostic examination of Jelani’s condition, as soon as possible.

Supported by the *Social Pediatric Center (SPZ)* and in cooperation with the *Youth Welfare Office*, the parents finally applied for admission to a psychiatric day care clinic for diagnostic evaluation in early September 2016.

On the second day, the management of the day clinic saw the safety of their psychiatric staff and the other children they supervise correspondingly endangered by Jelani. The child psychologists were particularly shocked and bewildered by the fact that the then 5-year old described them emotionlessly and in details that he had killed his bird the day before admission by simply crushing the animal with his hands. The day clinic rejected soon after this Jelani's further stay and cancelled the diagnostic process.

His parents wanted to bring him back to the Kita, but its management refused to provide further care without any profound scientific diagnosis. Only under such severe pressure the father finally agreed to his son's clinical in-house admission. The Kita management could arrange with a lot of effort soon after an immediate admittance to a highly regarded psychiatric clinic in the district. But after only one week, at the beginning of the second, its staff reached also their limits, filed a report to the Youth Welfare Office and released the child two days later without any specific diagnosis. A general affective disorder was diagnosed.

Therefore it was not possible for Jenali to access specific services i.e. for autism spectrum disorder. His parents refused, as far as the Kita was informed, any further testing.

A joint support conference of all involved stakeholders came together to discuss the further course of action. The mother showed understanding for the raised concerns, but the father scolded at all participants and denounced the failure of the “German system”. Without parental consent and cooperation, this conference ended. The father refused to bring his child back to the Kita, although Jelani had there a reserved place. Jelani's place wasn't revoked by the Kita, as no other conceivable solution was found so far, and both parents were fully employed.

Jelani, however, did not return to the day-care center. The father stayed at home with his child for a period of 4 weeks, then he terminated Jelani's Kita contract in writing. Since October 2016 there were no feedback or answers from the Youth Welfare Office on Jelani's whereabouts, nor any further contacts by Jelani's family, either with the Kita or any other Kita parents and their children.

## Questions

- ❖ What do you think are the key issues about social inclusion in this case?
- ❖ Can you identify situations where the educators in the Kita could have acted differently in order to solve the problems in a different way?
- ❖ Do you have suggestions to actions that might have been taken at certain moments – and which competences would the professionals need for these actions?
- ❖ How well has the Kita balanced in this case the right of inclusion and the right of physical inviolability?
- ❖ As the father complaint about the “failure of the German system” and missing respect for the handling of his indigenous culture (i.e. beating the child to change misconduct), would have been there any better ways for the Kita to communicate differently with the father and might have resulted that in any other outcomes?

## Municipality Case of Berlin - The Situation of Refugee Children and Political Responsibilities

### **Introduction:**

In 2015 – especially from August until the end of the year – many families, singles and unaccompanied children and teenagers came as refugees across the Balkan route to Germany. Between September and November 2015 several hundred new arrivals were counted only in Berlin every day. All of them had to be registered first in order to receive accommodation, food, clothing, a residence status and other state services. Registration was the first step in a long process of arriving and integrating into the new home.

The following description characterizes the situation of families and children as well as unaccompanied minors.

### **Description of the situation in 2015:**

The institutions, which were responsible for the initial reception of the families, were soon overwhelmed by the rapidly growing number of people seeking help. Neither was there sufficient spatial capacity, nor was the number of employees sufficient to assist those seeking protection on their arrival. This led to people gathering in front of the building where they could submit their application. They waited outside without protection in any weather. At first they were not even provided with tents, food and drinks, and were only given medical care in emergency situations. Tense and sometimes aggressive situations arose due to limited possibilities of communication caused by language barriers. The fact that all of them had to go through the procedure of initial recording before they finally reached a safe place after a long journey and a dangerous escape from their homelands also contributed to the tense atmosphere. When it became clear that the authorities couldn't react adequately to the situation, a large number of volunteers jumped in. Effectively, they organized necessities to make people's stay bearable. Especially for babies, young children and mothers, the surroundings of the initial reception area was not a good place. The kidnapping of a four-year-old from the site and his assassination is a particularly tragic event and gives an impression of the chaos and the excessive demands that all involved parties had to face. The difficult situation in Berlin attracted the attention of the press worldwide.

After the registration, the families were assigned a housing option - usually in a gymnasium or in another large hall like the empty former Tempelhof Airport – where they had to live together with many others. There was little privacy, the sanitary facilities were restricted and the families could not prepare food for themselves. Furthermore, possibilities of employment were limited and the many different cultural backgrounds of the families could not be considered at first. After some time, the mostly private operators of these shared accommodations for refugees decided to separate single men from families or created areas just for women and children. Minor children and teenagers were sent to special homes, where they had to wait for the hearing as part of the asylum procedure. They were looked after by social workers, but they were not enough to help all the young people. Many teenagers have therefore disappeared, continued their travels on their own or were hit by homelessness during this period– until now it is not known exactly how many of them have escaped state control. Weeks and months of waiting for a change of their living situation were also challenging for the adults. While the refugees were struggling with these difficult circumstances, resistance against them started to develop in some districts among the German population.

At the schools, so-called Willkommensklassen (welcome classes) for school-aged refugee children were set up quickly, where the German language was taught in small groups. This was a first important step towards integration. Younger children should enter a regular day nursery as soon as possible. However, they encountered a very tense situation, since the need for nursery places had been extremely high for years and the planning did not count on a significantly higher demand. Missing places and missing staff could not be made available in short- or even medium-term.

Voluntary initiatives, which developed rapidly over the months, provided great support. But they could not compensate the difficulties of the state to react flexible to the people's needs. This complies especially for state tasks like provision of schooling, child protection etc.

In the end of 2015 and during the whole year of 2016 many state-run projects for children and families started with the following goals:

- Integration/inclusion of families and children as early as possible:
  - Attendance of school or day care centres

- Familiarity with the German education and training system
- Quick acquisition of the German language in day care centres and Willkommensklassen
- Quick transition to the regular education institutions
- Avoidance of further ghettoization, which had already started due to the housing situation.
- Improvement of accommodation by moving people into more suitable apartments or residences.
- Protection of children in shared accommodations and initial reception centres.

### **Analysis of the problem:**

Neither the population nor the state authorities were prepared for the large number of people who came to Germany and especially Berlin to seek refuge. It was impossible to provide a quick solution to all the challenges of initial reception, provision of care and support, protection of children and adolescents as well as long-term integration of the immigrants. While the official narrative by the government – “We can do it” and “Our country needs immigration” – promoted a confident and optimistic attitude, increasing defensiveness developed among the population. Pictures in the media of people camping in front of the initial reception centres contributed to the growing fear of “foreign infiltration”. On the one hand, there was a great willingness for inclusion of refugees by volunteers and people in charge of the administration. On the other hand, inflexible structures, inadequate control, long decision-making processes, shortage of specialized staff and so on led to a seemingly uncontrolled situation that caused anxieties in parts of the population who then favoured exclusion rather than inclusion. A group with the telling name Pegida (Patriotische Europäer gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes, Patriotic Europeans against the Islamization of the West) started already in autumn 2014 to march against the immigration-friendly government policies. Also the right-wing populist party AfD (Alternative für Deutschland, Alternative for Germany) rapidly gained popularity which got them an unexpected number of seats in several provincial parliaments and finally almost 13% of the votes at the federal election in September 2017. Alongside these general trends, which increasingly developed towards exclusion, foreclosure, establishment of border controls and the demand for deportation, also numerous good concepts for projects that aimed at quick

integration and inclusion of refugees and immigrants were developed by the state of Berlin and at the federal level. However, it was a long way until their implementation: Financial means had to be approved unscheduled by the parliament and staff had to be found and hired. These processes took many months. The situations on the ground changed in some cases for the better and in others for the worse, e.g. because the refugees had to stay longer in the reception facilities, their asylum procedures were delayed, members of different cultures came into conflict, or mental problems developed due to stress or trauma.

By now - two years after the peak of the refugee crises - many measures and projects have been implemented in cooperation with independent institutions and organizations. But the main problem of integrating refugee children remains: State structures often prove to be too inflexible to provide solutions in specific circumstances quickly and with little bureaucracy. It is the public authorities (the federal government, the federal states and the local authorities) who have to control and organize the reception, integration and inclusion of newly arrived people in the German society. Private initiatives and volunteers can provide meaningful supplementary support, but they should not take over tasks that fall under the responsibility of the state. Until now, the state is too slow in implementing planned measures, so there is always the risk that the requirements have changed in the meantime and the measures and projects therefore turn out to be – at worst – absolutely ineffective.

Also supported by the media coverage, many citizens became convinced that the public authorities are incapable of acting, let alone protecting the German people. An increasing fear of uncontrolled immigration emerged and the image of 'us' against 'them (the strangers)' solidified. Xenophobia became an additional challenge and burden for everyone involved in the integration of refugee children in childcare institutions.

- Do you see parallel developments in your country?
- Which measures were / are successful in your country?
- What role does civic engagement play in limiting or preventing processes of exclusion?
- How can educational institutions react to the developments described in order to promote integration and inclusion in the medium and long term?



## Denmark

In Denmark parents are entitled to one year of maternity leave. A significant part of the maternity leave is targeted the mother but besides that parents can plan to organize the maternity leave. In Denmark women hold the vast majority of maternity leave men holds in average about 10 per cent of parent's maternity leave. Compared to other Nordic and Scandinavian countries there is a big difference. In Sweden for instance that number is about 30 per cent. In Denmark there is a debate whether or not to legislate on earmarked maternity leave for men.

Day-care institutions in Denmark is typically organized in Nursery (0-3 years) and Kindergarten (3-6 years). Daycare facilities can also be in private homes or age-integrated institutions.

All children under school age are entitled to enter a daycare facility. Guaranteed daycare availability implies that the local council must offer places in an age-appropriate daycare facility to all children older than 26 weeks and until they reach school age.

Daycare fees depend throughout Denmark on parental income but parents pay a maximum of 25 per cent of the budgeted gross operating expenditure for a daycare service for children from 26 weeks to age six.

In Denmark almost all children are in full time day-care from Monday to Friday every week and opening hours differs but would normally be from 6-7 am. until 17 pm. in the afternoon.

90.9 per cent of children between 1 and 2 years age are in a daycare institution. That number increases to 97.4 per cent of children between 3 and 5 years of age.

The Day Care Act stresses four key objectives on daycare:

- Promote children's well being, development and learning
- Provide families with flexibility and options
- Break the vicious circle of deprivation
- Create coherence and continuity between facilities

### **Purpose of daycare facilities.**

Children in daycare facilities must have a physical, mental and aesthetic child appropriate environment that promotes their welfare, health developments and learning.

Daycare facilities must cooperate with parents to provide care for the children and support the comprehensive development and self-esteem of the individual child and contribute to the proper and safe upbringing of children.

Daycare facilities must promote children's learning and developments of competences through experiences, play and educationally planned activities that give children room for contemplation, exploration and experience.

Daycare facilities must give children co-determination, co-responsibility and an understanding of democracy. As part of this objective, daycare facilities must contribute to developing children's independence, skills for entering into committing social relations and solidarity with and integration in the Danish society.

All daycare institutions are obliged to prepare a written pedagogical curriculum for children aged 0-2 years and children aged 3 to school age. The curriculum must describe children's learning within:

1. Personal development
2. Social competences
3. Language development
4. Body and motion
5. Knowledge of nature and natural phenomena
6. Cultural values and artistic expressions

All daycare facilities are obliged to develop and publish a pedagogical curriculum.

### **Afterschool Centres or SFO**

Afterschool centres for children attending school from 6- 10 (between 10-12 years in youth clubs) is in the school and now part of the school act.

## Case about relations and social inclusion in Stenurten day care institution

### Introduction to Stenurten

Stenurten is an integrated day care institution in Nørrebro – a densely populated area of Copenhagen. The institution facilitates 36 day nursery children at the ages of 1½ to 3 (due to long waiting lists; they could have been younger if waiting lists were not so long) together with 66 kindergarten children (3-6 years).

A kindergarten unit is attached to Stenurten, this is situated in rural surroundings and a 25 minutes' bus drive away. The three kindergarten groups go alternatively to the rural kindergarten a week at a time throughout the year.

In 2002 the house was built and made of wood, glass and bricks. It is an open plan institution. This means that in the day nursery group there is a group room for each child group, whereas the kindergarten rooms are divided into rooms according to the various functions, i.e. each room and corner has its specific function. The large outdoor spaces around the house are fully utilized so all children are allowed to play everywhere – also between the sections. There is a large common playground. A large open kitchen is situated between the two sections where lunch and afternoon foods are served daily.

Attached to each group there are two nursery teachers, two kindergarten teachers together with an assistant or student. Furthermore, we have different kinds of trainees attached to the groups. We have approximately 22 permanent staff members including kitchen and cleanings assistants. The house has a good administration, which means low sickness absence and adequate economic resources.

The institution has 25 % bilingual/trilingual children. Mostly western languages and only few Middle Eastern languages. The families are well functioning both socially and economically. But many families are uncertain in their parent role and have great many life style problems – for example birth traumas are not unusual.

The institution has pieced together their own educational pedagogy based on theoretical considerations and practical experiments. This is a pedagogical principle showing a direction in the educational work and organization of work. This is called “relations learning”.

## **Conception of Relations Learning**

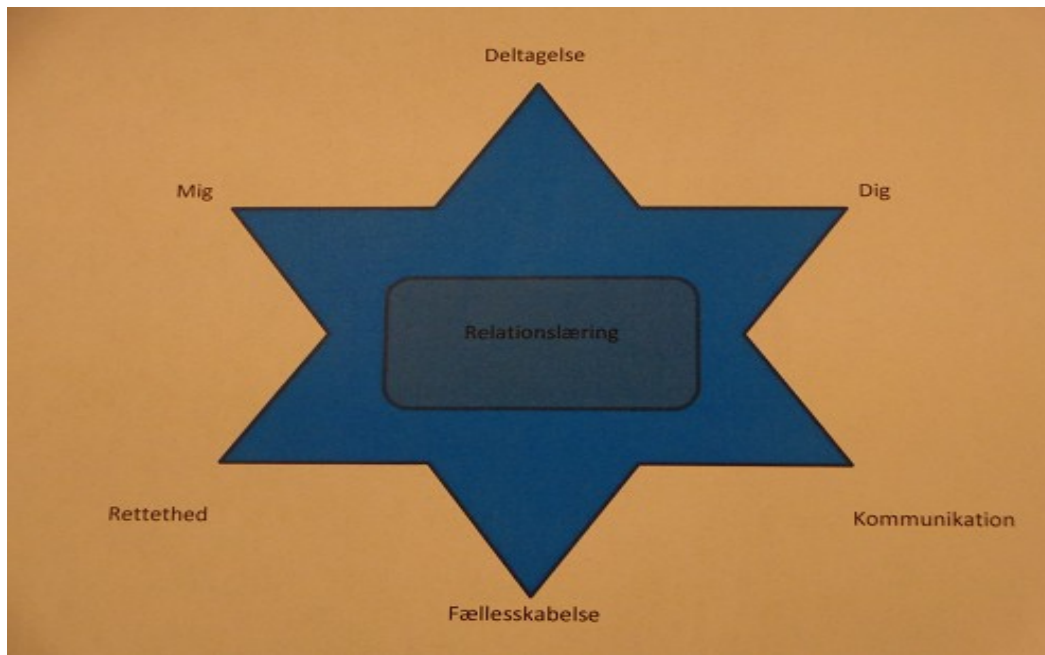
This concept we have composed of two already existing pedagogical concepts and as such there is nothing new in the thinking either in relations or learning but the fusion of the two creates a meaning for the pedagogical practice at Stenurten – and will serve as a guideline for children, parents and staff at Stenurten. A concept which also focuses on our approach to the pedagogical practice at Stenurten together with the underlying values

- Fellowship and people is something which is done all the time – something which creates fellowship
- The relations learning is, therefore, not the starting point in the individual, but in the fellowship among individuals

Relations learning sets the frame around the way in which the educational staff works and fulfills the professional and didactic considerations. If we are to catch the children in the moments of access, courage, hesitation towards the interaction, a pedagogical practice is necessary to be taken in this direction. A practice which is greatly influenced by grown up initiatives to relation learning, a practice which has the courage to be in relations with involvement, and a practice which continuously undertakes the responsibility for the children's lives in the social life of the daycare institution, a practice which means listening, reflecting and from that starting point leads forward, next to and behind the learning and developing of the child.

## **Theoretical presentation of the Relations Star**

A pedagogical concept can lead to many closely woven words. A deeper understanding of a complex concept can sometimes be given through splitting up the contents of the concept – we have, therefore, developed a model for the concept of the Relations Star, now presented.



The Star consists of two joined triangles: A relations triangle where two or more individuals meet around something and create something together including a learning triangle consisting of elements necessary for the fellowship – participation, guiding principles, and communication.

In the following we will try to establish the six poles of the star individually and in relation to each other.

### **What You and Me means to us:**

There is always at least a You and a Me present in pedagogical practice. Regardless whether it is adult/child, child/child, or adult/adult. The relations learning takes its starting point in what happens on the line between you and me. The notion behind this is the thought of the relational self, i.e. we understand the self as relational processes in two directions, one process pointing inwards into the self and one points outwards in the relation to the surrounding world. You could say that it is the relations to the others where you not only experience yourself but also in relation to others. The Me therefore needs the You to feel itself in order to take in the world and to combine the two processes.

### **What Fellowship means to us**

What the kindergarten teacher creates through activity, child rearing and teaching means, in other words, a teaching environment where the children through activity and interaction with each other and the adults support own and other children's learning and development.

“The teacher must be able to “perform” so the children will be engaged into learning”

(Lev Vygotsky)

In the fellowship we enter, we have the possibility of training social, linguistic and empathic competences. The communicative actions connect people and recreate and renew social relations.

### **What Participation means to us**

Engagement, involvement, passion and clarity around what the teacher intends with the children. In our work with the children we are conscious of the fact that the children mirror themselves in the grown ups. Consequently, it is important that we are caring, honest, clear, encouraging and reliable personalities.

Confidence in a safe and secure environment means that you are visible, show yourself and put yourself at stake in the relations. However, this requires the teacher to be able to withdraw from the relation and let the child develop and grow within itself.

### **What “Goal-directed” means to us**

Attention on goal-direction changes from the impulsive to the goal-directed which is a phase with a qualified attention when the child learns this goal-directed attention for ability to concentration together with the adults through their common activity. We might also call goal-directed attention for concentration, perseverance and the capacity for excluding disturbances. This learning does not happen by itself – concentration must be learnt and practised by focusing which demands a consciously close interaction among children and adults.

### **What communication means to us,**

Apart from being able to communicate the acquisition of language and linguistic understanding is to get a voice in the fellowship. The non-verbal, the body language is present all the time and it is the child's sharing of feelings with the surrounding world. Facial expression, eyes, mimics, and voices are all key elements in social interaction. The verbal language is used both socially and in inner speech and is internalized in the child to enable thinking and reflection making it possible for the child to reflect on what he/she has learnt.

In this way the Relation Star is used in the daily work with the children.

### **What You and Me means in practice.**

This means that the staff must be empathic, developing and at the same time very distinct. Distinctness and acknowledgement give security and possibility for learning. It is about being self-reflecting. As a teacher it is about understanding and accepting the fact that you do not always look at things in the same way: children, parents and colleagues. It is important to find out who you are yourself in order to understand other people, and to accept that we are not all alike, but still equally important! Therefore, we spend a lot of time in dialogue with the children – in the community but also individually. The children are made aware of their own thoughts, feelings, and understanding by applying words and actions through the help of an adult. The teacher uses empathic understanding of the child, an understanding achieved by being on the sideline, when children play and interact with the surrounding world to become an attentive interpreter together with the child.

This demands organization of daily routines in order to create necessary time and tranquility for the teachers being able to observe, together with a highly qualified educational work community to watch, listen, and analyze the children's obvious or subtle code of language.

### **What Fellowship means in practice**

We organize the pedagogical work. This means that each week, we prepare activities in a weekly plan

In the activities the relations among the children are observed whereupon the children are

selected for the various activities. Maybe a child needs to practise opening up towards other relations who are not quite as safe and secure as being with one's own best friends. In this way an opportunity is presented to show or practise some other competences than those already mastered by the child. Maybe a child is just the child who can teach another child something, and at the same time, he feels the joy of helping and in this way also learns something himself. The relations learning in the community weighs a lot when the children are moved from day-care to kindergarten. It is the children's actual relation and pedagogical ideas on the relations in the nearest future which form the basis for group formation in the kindergarten.

### **What participation means in practice**

To be present both physically and mentally. Therefore, it sometimes may look as if the staff sit still or walk around apparently without aim. But they participate in the lives of the children through their availability and use senses and themselves, they listen and watch and maybe they become actively involved on the spot. Either by being invited or inviting themselves.

The teacher must have a fundamental urge to enter interaction with the children using their own personality and also having an eye on the long-run perspectives in the interaction. The character of the relation between child and teacher may have decisive effect on the child's well-being, growth and development.

It is necessary that we organize the teachers' possibilities for professional sparring partners and that we constantly upgrade our professional knowledge. Instead of many personnel meetings after closing hours, we hold dialogue meetings in smaller groups during the day and departmental meetings late in the afternoon. Meetings and dialogues in the house are carefully planned on set times, so there will not be meetings all day long.

### **What Goal-direction means in practice**

To include the children with the adults in the practical activities and educational sequences of a shorter or longer period of time. Activities which are concrete, emotional and have obvious endings and goals.



Apart from the adult initiated activities and the practical everyday routine, it is important that room is given to the children's adaptation of the cognitive, emotional and social processes going on inside the children. These adaptations take place in the play as an integrating mechanism where children give way to feelings, relations, ideas, skills, competences and the knowledge which they have taken as input.

It is important pedagogical work to be observant to children's games, which is where children's approach to learning and social processes may be seen – and not least, it is here the teacher may plan initiating coming activities to see and analyze the tracks followed by the children. It is vital to watch which social and cultural processes the children follow and in some cases it becomes the task of the teacher to intervene the children's interaction and conflicts. Either by giving more space to some children in the fellowship or some children may be given room to give other children space.

We at Stenurten are engaged in giving space, time and tranquility to the children so this room may be given to learning and goal-direction and to abstract from potential disruptions.

### **What Communication means in practice**

We take time in attentive presence with the children, we listen to their stories and tales and we help them to listen to each other, by teaching the children to speak one at the time. In the kindergarten the children are taught 'a show of hand' from the beginning of sessions. We help the children to both agree and to disagree. Seclusion in child groups is a returning conflict where the teacher through the children's own stories actively can contribute to solving the conflict by the children themselves e.g. through roleplay, drawings or talks. But also by showing the children which course of action there might be. The children may then decide themselves which possibility fits the situation. Children should be acknowledged to express their feeling of sadness and at the same time they should be shown a way to express their feelings appropriately in the fellowship. Also to be shown a possible course of action to solve their conflict thereby increasing their ability to handle relations between You Me and the surrounding world.

We have chosen a description of two observation cases. One directly observed, and one observed and reflected upon. The same theme for both cases: the teacher's role as a facilitator

of an inclusive child environment. There is a dilemma in both cases. The kindergarten teacher's considerations as to when and how much she should intervene in the children's play patterns?

### Case 1

**Observation:** It is in the middle of the day in the rural kindergarten. Sophie is on the swing alone.

**Background knowledge:** Through a long period of time, Sophie has been swinging alone. We see Sophie shut in herself with difficulties contacting other children. We estimate that she needs help in creating friendly relations.

**Plan of action:** The two kindergarten teachers agree on special focus on Sophie and plan to both organize and take spontaneous steps to get Sophie into some existing games and relations.

**Continued observation:** Sophie leaves the swing and moves into the periphery of a game between two girls from the group. The girls do not notice Sophie and Sophie takes no further initiative to enter the game.

**Action:** One teacher sits on a bench between Sophie and the playing girls. She says nothing, she does nothing. After a short while the girls notice the teacher and they invite her to join their game. The teacher joins the game and invites Sophie into the game. They all play together for a while. The teacher withdraws and the three girls continue their game.

**Reflection:** It is agreed to use the same method in order to help Sophie into playing relations and after a month make an evaluation to see whether the initiative has helped Sophie or other methods should be activated.

### Case 2

Three boys in a good game without any grown-ups. The boys identify themselves with their different roles. They are pirates on a ship. Kasper is captain, Jonas controls the canons and Bo has the observation post. Kasper quickly declared himself as the leader of the ship which was ok with the other two. They chose different roles and the game was going well...

Kasper: Can you see anything out there Bo?

Bo: Yes, just ahead there is a shark!

Kasper: I'll sail over there so we can shoot him!

Jonas: I'll manage that as soon as we get over there!

When they reach the shark Jonas makes noises to illustrate his shooting and killing the shark.

Bo: That was a good job - you killed it with the canons

Kasper: Yes, that was good work! Now we must sail on

And the game continues. The game goes well. The boys take turns in bringing up different ideas – ideas which are received positively by the others.

A teacher comes up to the boys after they have been playing together for quite a while. He squats down asking if he may join them. All three boys agree with great enthusiasm. Jonas grabs an extra action man next to the ship, gives it to the teacher saying: You can be him! The teacher sits next to them participating in the game.

Kasper explains what they are doing: We sail around keeping an eye on everything!

Bo: Yes and you have to be somebody on the ship – you must do something!

Teacher: Ok – then I could be a soldier and if anything happens, I could help!

The three boys find this is a good idea and the game continues in this way and new ideas arrive and are acted upon.

## Questions

- ❖ Can you find examples of how the professionals are working with social inclusion in this case?
- ❖ The institution/ the educators uses “The relation star” as a theoretical perspective on practice. Discuss why this theoretical perspective as a guideline could be a good idea?
- ❖ How are the different elements in “The relation star” present in the two small cases presented?

## Case about language and social inclusion from Sølund Kindergarten in Copenhagen.

### **Introduction to Sølund kindergarten**

Sølund is a 0-6 year-old children's institution partly with a rural kindergarten attached to the institution. The institution houses 36 day nursery children and 50 kindergarten children, all their parents together with 17 staff members both men and women.

### **Location**

Sølund is situated close to the Lakes of Copenhagen and is built together with the old people's home, the Sølund Centre. We have great use of the Centre's garden which we use for walks with the youngest children. We have a co-operation with the Centre's rhythmic -and music activities between the children and the old people; we are sometimes invited to events with the old people. Our Christmas party is always held in the main hall of the Centre.

Our institution lies centrally in relation to several of the city parks and public playgrounds which we often visit, e.g. Ørstedsparken, Østre Anlæg, Fælledparken, De Gamles By and the indoor playground Remisen at Trianglen on Østerbro. We visit the public library Blågården, where we borrow books and participate in theatre -and filmshows.

Our kindergarten children are divided into 2 groups which every 2 weeks are taken to our rural kindergarten at Vildroseholm in Jægerspris. Apart from the lovely outdoor facilities within the grounds we visit the wood and fjord nearby. We leave Ryesgade at 8.30 a.m. and are back home again at 4 p.m.

### **Pedagogy**

The pedagogical education plans at Sølund consist of overriding goals for each educational theme in a 0-6- year-old perspective together with goals, means, and methods. For each of the six themes of competence areas which are contained in Dagtilbudsloven, goals are drawn where it is expected that children at the transition from daycare to kindergarten, and kindergarten to school are acquainted with daily routines and activities.

The teaching plan is built up in a way so that the 6-year-olds develop on the goals of the 3-year-old children. In everyday routine the educational staff use these goals as guidelines for

accommodating the activities and initiatives supporting the individual child and the development and learning of the child groups which relate reflectively to the fulfilment of these goals.

The individual child's learning takes a starting point in the child's nearest development zone, where the child must 'stand on tiptoe' to master a new proficiency. On the background of a close knowledge of the individual child's development seen in a full perspective it is the pedagogical task to include the parents and the child's zone for further development and here to challenge and support the child so he/she develops and learns.

Learning is an individual process where practice and experience form the basis for acknowledgement. Learning happens basically in a social context with grown-ups and other children. Therefore, it is important that children experience to participate constructively in different relationships from which they can grow. In the play inter-action with children and grown-ups, the child learns about himself and the surrounding world he has created himself.

At Sølund we focus on learning in a process of formation. This means that we are engrossed in creating personal and social competences of the children so they develop into competent and resilient children- and later grown-ups with a core of self-worth in order for them to get on in life and be true to themselves in relationships with others. To be able to be yourself together with others.

At Sølund we meet the children equally and respectfully together with an acknowledging approach. For us this acknowledging approach means that the child is recognized, seen and understood with respect for its own experience of the situation. We meet the child by looking underneath its behavior and try to understand the child's intention.

### **How we understand inclusion in Sølund**

In Sølund we have a dialectic basic understanding of inclusion.

From our point of view it means, that we understand and work with inclusion in a manner, where the child's behavior is understood to be caused by an interaction between the child's innate inner prerequisites and the social contexts and interactions it is part of.

The child has some individual biological requirements, but the environment is essential for how the child's resources and challenges emerge. We see the relationship between children and adults and between the children as the focus point of development, which is why we work largely with the child's challenges in the community.

We focus on setting the right conditions for everyone's participation and development of the community in the most possible learning situations and as long as possible.

It is the responsibility and the most important task of the educational pedagogue to create a learning environment for ALL children who are characterized by loving and trusting relationships where there is room for human integrity and diversity in the community.

In Sølund, this applies to ALL (everybody) participants, both children, parents and employees.

### **Understanding of being in an exposed position:**

Our understanding of exposure is when someone is in a vulnerable position.

Being in an exposed position has great influence to the well-being, health, development and self-understanding of the individual and the position can change in interaction with other people in social communities. How it will succeed, depends on the quality of these communities.

In Sølund we have a wide understanding of the term being in an exposed position.

In our optics, the feeling of exposure is dependent on the individual's subjective experience.

A child may be in an exposed position because of:

- Living circumstances and conditions - Cultural, religious, linguistic, social
- Family crises - divorce, death, mental illness
- Physical and mental challenges - Disability, diagnosis, sensitivity
- Developmental challenges - linguistic, bodily, social, emotional
- Changes in the home or institution - Moving, changes in children groups and positions, staff changes, cooperation- and communication difficulties

### **In our daily practice we are deliberately working with inclusion in several ways:**

We welcome new children and families based on their unique family. We are part of a close

collaboration with the parents about their child and its experiences, terms, resources and vulnerabilities.

- In the pedagogical everyday life, we base our children's resources, profits, difficulties, challenges and conditions when we organize activities and plans for the child in the community.
- We create a development- and learning environments - physical and mental - that ALL children can benefit from.
- We organize routines, activities and shifts in the day to make available and clear learning spaces based on the individual child qualifications and current situation.
- We review the behavior of the child and to understand it as appropriate responses to an inappropriate situation, and help the child into the community through understanding and guidance for a more appropriate behavior.
- We are responsible for creating an atmosphere - a mental environment - in which ALL children can "breathe freely", feel valued and valuable in the community for who they are - in relation to the adults and the other children.
- We are aware of that ALL children experience belonging to and feel as part of one or more communities.
- We are aware of that there are many approaches and ways to be part of a community. We create space for different communities and different opportunities for participation in these communities.
- We are aware of that the children are co-creators of the communities. Children's communities - the relationships and contexts - are therefore both used actively to support the individual child in its development.
- One thing to be aware of is, that we as adults define some communities as more valuable than others, and that we therefore continuously discuss why the communities are valuable.
- We have an important attention to, how we collegially talk about the child in a way that gives the child opportunities for participation and strengthens its self-telling.

- We have attention to that in cooperation with parents, we are responsible for creating a culture where we talk with the parents about their own child, the children of others or other parents in a approach that strengthen the self-telling of the families and the communities of all children and parents in the institution.

### **Case by Mads Seitzberg from Sølund day care institution**

My name is Mads Seitzberg. I qualified as a kindergarten teacher in 1997. For the past 18 years I have worked in the integrated day care institution Sølund, which is situated in Ryesgade, Copenhagen N.

There are 36 children (ages 0 to 3 – day nursery) and 50 children (ages 3 to 6 – kindergarten). We have a rural kindergarten attached to our institution which means that the 50 kindergarten children are divided into two groups of 25 each. These children groups are permanent which means that the children do not move from one group to the other. However, a few exceptions do occur.

These exceptions are based on the needs of the individual child and pedagogical considerations. When one group is at home, the other is away in our rural kindergarten. The groups alternate every two weeks. The groups travel together by bus to the rural kindergarten.

At Sølund our work is based on some basic and fundamental principles. One of the principles is a common community spirit and fellow-feeling.

In order to understand this principle it is important that you as an educationalist/human being are aware of the view of human nature you possess. Furthermore, you are very much conscious of your actions in the meeting with the child and the parents.

We meet on an equal footing. We do not meet on the same status, because we do not have the same status. I come with a pedagogical knowledge, experience, etc. For the child and his parents this may be the first time they meet an institution. In this meeting our actions as human beings should show that our worth and merits are of the same nature.

We meet in the complementary relation where both parties contribute, are heard, are seen, are acknowledged, are appreciated thereby achieving a feeling of solidarity with each other. We create a fellow-feeling.



### **Example 1: The first meeting**

A four-year-old boy arrives in Denmark with his family from another European country because the father has obtained a job in Denmark. The boy and his family only speak their mother tongue, but the parents also speak English

Already before the first meeting we have made a strategy as to how we can meet the boy and his family. A strategy based on our view on human nature so the boy quickly will have achieved a feeling of fellowship.

Here it is important that he achieves this fellow-feeling with the kindergarten teacher who receives him in the institution. We the teachers have assigned the primary adult to receive and welcome him, and should this person be prevented a secondary adult is also selected.

In this starting phase it is important that based on the child's situation the child is presented to the other children – as they in time will be his primary environment.

We gathered all 25 children in a circle. From an aesthetic idea we had chosen a place in the rural kindergarten where we knew everybody would sit comfortably. This would be a place which the other children knew well and where they felt safe and, above all, a place where we would not be disturbed by others.

The primary teacher introduced the group to the boy and his mother. The children were told that he did not speak Danish. So in order to communicate with him we had to show him, using signs etc. and most importantly the children now knew how they could communicate with him.

The children were now participants showing how we could include the boy in our community. Furthermore, we talked about the country from where the boy came, what food they ate, which game they played etc. The teacher asked the questions and the children provided the answers. We had now reached the first goal; to focus on him, his family and us.

With words and actions the family was met with our expectations to them but also the expectations they might have from us. It is important to agree on expectations as these form a breeding ground for good co-operation. We explained in so many words who we are, how we work and which educational principles we have. If the boy, in any way, is to be included in

various fellow groups, it is of vital importance that we already in the upstart create a constructive co-operation with the parents.

- We as an institution act
- You as parents act
- We interact

It is through dialogue with the parents that we, with our pedagogical background, plan, act, communicate and evaluate. While the parents possess great knowledge of their child, we must therefore link together the two factors so we can act accordingly for the benefit of the child.

But the greatest actors are the other children. We continually try to follow the tracks of the children, what they do, who they play with, what they like, what they do not like, and what they do not do etc.

The objective of all this is to give the individual a safe everyday life but also to map which children may have some challenges and which have reserves of energy and which are able to take in other children. From this knowledge we have expectations that the other children are co-actors in the boy's inclusion.

### **Example 2:**

We as grown-ups put the boy in small groups.

At the beginning of the boy's time in the institution we put the boy together with another boy of the same age. They had both sought out each other and on the basis of this, made sure they sat together in the bus going to the rural kindergarten. They sat next to each other at meals. The food was not the primary issue. The primary issue was the fact that the boy was included, he participated, was asked, heard and sat next to his new friend. The boy now had the feeling of having a friend. Another fellow-feeling.

We the grown-ups had spotted the signs and tracks and created the frames, but it was his new friend who had created the difficult part of inclusion helping the boy to feel part of a group.

### **Example 3:**

When we went on excursions we centered the trips around the boy and his friend. More children went along and they were later able to include and welcome him.

#### **Example 4:**

When we went to the playground we allowed the boy and his friend to stay inside so we did not interrupt their game.

Today, the boy feels part of many fellowships in the institution.

#### **Summing up: the kindergarten teacher's role and dilemmas:**

You need to make time limited activities with children. However, you must also be flexible adjusting the time. Often it is more important to wait 10 minutes with an activity and in this way help motivate the child towards the activity.

Inclusion is not something which takes place on Tuesday between 10 and 12.

Inclusion must take place all the time in all areas of the institution. It is the grown-ups who make the inclusion while being aware of the fact that the children are the most important actors in the inclusion.

Through continuous dialogue with the parents, we inform, exchange views, create experiences and include the parents in the plans of action. A positive and constructive parent-teacher co-operation will benefit the child very much.

As a kindergarten teacher you must collaborate with your colleagues:

You plan, set goals, semi-goals and make a strategy

You perform, you act

You evaluate

When you have evaluated you start again with no. 1 new goals etc., new actions and new evaluations. All the time you adjust practice and actions. The process continues. A circular process.

If this is going to be a success it is important that the individual teacher reflects on his own practice, and also reflects with his colleagues. That he is able to adjust his methods in relation

to the child, to encourage and motivate the child and adjust in terms of time. That he is a participant in a culture where openness and feedback among parents and colleagues come natural and is professionally based and always with the child as a starting point. Challenges and dilemmas may occur. Parents who will not co-operate, or disagreement among colleagues etc. These challenges should not stop us from inclusion all 24 hours.

## Questions

- ❖ What do they mean by saying they have a dialectic understanding of inclusion at Sølund Day care?
- ❖ “Inclusion is not something that takes place on Tuesday from 10-12”. What does he mean by saying that?
- ❖ In the case there seems to be significant focus on fellowship and a fellowship-feeling. Give examples from the case where fellowship and fellowship-feeling is part of an explicit pedagogical strategy or objective.

## Municipality Case of Copenhagen, Nørrebro / Bispebjerg area

The Child and Youth Administration in Nørrebro / Bispebjerg is one of five administrative areas in Copenhagen Municipality. It consists of 130 employees with different professional backgrounds and roles. These professions include psychologists, speech and hearing therapists, healthcare professionals, educational consultants, school consultants, inclusion coordinators, support educators, finance educators, integration advisors and language advisors.

The area includes approximately 100 institutions, 10 mainstream schools and four special schools and supports children and youth between the ages of 0 and 18.

### **The area's main functions are:**

#### **Management of school and institution leaders**

The area frames and implements a systematic and professional dialogue within management and across the organisation based on data and knowledge so that the administration can jointly develop the quality of its services.

#### **Interdisciplinary support for children, parents, schools and institutions**

The area ensures a clear and co-ordinated entry point to the interdisciplinary support function that meets the local needs of schools and institutions.

#### **Healthcare**

Health care professionals have contact to almost all new young families and are therefore most family's first contact with the municipality. Their role mainly consists of baby health and development reviews and early intervention and preventative measures. Healthcare professionals also work closely with resource centres and resource teams on concrete initiatives for children at institutions and schools.

#### **Pedagogical Psychological Counselling**

Pedagogical and psychological counselling is conducted by psychologists and speech and hearing therapists. This initiative has been largely organised in conjunction with the schools' resource centres and the clusters' resource network. The psychologists also play a central role in examining children with special needs.

## **Early years education (0-5 years)**

All municipalities have to guarantee an early years education place to children from six months of age within the municipal boundaries. Copenhagen Municipality offers early years education places within four kilometres of the child's home. For children between 0-3, we offer a place either with a private childcare provider or in an early years education institution, and, for children between 3-6, we offer a place in a kindergarten. All children begin school in the year they turn six.

## **Political criteria for pedagogical quality in early years education**

In 2012, the Child and Youth Committee established six criteria for the pedagogical quality of the early years education institutions in Copenhagen Municipality. These pedagogical criteria should encourage each individual institution to decide how to formulate and practice its pedagogy locally. They describe a common direction for the various pedagogies, methods and strategies that exist and are being developed within the institutions.

### **The criteria are:**

- Social relationships – *positive adult contact every day*
- Inclusion and community – *child and youth communities for all*
- Language initiatives – *opportunities through language*
- Collaboration with parents – *parent partnerships*
- Coherence – *also in transitions*
- Requirements for reflection and systematic methodological approaches in pedagogical initiatives

## **Case study: interdisciplinary collaboration meetings and Børneforums (Child Forums)**

In this case study, we present Nørrebro / Bispebjerg area's work with interdisciplinary collaboration meetings and Børneforums (Child Forums). These meetings are highlighted in relation to work with inclusion, since, in the 0-5 years education field, there is a focus on early, preventative initiatives for the individual child. The interdisciplinary meetings and Børneforums (Child Forums) require an initiative characterised by close collaboration between the professionals in a child's life and the child's parents. This encompasses the child's primary

pedagogues, the management in the child's early years education institution, various other professionals and the involvement of the child's parents.

Nørrebro / Bispebjerg area has been working with interdisciplinary collaboration meetings since 2015 and conducts a Børneforum (Child Forums) based on these meetings when required. The meetings were established in order to strengthen and promote early and preventative initiatives in the 0-5 years education field. The interdisciplinary collaboration meetings are designed to create the framework for increased knowledge sharing and co-ordination between the Child and Youth Administration (BUF) and the Social Services Administration (SOF). It emerged as a result of a political decision in 2015 and, throughout 2016, it served as a pilot project in the Nørrebro / Bispebjerg area. Owing to good results, it has now been implemented as a part of the services and support offered in the area.

The interdisciplinary collaboration meetings facilitate interdisciplinary discussion in early years education institutions about those children whose wellbeing and development is a cause for concern. The meetings are held in the given institution every four, six or eight weeks. The frequency depends on the number of children and the socio-economic conditions, with the most challenged institutions having an increased frequency of meetings.

The interdisciplinary collaboration meetings also aim to create a framework to quickly involve parents in the process. Prior to a meeting, the educational leader must obtain written consent from the child's parents for the meeting to take place. The parents do not take part in the meeting, but they do take part in any subsequent Børneforum (Child Forums).

The interdisciplinary collaboration meeting is attended by the educational leader, the child's primary social educator, a psychologist, a social worker, a healthcare professional, a speech and hearing therapist and a support educator, in so far as they are all connected to the institution in question. The meetings are chaired by the educational leader using a solution-focused approach. It is also the educational leader who provides the parents with feedback on what was discussed at the meeting.

The solution-focused approach at the meeting contributes to a clear framework for how the challenges surrounding the child should be handled. The meeting is divided into four phases:

1. In the first phase, the challenges surrounding the child are described. This can, for example, take the form of a five-minute interview with the child's primary social educator.
2. In the second phase, the various professionals give their own take on how the pedagogical practice surrounding the child can be tackled.
3. In the third phase, the professionals discuss their experiences with the challenge at hand or similar challenges from other contexts.
4. In the final phase, the professionals discuss which courses of action "are called for", what should be supported, initiated or continued. As well as this, they discuss which concrete agreements should be made and whether a Børneforum should be convened.

The Børneforum (Child Forums) is attended by the leader of the institution, a social worker, other relevant professionals as well as the child's parents. The meeting itself is chaired by the social worker with a point of departure in SOS, Signs of Safety.

### **Three perspectives on the interdisciplinary collaboration meetings**

In this section, we will present three different perspectives on what and in what way something works for an interdisciplinary collaboration meeting, seen from the level of the administration. These perspectives are based on interviews with interdisciplinary director Lone Mortensen, psychologist Morten Elsborg Jensen and support educator Mette Cecille Smedegaard.

#### **Head of the interdisciplinary support of Nørrebro/Bispebjerg Lone Mortensen**

According to Head of the interdisciplinary support Lone Mortensen, the interdisciplinary collaboration meetings have been integral in enhancing administrative collaboration between BUF and SOF in order to promote an initiative concerning the individual child close to the pedagogical practice surrounding the child.



Lone Mortensen points out that, after the “pilot project” period, the interdisciplinary collaboration meetings were evaluated and that this evaluation showed that the meetings were very successful. In this evaluation, three points in particular became clear:

- Early intervention for concrete challenges surrounding a child
- Possible courses of action to improve the handling of these challenges
- Upgrading of practices based on discussion at the meeting

It was highlighted that the support at the meetings was very concrete and supported by possible courses of action regarding a child, so that the initiative was able to quickly promote the child’s development and wellbeing. The meetings help to establish which initiative is best suited to the child and which courses of action the various professionals should support.

At the same meeting, the knowledge and experiences of different professional fields are represented and accessible for everybody. This knowledge sharing constitutes a joint reflection that provides the basis for new courses of action when working with the child.

There may be different challenges to running a successful meeting and these challenges can vary widely; for example, it can be difficult for some institutions to obtain the written consent of the parents if (among other reasons) there has been no previous discussion of the child’s challenges or if the parents are sceptical or uncertain about different professionals discussing their child.

### **Psychologist Morten Elsborg Jensen**

According to psychologist Morten Elsborg Jensen, the strength of the interdisciplinary collaboration meetings is that the different professional perspectives supplement each other. These perspectives help us to view the challenges surrounding the child from different angles in order to adjust the subsequent pedagogical practice.

Based on the primary social educator’s description, it often becomes clear “what can be at stake”, and thus the various professionals can each contribute their own knowledge. Based on this discussion, the social educators are quickly able to respond to the challenges surrounding the child. Morten Elsborg Jensen emphasises the importance of all the professionals making

themselves heard at the meeting, so that they can claim ownership of both the description of and the response to the challenges surrounding the child, which concern all the participants.

In Morten Elsborg Jensen's opinion, the interdisciplinary collaboration meetings and børneforums can help to promote inclusion and, in this context, five aspects are particularly important:

- The frequency of the meetings facilitates timely intervention
- There is a focus on adjusting the environment around the child
- Testing possibilities, to which various professionals contribute
- Opening different views of the child

It is also, according to Morten Elsborg Jensen, the way the meeting itself is conceived that is decisive for its success. An essential component is that the various professionals are able to view a challenge and are not "a part of the challenge". It is also essential that they can examine "the system" surrounding the child and use this to adjust the pedagogical practice.

Morten Elsborg Jensen explains that one of the challenges of the meetings themselves can be insecurity working within a relatively structured framework; for example, chairing a meeting according to a solution-focus approach. Another challenge may be professional insecurity associated with daring to speak out about challenges surrounding a child in the presence of so many different professionals. For this reason, Morten Elsborg Jensen believes it is particularly important that the "space" at the meetings fosters safety and with this an openness to share concerns and knowledge with one another.

### **Support educator Mette Cecilie Smedegaard**

According to Mette Cecilie Smedegaard, what works at the interdisciplinary collaboration meetings is that everybody speaks from within his/her own field and professional position. The meetings create a space where the quality is reflected in the meeting's systematic approach and reflection, which comes close to the practice itself.

In Mette Cecilie Smedegaard's opinion, the meeting's form and fixed role structure mean they can always benefit the practice field and that people in the practice field experience that

*something is being done about* and that *something can be done about* the specific challenges discussed.

Support educators were not initially part of the interdisciplinary collaboration meetings, but they are now included in the practice. In Mette Cecilie Smedegaard's opinion, it is vital that they take part, because it makes sense in relation to their co-operation in institutions, where they often contribute to translating the professional perspectives and advice that for example the psychologist or speech therapist identify for the individual child. This strengthens the combined effort, according to Mette Cecilie Smedegaard, because it leads to increased co-ordination through (among other things) the recognition of one another as different professional groups. A knock-on effect of this is that there are more agreements in relation to how professional groups can collaborate to create a joint initiative for a child.

Mette Cecilie Smedegaard stresses that this also allows the support educators to offer their expertise at the interdisciplinary collaboration meetings. Support educators can, for example, offer to observe the practice surrounding a child or to interact in a given situation so that they can provide concrete sparring in practice and thereby guide the social educators into new courses of action. This approach helps to nuance and bring new elements into the child's story, because such professional sparring has the power to break patterns and nuance the situation. Mette Cecilie Smedegaard sees this as one of her tasks to "take with her" into practice, so that new opportunities are created in the child's story. In this way, Mette Cecilie Smedegaard believes it is important to support the professional social educators who surround the child and to challenge their practice surrounding the child, among other things, through curiosity. Mette Cecilie Smedegaard also addresses the frustration felt by social educators, both by articulating and challenging this frustration. She believes that, in her position, she is able to maintain some of the agreements and adjustments of practice that arise from the interdisciplinary collaboration meetings. Mette remarks that these meetings allow for earlier interventions than previously, when it was often a longer process to apply for help to support a child.

### **An example described by support educator Mette Cecilie Smedegaard**

Participants: five-year-old ethnic Danish boy, who attends a kindergarten and has done so since he left his 0-3 day care institution (*vuggestue*). Danish parents and Danish speaking. Parents

divorced nine months previously. Lives one week at his father's and one week at his mother's. Has a four-year-old sister who is in the same kindergarten class.

The case is based on the fact that the boy scored below 5 on his language test and, because of this, it was decided that there should be a special initiative and that an action plan should be drawn up in collaboration with the social educators in the kindergarten and a speech and hearing therapist.

The social educators in the kindergarten were surprised that he scored so low, because they evaluated his Danish as being well developed and they knew that no other language was spoken in the boy's home. Their concern is how the kindergarten should work with his language and how they should manage his transition to school, which he is due to begin in six months.

At the interdisciplinary interview, the social educator presents the case and then the psychologist assumes the role of interviewer. We each take turns to give our own professional input regarding the reflections and possible initiatives that we can offer. The healthcare professional explains that she didn't notice anything unusual during the home visits she made when the boy was a baby. The parents were viewed as socio-economically advantaged and the divorce was amicable. The speech and hearing therapist explains a little about the language tests and elaborates on the results, which show that the boy has a profoundly deficient verbal language – both receptively and expressively. The social educator cannot recognise this description of the boy and questions whether or not this really is language difficulty. The speech therapist suggests that she visits the kindergarten to test the boy's language further.

The psychologist enquires about the boy's cognitive ability and whether there is cause for concern regarding his general development, which the social educator has also begun to question. The social educator explains that she has experienced a marked difference between the mother and father when it comes to dropping off and collecting the child, which she believes is highly confusing for the child. He is equally confused about who will collect him and his little sister in general, and he asks about this several times a day.

This causes me to enquire about the boy's general wellbeing, his friends, his participation in communities, and whether he calls on adults when he experiences difficulties. The social

educator talks about the boy and, in the course of the dialogue, realises that he has always been strikingly dismissive of tasks or instructions that he did not himself help to decide or whose content he cannot decipher. “He goes his own way”, she says. We discuss his role in relation to his little sister, who is always enormously helpful (perhaps over helpful) and conscious of her own means in her interactions with adults – and that the two siblings are very different. The more we discuss it, the more the social educator (and the other professionals) understand, become curious about and care about the boy, who suddenly has another narrative – a narrative whereby he seems uncertain and holds himself back when this uncertainty arises. We discuss whether the situation in which he took his language test could have been profoundly intimidating for him and whether, as a result, he avoided collaborating; we also discuss whether he could have been so overwhelmed by the situation and requirements that he withdrew from the situation and therefore received a low mark.

I offer to visit the kindergarten and conduct observations. After this, we hold a meeting to discuss what the social educators themselves have noticed over the next couple of weeks; if they see him differently than somebody who is “simply contrary and goes his own way”. On the basis of this, we draw up some focus points for the social educators to work with over the following months before we set anything else in motion.

My observations indicate a boy who closes up “like an oyster” whenever he is in situations where something is required of him that is either too much for him or ununderstandable for him. At the next meeting, we draw up some points together that everybody in the boy’s kindergarten class should work with:

- 1) A great deal of emphasis should be placed on playing small games with him (and three of his friends) where rules and ‘never mind’ strategies are practiced. This will help the social educator to discover how much or how little she can expect of him.
- 2) Along with another child, he should help to prepare the fruit trolley, which is a popular activity among the children, so that he can enjoy more ‘star moments’ with the social educator. This will strengthen his relationship with the social educator and the other children and increase his sense of self-worth.

3) The social educators should ensure that the boy's little sister does not end up 'taking over' or dominating too much in situations where the boy cannot live up to expectations so that she earns 'cheap points' from the social educators and further exposes his insecurities.

4) The focus on language should not appear as a test, but as play and content. It should be fun and meaningful for him.

I return a month later and the social educator explains that the boy is currently developing positively and that, in general, the social educators are no longer concerned about him, yet they know they should continue with their efforts and resource-oriented focus in their interaction with him, because they can see it makes a clear difference. We discuss how pedagogical practice and the interaction with the child can change when the social educator's view of and approach to the child changes – and we decide to close the case, since the social educators have taken ownership of the case themselves.

## Questions

Below are some dilemmas and discussions that might be relevant to the case:

In relation to interdisciplinary collaboration meetings:

- What can be challenging when one has to collaborate across different administrations?
- What barriers can arise in interdisciplinary collaboration? And how should one work with these?

In relation to the concrete example of an initiative:

- What challenges and opportunities can arise when the focus shifts from the individual (child) to changes in pedagogical practice (the environment)?

## Appendix to Municipality Case Copenhagen

### Introduction

The Child and Youth Administration's objective is to create the right service for all children and young people. One of the ways to achieve this is by creating communities in which all children and young people are included. In order to support this initiative, the Child and Youth Administration has developed an inclusion policy for those between 0–18 years.

The inclusion policy has been developed in collaboration with the administration's central and decentralised units as well as professional organisations and interest groups.

### The overall goal

The overall goal of the inclusion policy is that all children and young people can thrive and develop in the communities they are a part of.

In this way, opportunities are created for children and young people to use and develop their knowledge, competences and resources so that they can increase their current and future options and choices. This does not mean that all children or young people should be included in mainstream settings. There should still be special services for the children and youth who can benefit from them most.

### Purpose

The purpose of an inclusion policy is that education and organisational structures help to:

- create the best possible framework to support children and young people to be equal participants in communities in which they thrive and develop.
- create open and development-oriented environments for all children and young people in which they develop academically, personally and socially.
- ensure that the inclusive, flexible services in mainstream education cater for children and young people's different needs, thus helping more children and young people to remain in mainstream education.

## **The definition of inclusion**

Inclusion is an on-going process which involves creating open and development-oriented environments in which all children and young people can play an active part in the community. The objective is that all children and young people are viewed, acknowledged and appreciated as the unique people they are, which ensures that they can develop academically, personally and socially.

## **The six focal points for inclusion and therefore for inclusion policy**

1. Open and development-oriented environments
2. Academic, social and personal development for everybody
3. Flexible resource allocation
4. Early and preventive action
5. Holistic thinking and bridge building
6. Inclusion as a dynamic and an on-going process

The following section describes these six focal points in more detail.

### **1. Open and development-oriented environments**

- **focus on children and young people's active participation in everyday communities**

In order for children and young people to thrive and develop, it is essential that they can participate actively in the various communities they belong to. This active participation is the basis for the individual child or young person to feel recognised and valued and to use and develop his/her resources and competences. It is important that the child or young person can see him/herself in a context with others and feel part of the community. This also contributes to increasing the child or young person's current and future options and choices.

The municipality's employees – in collaboration with parents – should therefore work towards children and young people's well-being and development in the environment they are a part of. They should relate actively to the available opportunities to help children and young people.



The individual child or young person should receive services that cater to his/her needs, which could be both in a mainstream or a special needs environment.

A good collaboration with the parents is important, because the home is the child or young person's primary arena. The parents should therefore be involved in and have the opportunity to affect the decisions made about their child.

## **2. Academic, social and personal development for everybody**

### **- focus on the individual child or young person's competences, resources and learning**

All children and young people should have access to environments in which they can develop academically, socially and personally together with their peers. This means that all children and young people should remain equal members of their community while their special needs are accommodated.

Inclusion initiatives should always take their point of departure in the individual's well-being and possibilities. Professionals should meet the child where he or she is, based on his/her uniqueness and integrity. They should therefore also help the child or young person to develop his/her own sense of identity.

The main premise is that children and young people learn differently and should therefore be challenged in relation to their academic ability and their development based on their own requirements. Focus should be on discovering the individual child or young person's resources and ways of learning. This creates the conditions for children and young people to use their competences and achieve success and progress.

## **3. Flexible resource allocation**

### **- focus on enhancing the community's ability to accommodate the individual child or young person's needs**

Resources should be allocated flexibly and be available where the children are, so that the conditions to create an inclusive culture are enhanced. This in turn enhances the community's ability to accommodate the individual child or young person's needs.

This entails that resource allocation models should provide incentives for inclusion and finding solutions in new ways. It should be possible to find solutions locally and flexibly and in a fast and unbureaucratic manner. Schools and institutions should themselves take responsibility for inclusion tasks and offer services that are flexible and that can include more children with special needs in the mainstream environment. In this way, they will become more creative in offering appropriate services and more children and young people will be able to remain in mainstream education with particular services that meet their individual needs.

#### **4. Early and preventive action**

**- focus on enhancing early and preventative action so that more people are helped in time**

It is important to have an acute awareness of early and preventive action in the field of inclusion, since this means that more children can be included in mainstream environments and that they can feel safe, thrive and develop.

The Child and Youth Administration is working to provide the best services for children and young people who require help or special support. We wish to prevent children and young people's difficulties escalating and affecting the rest of their lives. It is therefore important that we address a child's difficulties as quickly as possible. School teachers, early years teachers and other professionals should decide in an interdisciplinary environment how the child can best be supported. In Copenhagen municipality's schools and early year education institutions, we aim to help children and young people with their difficulties within the school and institutions' own capacities and resources. We do this based on the view that it benefits most children and young people to be helped within – and not detached from – the community in the environment they are used to. Different ways to achieve differentiation in the classroom and to prevent exclusion include group teaching and pair work.

#### **5. Holistic thinking and bridge building**

**- focus on interdisciplinary collaboration to accommodate special needs**

The Child and Youth Administration wishes to view mainstream and special education environments as interconnected. There should be a holistic and coherent approach to problem

solving. Holistic thinking and bridge building should play a key role in an interdisciplinary collaboration. The professionals should work together across traditional cultures and professions and develop a common professional language about the individual children. In order for this collaboration to work, it is essential that there is communication between the relevant professional groups.

Joint planning, organisation and implementation of activities and learning environments are important conditions for developing interdisciplinary collaboration that promotes inclusion.

This means that teachers, early years teachers, psychologists and other professionals should work together across professional borders and the Pedagogical-Psychological Counselling Service (Pædagogisk Psykologisk Rådgivning (PPR)). Similarly, the possibilities for collaboration should be present, together with the conditions for a joint action for children's inclusion. This creates the conditions for more children to be included in mainstream education and for those children who thrive best in the special educational settings to nevertheless come into contact with the mainstream setting, and vice versa. This means that existing interdisciplinary groups should be supported and actively used, because this is a 'tool' that has already been developed.

## **6. Inclusion as a dynamic and an on-going process**

**- focus on the idea that being inclusive involves a great deal of participation, mutual understanding and co-ownership.**

The driving force behind work with inclusion in schools and institutions is that the staff are conscious of what inclusion is and what it means to act inclusively. The staff should recognise the importance of playing an active part in the development process and of working in an inclusive manner. For this to succeed, it is vital that management backs up the inclusive initiatives; for the management plays a central role in initiating and setting the framework for collaboration as well as organising inclusive initiatives.

Building professional networks and the joint development of competences and forms of collaboration that promote inclusion are important to ensure a sustained development focus on inclusion in schools and institutions in and between both mainstream and special educational settings.

Copenhagen Municipality

The Child and Youth Administration <https://international.kk.dk/>

## The Netherlands

In the Netherlands there is in total 16 weeks of paid maternity leave. Mostly 6 weeks before birth and 10 weeks after birth of the child (the parent(s) can vary the 6 and 10 weeks). Of course women/ parents can have a longer period of absence from work but this is then unpaid. From 2017 on, fathers have 5 days of paid paternity leave. This relatively short period of paid leave means that children are visiting childcare relatively young (from 10 weeks on).

### Elementary education

The Dutch education system consists of 8 years of primary education, 4, 5 or 6 years of secondary education (depending on the type of school) and 2 to 6 years of higher education (depending on the type of education and the specialisation).

Between the ages of four and twelve, children attend elementary school (*basisschool*; which is literally, "basic school"). This school has eight grades, from *groep 1* (group 1) to *groep 8*. School attendance is not necessary until group 2 (at age five), but almost all children start school at age four (in group 1). Groups 1 and 2 used to be held in a separate institution akin to [kindergarten](#) (*kleuterschool*; literally, "toddler's school"), until it was merged with elementary schools in 1985.

From group 3 on, children learn how to [read](#), [write](#) and do [arithmetics](#). Most schools teach English in groups 7 and 8, but some start as early as group 4.

In the Netherlands, there are both regular (*openbare*) and special (*bijzondere*) schools. Both schooltypes are public schools, funded by the government and run by a schoolboard. Private schools hardly exist. Most special schools are religious (e.g. Catholic, Protestant, Islamic, Jewish), or follow specific pedagogic principles (e.g. Montessori, Waldorf/Steiner, Dalton, Jenaplan). Usually, the religious schools are fairly moderate in terms of religion and are also open to children who have a different religion or are not religious.

Special schools should not be confused with special-needs schools that teach pupils with (severe) learning problems. Recently a national policy is released called *Passend Onderwijs*

(Literally: Fitting Education) which obliges public schools to include children with special needs. Many schools embrace this viewpoint and try to offer inclusive education.

In the Netherlands, about 30-40% of children under 2 years old visit childcare. But over 80% of the two- to four-year-old children attend either formal centre-based day care or preschool before they enter the primary school system at the age of four years (age five is mandatory but nearly all children start school at the age of 4).

The Dutch system has a strong part-time character, enhanced by the fact that many of the parents (mothers) work part-time. No other country in the world has such a high level of part-time work as far as parents – and especially mothers – are concerned. Of course, this really affects the daily work in childcare centres, where the staff (who also work part-time) deal with a lot of different children during the week.

As a result, pedagogical stability is a major point of discussion in the Netherlands. In the Netherlands, about 30-40% of children under 2 years old attend childcare. But over 80% of two to four-year-old children attend either formal centre-based day care or pre-school before they enter the primary school system at the age of four (it is mandatory at the age of five, but nearly all children start school at the age of four).

Children can attend two main types of ECEC provisions before they enter primary school. The first consists of centre-based day care for children from zero to four years of age, with as its main function to support parents and help them combine work and care. However, over 50% of children under four only attend centre-based day care for two full days a week (NCKO, 2011) on average.

Because the main function is to support parents and help them combine work and care for children from zero to four years old, only children from working parents can attend such childcare facilities.

The childcare system is accessible for parents who both work.

The second type concerns pre-schools for two to four-year-old children, which, on average, are attended for two to four half days a week.

Socio-economically disadvantaged children, who may have low-skilled parents or are from non-Dutch speaking homes, are subject to a targeted policy that combats early educational disadvantages and offers an educational programme that is provided in pre-schools four half days a week.

Children who are not considered to be “at risk” usually attend pre-school for two half days a week.

**Innovation: Kindcentra 0-12 years**

In response to the fragmented character of the Dutch childcare and school system, there is a strong movement in the past 8-10 years to cooperate (and even merge) and establish so called Child Centres 0-12 years. These Centres offer child care for 0-4 year old children, pre-school programs, education and after school facilities. They work closely together with the community; pedagogues and teachers and other professionals act as one team and there is one director. By combining staff, buildings and resources and using the idea of inter-professional cooperation, these new institutions try to put principles as inclusion and diversity into practice by creating a learning environment for all children.

## THE PACT Project<sup>6</sup>

PACT is an innovative project in the Netherlands that connects the different worlds of child care, education and youth care, with the focus on the role of professionals. The aim is to create pedagogical communities in which all children learn and play together. The main concepts are inclusion and diversity.

PACT is working together with schools, child care centres and so called 'kindcentra' for children in the age from 0 till 12. Seven pilots have been set up, all over the Netherlands, in which multidisciplinary teams of teachers, pedagogues and care workers collaborate, design and learn from each other. The inclusion professional at work. A team of scientists has been investigating the pilots in a case study and the results of the interdisciplinary collaborations have been monitored.

The pilots delivered a competence profile for a new function within the Dutch educational and child care system: the inclusion professional/pedagogue.

The project also works closely together with local authorities and a group of leading alderman, the so called 'Kopgroep Wethouders voor Kindcentra', that support inclusive professional provisions for young children. Two PACT- pilots were initiated and focused specifically on the role of the municipality.

Besides the PACT-activities in schools and child care centres, a platform of professional Educational Institutes has been set up in order to investigate, discuss and design new courses for the pedagogical professional of the future. PACT has developed a training for professionals in the work field - teachers, pedagogues and professionals in ECEC – that has been launched in 2017 (SamenScholing).

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<sup>6</sup> In Spring 2018 the PACT project has been transformed into PACT voor Kindcentra. This project advocates the realisation of child centres 0-12 years and combines field support activities, innovation in educational programs, scientific research and political lobby. See [www.pactvoorkindcentra.nl](http://www.pactvoorkindcentra.nl)



In June 2017 the results of the PACT project so far has been presented and shared with national stakeholders. For this purpose a short animation of the project has been made.

You can [watch it here](#) (English). The scientific team of PACT recorded the results in the publication: *Inclusie door interprofessionele samenwerking* (Inclusion by interprofessional collaboration, 2017) An English summary will be available soon. All the materials of the PACT pilots have been made available through: [www.pedagogischpact.nl](http://www.pedagogischpact.nl) (in Dutch).

The cases presented are based on **stories which the project leaders of the PACT pilots** entered during central PACT meetings. We discussed them with the help of Work Principles Inclusion Professional Actions, made by Ady Hoitink.

### **Case Examples from the PACT project:**

#### **A) 5 years old B. in elementary school**

##### **Context information**

B.'s school is situated in a new build neighbourhood near Nijmegen, a middle-size city in the eastern part of the Netherlands.

The school is a so called Brede (Community) school and is closely related to the child care company that offers child care 0-4 and out of school care. Both organisations are located in the same building. The teachers and pedagogues work together intensely. The school has the ambition to offer inclusive education and takes part in the PACT- project. An extra professional with youth care background (Annemarie) is added to the team to support the staff.

The case is written by Annemarie, November 2016, at the request of the Pact project leader

##### **B.'s case**

B. is 5 years old and is in elementary school. B. has trouble with the characteristic school behaviour like sitting in a circle, independently starting an assignment, making and cleaning and playing together. He has difficulty explaining what he does or doesn't want. He says:

“when I hit someone they listen to me faster than if I talk”. B. is also very restless and when he trips in the circle the other children laugh at him. B. thought that to be very interesting and therefore the circle often starts with an ‘act’ from B.. This clowny behaviour became bigger and bigger: while waiting in line, on the toilets, during the reading. Assignments, like fetching your coat or cleaning up your mug, became a challenge. Then they would find him laying under the coat rack in the hallway.

The teacher asked for help. *How do I deal with B.?*

### Questions:

- ❖ How would you describe B.’s behaviour in your own words?
- ❖ What could be the most simple reason for B.’s behaviour?
- ❖ What small intervention could stimulate normal participation of B. in the group?
- ❖ Is there a solution which gives positive effects on (almost) all children?
- ❖ Is there a solution possible within the group?

*Annemarie, the inclusion pedagogue of the team, saw something else in him: fear. He showed this clowny behaviour on specific moments, as well as his physical communication with other children. He also showed fear in his work. It appeared not to be disinterest but fear / insecurity. Annemarie started addressing this fear and confidence very specifically. Not only with him, but also in the group. She let him experience success in the group, together with the group. As a result B.’s confidence grew every day and with that, B. as a person. His clowny behaviour diminished and he dared to ask for help. Now he can finish assignments, that sometimes can take more than 15 minutes of concentration, with ease. This is also the case with chars and getting his coat. That is a completely different story, however not always, because laying under the coat rack is a part of being B. and sometimes he just likes to do just that. In his interaction with the other children he has now also the confidence to say stop. He himself explains this: “I always could do it, but now I also dare to do it!”*

## B) S., a boy at an innovative child centre in Amsterdam

### The Context

S. is 6 years old and a pupil of Laterna Magica, an integrated childcare/ school centre in Amsterdam, and one of the PACT pilots. **Laterna Magica provides childcare and education for children 0-12 years**, Pedagogues and teachers are responsible for the full-day program of their group. Teachers are called coaches. They are using the method of personalized learning. Laterna Magica has a strong ambition to be inclusive for all the children in the neighbourhood. The organisation works together with all kind of experts to achieve this goal. The team is trained in working with inclusive pedagogical principals (see 1<sup>st</sup> version of PACT input). Laterna Magica is seen as one of the most innovative pedagogical organisations in the Netherlands.

The case is written by one of the coaches, September 2016.

S. is a six year old boy attending Child Center Laterna Magica in Amsterdam.

At random S. can become very physical. Apparently out of nowhere he becomes very angry, confrontational and aggressive. Lieke, his coach, is looking for an approach. She discusses the situation with her colleagues and together they decide that Lieke will become 'S. for a day'. In a way she creeps in his skin and experiences a day in the way S. does. S. is also filmed during his daily routines.

### Questions

- ❖ Why would the team suggest to “become S. for a day”?
- ❖ What could be the most simple cause of S.’s behaviour?
- ❖ Is there a way to help S. to participate positively in the group?
- ❖ *Is there a solution that gives positive effects on (almost) all children?*

*The result? The many sensations of the group space create unrest with S.. He is not happy with himself. “Miss, it is so very busy and I don’t like that” S. confides with Lieke. We developed a plan in which S. remained a normal participant of the group. When he needed to have some extra protection he doesn’t have to be part of the circle call and if the group is reading out loud, he can put on his headset, so that he can stay concentrated on his work. In this way he still participates. The plan was developed by the unit-team of teachers and pedagogues.. Together they review the films and Lieke can enter her observations. They benefit from each other’s expertise. Also the parents are being involved: does S. experience the same unrest at home, and how do they deal with that? Experiences are shared, adjustments made and also at home the changes are being implemented. Headsets have been made available for all children in the group. And the results pay off. S. is less influential to the group and his parents also observed that he has more peace at home. A beautiful ongoing line has been created from home to the child centre, with the result of a child that gets support in the way that is most needed.*

### **C) The school principal is worried**

Het Talent in Lent is a **community school**. The school and the child care organisation which is located inside the building, work together very closely for several years. The child care organisation offers child care for children 0-4 years and after school activities for the 4--12 years. There are 600 children in this school.

#### **The School principal:**

“A couple of years ago I realised: In none of my locations are children that are being abused. At least not that we are aware of it. I found that odd... It wasn’t right and couldn’t be true. We are overlooking something... me, my team, my staff didn’t see it. And that worried me. And it’s not only possible abuse. If we fail to notice this, what else don’t we see? There are many children from divorced families. What is the effect on those children? Do we support them? Can we intervene in time? Because we now that the earlier we detect and address, the more it helps. Don’t wait till the child needs specialized care, or worse, that I have to let the child go. I want to work preventive instead of curative.

### ❖ Questions

Imagine you are the school principal and you are wondering....

- ❖ How do you deal with this observation?
- ❖ Send all staff on training?
- ❖ Hire more staff?
- ❖ Hire other experts in the team? And if so, which expertise?
- ❖ What kind of support do you need from your board; from expert organisations; from the local community?

### *The approach of Het Talent*

*The school appointed a behavioural expert, a full time member of youth care who becomes part of the professional school team and works along the team in the normal workspace. She monitors, supports the teachers and educational professional, speaks with the parents and works along in the group also with the youngest children and in the after school care. The lines of communication are direct and together they develop a working approach based on their complementarity and complementary to each other while they are working. In this way the function of an inclusion professional/ pedagogue is generated (see profile) and the professionals in the team feel supported, and that makes them more confident within the group.*

*The school principle: “By the way, this works also for the organization, we notice and measure that our approach works very well, also financially. Less children leave our child centre and less external support is needed. Due to this financial benefits, the local government supports me to hire the expert. It is become part of the official preventive youth policy. A real Win-Win!*

### **Inclusive professional actions: work principles**

During the PACT project we discussed several cases like the ones written above together with an expert on inclusive education. (Ady Hoitink, [www.buoverschillig.nl](http://www.buoverschillig.nl))

In order to understand situations, she offers *four principles of inclusive professional acting*:

**1. Least dangerous assumption**

What is the smallest cause of this situation? And what is the smallest consequence? Start with that!

**2. Taking away obstructions for learning and participation and don't develop new ones.**

What prevents positive participation. How can we take that obstruction away? ? What makes an improvement?

**3. Design for all**

Which solution gives positive effects on (almost) all children? What can we do to prevent the negative consequences for the other children?

**4. Approach with support**

Everything which can be done inside the group will not be done outside. Everything that can be done by the educational professional we don't do apart from the child. All the things we can achieve with the support of parents will not be done by using external support.

**The inclusion professional (IProf)- competence profile**

This profile is composed and based on the experiences in 3 pilots of PACT (Nijmegen, Apeldoorn, Amsterdam)

The inclusion professional is a behavioural expert of a Youth Care Organisation who is commissioned by a school, after school organization or child care centre. The IProf is part of the team and therefore always available. He/she is a colleague of teachers, educational professionals and other professionals of the team.

**Duty and role**

The school, after school organisations and inclusion professionals are focused on enhancing the educational climate so that more children in the centre can stay and learn in the best way

possible. The role of the inclusion professional is focused on standardizing and prevention. Part of that role is to recognize ‘notable’ behaviour of children and in the extension of that the relation with the adults (parents and professionals).

Another important goal is ‘instant response’. Immediately signals and underlying need for support is being met with an active response because if these signals are not handled in an early stage, the risk of heavier interventions later on, is increased. The IProf plays a coaching role in this important task.

The purpose is that less referrals are being made to specialized care / education, but that, if it appears necessary, referrals are made faster and effectively. The expertise of the IProf plays a crucial role in this.

### **Tasks of the IProf**

- is available to participate in group processes (groups 0-4 and units 4-12 years) as well by demand of a colleague as well as by own initiative.
- Advices and coaches teachers and educational professionals about adjustments to the group process/group dynamic with the purpose that ALL children (also those with special behaviour) can be involved and learn in the best way possible.
- Guides and supports the individual child.
- Is available for parental conversations or short advise programs with parents, based on signals of the child, the professional or the parent.
- Analyses together with the mentor/unit director/professional about the needs of an individual child.
- Looks together with mentor/unit director/professional what the group needs.
- Shares insights and work processes about the approach of the child or the unit/group with professionals.

### **Competences: The IProf**

- Has strong affinity with child care, education and after school care.
- Has abilities to coach and is able to train care givers.

- Is able to give alternatives that are practical and solution driven to parents in coordination with the school or after school care.
- Is able to apply/insert the expertise (knowledge/skills) of the youth care to schools and after school care. This applies to the following knowledge areas: knowledge of (threatening) behavioural disorders / possible development backlog on individual level and within the system (as well externalising as internalising behaviour).
- Can make a clear distinction between the educational question and a educational problem (question vs. disorder).
- Can work with larger and smaller groups of children in the area of social emotional development, supportive of the after school/educational situation.
- Has knowledge of group dynamics.
- Has experience and knowledge in calling in heavier types of care, as well as handling effectively with regards to troubling home situations (report code).
- Has a master in education in work / thing level.
- Has good communicative skills as well verbally as written

### 3) ***The PACT project: an animation (English)***

Watch it here: <https://youtu.be/87C3iltBQAk>



## Cases from a kindergarten in Amsterdam

In January 2018 a new childcare law was introduced in the Netherlands. This law has a great influence on the preschool system in Amsterdam. Until December 2017 there was no fee for preschool, but now every parent has to pay for childcare and also for preschool.

In Amsterdam every child from 2 years old has the right to go to the preschool for 16 hours a week, mostly 3 mornings or afternoons. This right is for all children, whether their parents are poor or rich, working or not working and with or without a high level of education. When parents do work, they get an allowance from the tax authorities and they can bring their child also more than 16 hours a week. They can choose to bring their child to a regular daycare or to a daycare with a preschool program. The municipality of Amsterdam pays an allowance for children whose parents don't work or one of them isn't working (and don't have right to an allowance from the tax authorities), but only if they're attending preschool.

In Amsterdam preschool is carried out by daycare organizations. They are obliged to work with a special preschool program, which is controlled on legal requirements and on quality requirements of the city of Amsterdam by the inspection every year. Amsterdam is paying subsidy to preschools and is asking for quality. Purpose of the preschool is the development of young children, therefore good quality of the preschool is very important.

In Amsterdam there are about 600 daycare centers, about half of them is a preschool. In a preschool there are 16 children in a group with two teachers.

Which categories of inclusive preschool education is available in Amsterdam:

- Most of the children develop normally.
- All preschools follow children in their development and all of them are visited by preventive speech therapists. They observe children with possible speech problems. If necessary they refer these children to speech therapists.
- When there's a small development problem, a preschool coach makes a 'customized' plan of action for the child and carries it out;
- But when there are serious development problems, the preschool can get more help. Okido is a cooperation between youth services and childcare, subsidized by the city of

Amsterdam. Okido makes it possible to get an extra teacher in a group for a couple of hours, guided by a coach from youth service. In this way children with severe development problems can stay in the daycare group.

- Sometimes the problems of a child are so severe that it is not possible to let him/her stay in a preschool or a daycare centre.

The municipality of Amsterdam sometimes have discussions with preschools and daycare about considerations and about the limits of childcare: When is it possible to include children and when is it not? Some central questions:

- Do you end a placement when a child is too far behind in his development to participate in the activities of the preschool? Or only when a child is seriously disturbing the group by aggressive behavior?
- How long do you give the parents space to 'adjust' to the idea of a developmentally challenged child? Is it in the child's best interest to pressure the parents into a transit of the child to youth service?
- How much space do you give to the acceptance process?
- How far can you go in the adjustment of the education for one child?

## Cases

**A:** In a preschool in Amsterdam, professionals have raised some concerns in relation to a three-year-old boy, as he seems to have a hard time understanding agreements and activities being initiated. He also responds strongly to incentives from the environment. The professionals have had conversations with the parents and they have decided that the boy needs more one on one attention. Therefore, they have applied for an extra daycare teacher through the Okido guidance program.

The Okido helper arrives and focuses on the boy, but after a while the conclusion is, that the boy does not seem to benefit enough from the involvement of Okido. The childcare professionals then agree that something has to change and they decide that the boy has to be part of a different group with less children, a more free play environment and more pedagogical assistance for 2 daily periods. During these periods of time the boy does not attend preschool activities. The parents in the beginning resist this idea as they would like the boy to just attend a regular preschool program. In the small children group, the boy seems more relaxed and there is room to participate or to pull back. He takes more initiative and explores more often. There are also more resources to aid him in his needs.

## Questions

- What are the differences in the two inclusion strategies that take place in this case?
- Please discuss differences between one on one inclusion strategies vs. group inclusion strategies
- Why do you think the parents at the beginning resist an alternative for their child?
- Please discuss pros and cons in relation to placing the child in a small children group outside the preschool context during the day.

**B:** In the preschool, there is also a 2-3 year old boy who stands out a little. He has a large head, looks cross-eyed and cannot control his saliva. He cannot talk yet and does not play with other children. He moves freely around and does his own thing. His level of playing, though, is more typical of a 1,5 year old, but he does not bother anyone. When the children gather in a circle to talk it is not clear whether he is participating and it seems that he cannot follow the

conversations and questions. His mother does not want him to attend a special needs group, and is convinced that he will come around with a bit of extra support.

The mother eventually changed her mind but at that time it was not possible to find a special needs program for the child, so he stayed in the preschool – and the placement actually in some ways went pretty well even though the boy couldn't fully follow the program. He was not a burden to anyone and the professionals invested in a relationship with the child and they worked with how to support the parents in an acceptance of their child's special needs. At some point another boy with special needs was placed in the preschool. This boy had primarily trouble to engage in a positive social relation with other children. He punched and pushed and the first boy adapted this behavior rather quickly and even bigger. Suddenly he was no longer quietly doing his own thing and the staff had to keep an even better eye on him. The situation got out of hand. Luckily, a special needs team got involved with this family. The parents were consulted about the situation and together they decided to end the placement, even though there wasn't an alternative for the boy.

### Questions

- Do you end a placement when a child is too far behind in his development to participate in the activities of the preschool? After all, if a child isn't able to participate in every part of the education, will the child enjoy going to the preschool? Is the child being challenged on his level?
- How long do you give the parents space to 'adjust' to the idea of a development challenged child? Is it in the child's best interest to pressure the parents into a transit for the child? How much space do you give to the acceptance process?
- How far can you go in the adjustment of the education for one child?
- For both cases, A & B, please discuss: Where are the possibilities, where are the restrictions when we talk about inclusion? What is the goal of the professionals and for whom?

## A Municipality case from Rotterdam: "Harmonisation"

This case takes an approach that is different from other cases. It is a contextual description of the situation in Rotterdam, a municipality that strives for inclusion by reducing the differences between the types of childcare in Rotterdam. In consultation with Yvette Vervoort, Rotterdam wants to highlight another aspect of inclusion: integrating the different types of childcare and removing the distinction between parents with jobs and those without, and between low-skilled and highly educated people.

### Introduction

This case was introduced by a pre-school policy officer. In consultation with a participant in the City Network, we agreed to also highlight another aspect of inclusion: the inclusion of children with different cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. In other cities, most cases focus on children who need specific care or have a disability.

The case, which was drawn up in 2018, describes the harmonisation that was introduced in Rotterdam on March 1<sup>st</sup> 2016. Harmonisation started in Rotterdam in 2016. It was finally implemented across the rest of the Netherlands on January 1<sup>st</sup> 2018.

### Figures

Rotterdam has around 15.000 two to three-year olds. 10.764 of these children attend a pre-school and early education (VVE) centre. Rotterdam has 623 pre-school and early education groups, with around 14-16 children per group.

#### 1. The "Harmonisation" case

We want all children in Rotterdam to be able to develop their talents. And that requires proper education. This "education" starts at a very young age. When a child is prepared properly at pre-school, he or she is ready to make a flying start at primary school. In the Rotterdam educational policy "Leren Loont! 2015-2018" (Learning Pays! 2015-2018), childcare and pre-school organisations, primary school boards and the municipality of Rotterdam agreed to harmonise the pre-school period, resulting in a single type of facility for all Rotterdam children

from two to four years old. As the description of the situation in the Netherlands (see the introduction at page 73) already explains, until recently, there were two separate systems. The new, harmonised system is all about properly preparing all young children in Rotterdam for primary school.

### **The fragmented field**

Rotterdam has a number of facilities that prepare young children for primary school and/or care for children while their parents are at work: pre-schools with a programme for pre-school and early education (also known as VVE), pre-schools without such a programme, day care centres with VVE, day care centres without VVE and childminders.

Through harmonisation, the distinction between pre-schools and day care will disappear: all facilities will offer the same high-quality care, and all toddlers can use it, no matter what their background is. There are two goals of harmonisation: On the one hand, every child is properly prepared for primary school in the same way. On the other hand, it prevents the segregation of target group children and non-target group children and children with working parents and children with parents who do not work. Another positive significant effect is that children no longer have to change day care if their parents find work or lose their jobs, and that the cyclicity of the system disappears. In the old system, parents without a job or households with one working parent were not eligible for childcare benefits.

The costs of these different types of day care are different for the parents, and the same applies to the quality that is offered with regard to learning through play. The number of hours that the children can attend the facilities varies drastically, from six hours a week in a pre-school without pre-school and early education to 50 hours a week in a day care centre.

A relatively large number of “target group toddlers” – toddlers with a risk of language and developmental delay – attend playgroups. Another difference between the various types of day care is the fact that only toddlers with working parents may attend day care centres.

Pre-schools are almost completely financed by the municipality and parents only pay a small contribution. Day care centres are funded by the government through childcare benefit and partly by parents.

Through the redesign of the pre-school period, Rotterdam wants to make sure that children are ready to make a flying start at primary school. We will continue to build on the investments made at many locations by pre-school organisations, school boards and the municipality in recent years: investments in the quality of pre-schooling and how it ties in with primary education.

Core points of the new system:

- A single basic facility for all young children in Rotterdam, which prepares them for primary school through play.
- One type of harmonised pre-school facility with mixed groups of target group/non-target group children and children with employed parents and unemployed parents.
- All toddlers in Rotterdam between two and four years of age are entitled to six hours of childcare in a harmonised pre-school facility. Children aged 2.5 to 4 years who have been identified as a target group child by the YFC (Youth and Family Centre, who monitor all children from birth) are entitled to six hours of additional care in the same facility, so 12 hours in total. Working parents may purchase additional hours at the same location. Waiting lists will be a thing of the past.
- Identical quality in all groups.
- One harmonised income-dependent parental contribution. Harmonisation is not just about harmonising quality and accessibility for all children, but also about harmonising the costs for parents.

## **2. Quality requirements and pre-school facilities**

Before harmonisation, the quality requirements were different for each subsidised childcare facility. Since 1 January 2017, all pre-school and early education facilities have had to comply with the same quality requirements, including:

- The assignment of a person at or with a higher professional level of education to each group. This may be a coach with a higher professional degree, and/or a person currently studying at a higher professional institution.
- The assignment of a person with a higher professional degree as coach/video interaction coach to multiple groups for at least four hours per group per week, or the assignment of a person studying at a higher professional institution as teaching assistant in addition to a MBO (secondary vocational level) teaching assistant.
- If a group is not part of a continuous learning path and care structure within education, a care consultation has been arranged for the toddlers, with a transfer document for each toddler.
- The groups have a parental policy that ties in with the pre-school and early education method, with an annual analysis of the parental population and, based on this, a specific parental policy plan for each location.
- Organisations must comply with the arrangements set out on 1 January 2015 in Rotterdam, relating to the way in which insight is gained into the output of pre-school education and the results of early childhood education. In 2016, in consultation with the municipality, organisations decided on the targets to be achieved at their locations based on the baseline measurement from 1 October 2015 and the single measurement from 1 October 2016.
- Organisations are continuously working on improving output-oriented work methods.

One of the main reasons for harmonisation is that, in the current system, toddlers with a parent or parents who become(s) unemployed or are no longer eligible for childcare benefit can no longer stay at the day care centre, because it has often become too expensive. Harmonisation means they can stay. Toddlers with parents who are not eligible for childcare benefits can also attend a day care centre or pre-school for a number of hours as long as they pay a net income-dependent parental contribution.



## 9. Indication of target group toddlers in Rotterdam

On behalf of the municipality, the YFC became responsible for the target group indication on 1 January 2015, and their doctor/nurse provides the parents with the pre-school and early education (VVE) indication letter for the target group child. Children in Rotterdam with a "target group indication YFC" are eligible for six additional hours of basic childcare on top of the standard six hours. This only applies if they use a harmonised pre-school and early education (VVE) facility. If the parents decide not to use a VVE facility, they will not be eligible for a subsidy from the municipality.

A child is a "target group child" for pre-school and early education (VVE) if the child attended the 14 and/or 24-month consultation at the YFC, and:

- the parent who is the main carer has a level of education that is lower than the basic qualification (i.e. level 1 intermediate vocational training, lower vocational training, on-the-job training, pre-vocational secondary education or lower);
- the language spoken at home is not Dutch and the educational level of the parent who is the main carer is lower than level 4 intermediate vocational training;
- the toddler has been diagnosed with developmental problems by a paediatrician at the 24-month consultation or later, or by the VVE organisation after observation within three months after placement or later (at a disadvantage compared to his or her peers in relation to the nationally recognised targets of the Netherlands Institute for Curriculum Development (SLO)).

### Questions:

- ❖ What skills do the teaching assistants need in order to be able to work with children with different socio-economic backgrounds?
- ❖ The number of hours that the child attends pre-school is limited, which also limits the impact on the child's life. How can you maximise this impact? How can you compensate for any negative factors at home?
- ❖ Dilemma: in the system, the care for children with developmental disadvantages is organised outside of the childcare system. This care is paid for by the parents through

the municipality or their insurance. How can you promote inclusion if everything is organised across a number of different organisations?

## Belgium

### **BELGIUM: a federal state**

Belgium is a federal state where different political bodies exercise their authority within their area of competence: besides the federal level, Belgium has three communities (French, Flemish and German), and three regions (Flanders, Brussels, Wallonia). “The concept of 'community' refers to persons that make up a community and the bond that unifies them, namely their language and “culture”. Education and welfare are considered as a community issue.

Consequently, we could say that the national context of ECEC is a double split system: between the communities, and between education and welfare.

Despite the never-ending state reform, the ECEC systems in the different communities still share a similar organisation. ECEC structures are organised according to the age of the children, with a transition around 3 years. Provision for the under 3 falls under the responsibility of public authority. In the sense that a public agency sets the requirements to be allowed to offer childcare provision. Provision itself is either organised and offered by public entities (e.g. a city) or by private bodies, who receive some level of subsidy. For the children aged 2,5 years and over, early childhood education takes place in preschool (‘école maternelle’ or ‘kleuterschool’) which falls under the responsibility of the Ministers of Education in all 3 communities.

Education as well is either organised by public bodies or private bodies who receive subsidy. Children can start preschool at the age of 2,5, non-compulsory, and they start compulsory primary school the year they turn 6. Between the age of 3 to 12, children can also attend recreational services, out of school care, during their free time, which are also regulated at the community levels. ECEC in Belgium involves three major sectors: childcare (0-2,5/3y), preschool (2,5/3-6y) and out of schoolcare (3-12y). Among these sectors, different regulations apply to issues like group size, attendance fee, professionals/child ratio, required professional training, salaries etc., which makes the whole image quite complicated. This main characteristics of the split system (in both communities) can be found in the responsible ministries, regulations on qualification, adult/child ration, curriculum, main focus, attendance and so forth (see annex for more details).

## **FLANDERS: the Flemish Community**

Regarding content and main features, the ECEC regulations in the Flemish Community do not differ that much from the French Community. Kind en Gezin (K&G) is the public agency in charge of several supportive services for families with young children with the mission to “together with its partners, aim to create as many opportunities as possible for every child, regardless of where he or she is born or where and how he or she is growing up”. K&G is active on several domains, such as public and preventive health care, family support, childcare (0-3y) and out of school care (3-12y)<sup>10</sup>, offering these services to enable children to achieve their full developmental potential, physically, mentally, emotionally and socially, with respect for diversity and children’s rights.

## **OUT OF SCHOOL CARE GHENT**

30 childcarecentres (0 to 3y) > 1100 childplaces daily reaching 2060 families in 2017

43 out-of-school-care centres (2.5 to 6y) > 3500 children daily reaching 5000 families

On schooldays, our out-of-school-centers provide care before and after school and during lunch break for children from 2,5 to 6 years. The childcare professionals can also offer care support during school hours, enabling kindergarten teachers to focus on their educational goals. During holidays, children from 2,5 to 12 are welcome on weekdays from 7am to 7pm.

The out-of-school care does not aim to replace education or care at home, but rather support and expand on it. Children, parents, community and care team are engaged as valuable partners.

Our out-of-school centers are places where children can feel at home, play with their friends and are offered a wide range of activities. We provide space to enjoy free time and relax, contributing to their global development. The child’s free choice is essential; a variety of activities provokes, challenges, surprises and offers new experiences, relating to the children’s exploratory drive, needs and potential.

The care is provided by professional caregivers who keep up to date with the latest insights and are trained to approach children and parents with an open, positive, non-judgmental spirit.

To ensure a continuum of care and connection with the broad network around the child, the out-of-school care collaborates actively with families, daycare centers, schools and neighborhood. Parents are always welcome and stimulated to participate in decision-making. Children explore the neighborhood, shop locally and use public spaces. The childcare is part of the local community and tries to mirror its values in its daily practice.

## Municipality Case Ghent - Out of school care

### **Context of the daycare center and school**

This story takes place in the out-of-school care of BOLLEKENS. This initiative for out-of-school-care in the city of Ghent is linked to kindergarten the BOLLEKENS. The kindergarten provides pre-primary education for children up to 6 years.

The out of school care welcomes the school's toddlers at times when there are no lessons. The daycare is open every school day from 7:00 to the start of the class (08:25), during the lunch break from 11:55 to 13:30 and after school from 15:25 to 18:00.

On Wednesday afternoons and during the holidays, the daycare is also open for children up to 8 years old and all children (also from other schools) are welcome.

Parents register in advance if they wish to make use of the daycare on school days. Parents must register their children separately for childcare on holidays. Children who run school on their own location are given priority when processing the registrations. The daycare works with fees in relation to the family income.

The BOLLEKENS (both school and the city's initiative for out-of-school care (STIBO)) are known for their high degree of (social and cultural) diversity, partly because of their location in a neighborhood with many social housing facilities and an unfortunately very limited range of socio-cultural organizations (and their activities). Together with the adjacent daycare center, both school, STIBO and daycare center make extra efforts to respond to opportunities and challenges that this diversity entails.

### **By numbers**

The school and the STIBO jointly use the playground, gymnastics room and (semi-public) grass

playground in front of the school building. The daycare continues before and after school in a separate building adjacent to the playground. This STIBO has a capacity of 56 children.

During the lunch break the classrooms are also used for a hot meal and play time. The school has a student number fluctuating from 120 (in September) to 140 children (in May). The numbers of children in the daycare fluctuate from +/- 15 to 25 children in the morning care over 120 to 140 children at noon to again 15 to 25 children in the evening after-school-care. On Wednesday afternoon there are on average 15 children present.

During the holidays the daycare is usually fully occupied and runs at its maximum capacity of 56 children. In the morning and evening daycare there are two professionals present. The daycare center is divided into groups where each supervisor has a permanent group of (attention) children.

This is to ensure continuity for children, parents and employees . There are 6 vertical living groups and 1 horizontal living group 'nestgroup' for the boarding toddlers who still take an afternoon nap.

The school works with a class division based on 2 age groups (3 substructure classes and 3 superstructure). This means the STIBO has a different group organization (vertical) than school (semi-horizontal).

The daycare facility has a staff of 10 professionals (6 FT in total) working in shifts and providing a child / professional ratio of 1 to 14. Staff includes the childcare professionals working with children and one childcare coordinator which has an attendance of 30%. At that time the manager facilitates-coaches-manages 3 facilities in total.

School has a professional staff of 10 teachers (6FT), 3 co-teachers (2 FT) , a 50% care-coordinator, a 20% IT-support, a 50% bridge figure, 1 FT administrative secretary help, a FT co-director and a 50% general director.

The daycare facility works with a neighborhood focused pedagogical vision. This means this out-of-school-care center has expertise and an extra focus on participation, accessibility and diversity.

M is a toddler aged 5. M has an energetic character, is curious and very social in his gameplay with other children. As you see he fits in completely in the group of the average 5 years olds.

M is registered for the summer holidays daycare. He is one of the children who is been registered for the full summer program and who is one of the first to arrive and one of the latest who is picked up in the evening.

The 8 weeks summer holiday daycare (with a collective closing period of 1 week and 1 week emergency daycare in another location) are organized in thematical weeks with a wide range of activities at the location of the daycare but also in the surrounding neighborhood with weekly excursions in and around the city center. This daycare facility has a good reputation in organizing their activities in a creative context. The team of daycare professionals is experienced and routined in organizing a diverse program for their children with a high pedagogical standard and approach. So children who are tending to maximize their attendance all have a full program with lots of well prepared and diverse activities during their summer holidays, in a pedagogical environment with a lot of attention on wellbeing and involvement.

During the summer holidays the STIBO day care center welcomes children up to 8 years. M. likes to play with the “big boys” of the daycare. Their games are a bit more rough, football, making bike trails and do a competition, .. all competitive games with a big physical component. Together with the big boys he likes to explore the limits of what is possible, stretching the rules from time to time and testing even provokes our professionals on their awareness to their group. All behavior is proper behavior on this age. Though at the end of the summer holidays his testing grows out of proportion, ... his actions are wisely chosen, on moments when the professionals have turned their backs in order to help other children.. he is using the timeframe when they were not around (for example when changing diapers or looking for materials in the storage. The boy developed a new invented game: throwing rocks to the big windows of the covered playground (for rainy days). 4 windows were broken in a period of two weeks. There was no unambiguous prove to address this behavior to the boy or his direct peer group (6\_7 years old companions). At the closing activity (an excursion to a big

playground in the neighborhood) M. was also part of the same group of youngsters who was visiting the playground. The 4 professionals accompanying the group were spread over the playground. Most of the time helping out and playing with the smallest children and running back and forth to the toilets. The group of bigger children had some more freedom in a bit bigger area (playground, surrounding hills and piece of forest next to it) but not always in sight. The playground was pretty crowded with other families and youth work groups. At a certain moment the leading volunteers of another group 8-12y old children came to our professionals with a story / complaint about a group of 4 young children. This group used their red scarfs (all children wear a scarf when they are on an excursion) to cover their faces and incognito they attacked a member of this other group. The victim has been hit with wooden sticks (from the forest) and kicked by this group while they were shouting: “we are the BOLLEKENS gang and this is our playground” ! The day care professionals were so embarrassed that they ended the excursion and took the group back to their location at the BOLLEKENS.

At the end of summer holiday, the +6y children went back to their own school, so this ‘group’ was disintegrated except for M who still was a toddler stayed in school / at the STIBO. During the next school year of stretching rules and looking for challenges, also more aggressive and even violent provocations became part of his behavior. Examples are: M. does not want to come inside with the rest of the group when it is time for the meal. He refuses to come inside, runs away when you want to talk to him about how and why. During the meal he is hiding under the table because for him the hiding is part of a game, ...

Addressing him didn’t make any difference, insisting on stop doing this often made it worse; from provocation to escalation: with his back he pushed the table up so all plates and watercups would fall on the ground. Ignoring him, like leaving him there without attention also made this behavior worse (see previous) to even kicking chairs around or throwing them on the floor. M. also tries to escape and run away from the STIBO group when he sees an opportunity. He tried to run off the property several times, always at a moment when a professional was not paying 100% attention, he climbed on a high iron fence (he wanted to try how high he could get), ran as fast as possible with stretched arms into a (single glass) window which broke and fell to pieces on his arms (he was hospitalized for 1 day), ... these series of



events occurred on a stretched period of 4 to 6 months. Up till this moment all incidents were treated separately from each other. Asking him how and why was often answered shortly 'just because'. It looked like he understood what was ment by the professional but every time, after the recovery interview, new incidents took place. Of course after addressing M. with the behavior, the rule or expectation that goes with it; there is a new chance or follow up; ex. at 4 o'clock there is a joint meal moment with sandwiches; raisins, chocolate paste, strawberry jam; M. took jars for the 4 o'clock meal from the fridge and threw them on the ground. After all the glass was removed he had to help clean the floor.

Up till now there was almost no or very little feedback from his mom when he was picked up; 'it is not easy' the common answer if we tried to talk about it. Her Dutch language was not very good. Asking if she can help the professionals out in dealing with his behavior her answer always was very short or avoiding and it seemed that she does not wanted to talk about how he was at home.

Up till now in the classroom everything went pretty OK. But when his teacher at one moment was out for a few weeks her replacement had to deal with behavior of aggression as well. Nor professionals of STIBO nor teacher knew how to break this circle of negative attention. Because of M.'s behavior the contact with mom intensifies. Bit by bit the STIBO gets to know her better. During the repeated talks in briefing her about M. she opens up and we found out that her situation is complex. Most of the time she is home alone with M., and his little brother S. Her husband is out for work and when he comes home he does not help out . He brings presents for the children, eats but when it gets busy, noisy he leaves and goes out to the café. She admits that she gets beaten by her husband if food is not ready or if she wants to talk about 'options in life'. If M. makes to much noise he is locked up in the living room with TV / Playstation because she does not know what else to do. She is afraid in his aggression he will hurt her or his little brother.

Parents were (several times) officially invited to the daycare for a conversation to talk about the events but only mom came to the appointments. After a while she admits to recognize this kind of behavior. Also at home his behavior becomes worse. Causing a lot of stress resulting in

more domestic violence towards M and herself (education is for mams - you are a bad mom). Because M prefers daycare above being home ( a small apartment in a building block) we agreed on taking him away from daycare every time his behavior gets dangerous and/or violent.

Hoping this message will get to him .. M himself says that he doesn't care if mam does come to pick him up early. This action did not result in the reflection we had hoped or foreseen.

At school / daycare the situation gets worse.

\* At a certain moment he took a cardboard tube ( we use it for tinkering rockets or other crafts workshops. M. hides himself under a table in the corridor (on his way to the toilet) and waits for a child to come out of the toilets. When a child passes by M. hits him full force with the tube in front of the face.

\* M. runs away very often. He chooses his moment very carefully meaning he waits for the most busy moments (when professionals are pouring soup for ex.). He just runs out of the building, on to the playground. There he hides or waits till someone comes looking for him. From the moment someone wants to start a conversation (What?Why?What to do now?) he runs off. The more pressure onto a certain result (please come inside) the more resistance is build up. This happens several times a week.

\* talking to him when he is in crisis is almost impossible .. he rages around, sometimes throwing tables and chairs. After a crisis he is tired .. sits on the ground and possible to talk to.

The STIBO team did not know what to do, patience, diversion, looking for his interest, .. all have their limits in daycare organized as a group. The behavior of M. became a negative factor in the professionals daily work. Some professionals started to dislike M. because of his behavior. Losing their professional attitude towards the child. A trajectory developing policy for behavior issues took place :

\* try to avoid the trigger,

\* if rage let it go in a safe environment (evacuate other children), don't go for the intervention, stay with him,

\* after the rage when he becomes calm : talk about what triggered him, name the line(s) he

has crossed, caress and give new chances.

The team learned to see M's behavior not linked to his person helping them to take fresh starts after a crisis. One of the professionals became an "expert" in this knowing to get to know more and more about his behavior. Too bad she discovered she was good at this and went for a job in the specialized youth care sector 😞

Because STIBO cannot initiate more care than talking about events and taking actions which involve their own service, school was contacted to initiate a new level of possibilities. In class his behavior also got worse but it never became violent or dangerous for other children. (mostly running away out of class on busy moments).

Communication between school teachers and Stibo professionals could not bring up any other conclusions in what was triggering this violent and aggressive behavior during STIBO time. STIBO and school (director, care coordinator & bridge figure) decided to try talking about external help with the parents. Initiative from now on was on the side of school but always together with STIBO responsible. Like this the gained trust with mom could be retained while school could invite both parents for discussing further possibilities parents on M's aggression.

In the first meeting mom and dad arrived in closed ranks. Dad was doing the talking (with neutral interpreter) confirming the behavior but letting us know that this is the responsibility and the job of the family. They will take care of these problems. If necessary they would consult a friend of family psychologist.

In the week after this conversation the aggression of M became more than dangerous. In STIBO We use real fork and knives to stimulate independent eating. At a certain moment M. points a knife to one of the professionals expressing his need "I am hungry right now".

When the STIBO professionals talk about this incident with mom (when she comes to pick M up), Mom lets us know that she wants a divorce and is willing to let school / STIBO help her in doing the best for M. This is her concern, this is what she wants.

It is now almost the end of the school period and just a few months before summer holiday. In

cooperation with CLB (External Health Centre for School Children Support and guidance) the best way to start the help is a registration for doing several psychological tests by the local University Hospital. There is a waiting list but school / CLB managed to get a priority considering the case.

What happened after these events is unclear .. dad was diagnosed with cancer, mom expressed to she had to be with him in this difficult period and the family moved to Algeria for a few months until dad passed away. When they came back M the new school year already had started. M had to go to another school (6-12y olds). School organized M's transfer to the basic school (across the street). His little brother was still in school / STIBO so mom still could do her talks when he was picked up. The new school couldn't take so much time for this and after a few months M was asked to change school.

## QUESTIONS

- ❖ CHILD LEVEL : Which elements could have made it possible to find the triggers for this behavior more easy ?
- ❖ TEAM LEVEL : Which other partners (next to STIBO, school & parents, CLB) could be useful in dealing with this case ?
- ❖ ENVIRONNEMENT LEVEL : How could it be possible to deal with the different perception / appreciation for parents towards school and daycare ? (so both parents in this case would feel the sense of urgency in talking about M and not only the mom). How to work with this ?
- ❖ PARENT LEVEL : where does parenting support ends and professional help starts ?