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Recommendations for and good practices of policies on inclusion for young children: a policy paper for local and national governments.

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Reading guide

This publication was made for local policy makers. But local communities are part of a national system and recommendations for local policy makers cannot be made without reference to the national (or even supra-national) level. Also, policy recommendations on inclusion always refer to the practice in institutions. So in this paper the first priority is the description and recommendations at the local level, but with reference to the national political level and to the work in the institutions.

This publication is based on international literature but foremost on information on policy and practice in Amsterdam, Berlin, Copenhagen, Gent, Ljubljana and Rotterdam produced by participants in the *Social Inclusion, Education and Urban Policy for Young Children* Erasmus+ project.

In this Erasmus+ project eleven international partners work together to develop instruments to promote social inclusion, intercultural competences and – from an urban perspective – to combat discrimination and segregation.

The six cities participating in this project are all facing population growth and the need for inclusive policy and education. Therefore they have to provide the necessary conditions to support the development and education of young children and their families in the cities.

The partners work from several perspectives: research, education, policy and the work field of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC), and exchange between the partners offers opportunities to find sustainable answers. The partners also form a *City Network*, in which the participating cities, Amsterdam, Berlin, Copenhagen, Ghent, Ljubljana and Rotterdam, exchange ideas about social inclusion – from a policy level to work conditions in the work field.

For more information about this project, see: www.amsterdamuas.com/citiesincludingchildren

Content

1. Preface.
2. What is inclusion?
3. Why inclusion and a growing urgency for an effective set of policies on inclusion?
4. Recommendations for policy on inclusion on the national level.
5. Recommendations on the local level.
6. Six city impressions with the national systems of education and care.

1. Preface

“Diversity is a fact, but inclusion is a choice we can make” (Janina Kugel, Chief Human resources officer of Siemens AG)¹

Childcare International was one of the partners in an Erasmus+ project on inclusion in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC).² Yvette Vervoort and Serv Vinders took part on behalf of Childcare International. Childcare International was one of the partners in the project. Other colleagues from five countries and six cities, Amsterdam and Rotterdam in the Netherlands, Ghent in Belgium, Berlin in the Federal Republic of Germany, Copenhagen in Denmark and Ljubljana in Slovenia, also took part. All cities share an urban context. We are very grateful to all our colleagues in these cities. They were a great inspiration and they showed us very exciting examples of inclusion.

In this paper we concentrate on the role of the local government in creating inclusion for children from the age of zero to eight years old. This is the period of childcare and the first years of primary education, with an emphasis on the childcare period. Not all countries or cities have the same scheme for childcare and primary education. But in our project we have seen evidence of resemblance despite the different systems. Because of the urban context of all the cities, our recommendations can be used in all the countries and cities in this project, even if these cities are different from each other, different in size (Berlin has 3,5 million inhabitants and Ljubljana has 280.000 inhabitants), different in the development on diversity (Amsterdam and Rotterdam are cities with a majority of inhabitants with an immigration background, Berlin is a city with a major minority group (of Turkish origin), Copenhagen has a majority of Danish inhabitants with a strong common cultural base and minorities finding their way into the city and its culture, Ghent is very diverse city with many young people and students and a base for migrants from eastern Europe, Ljubljana has a very homogenous population with one minority group (Roma)). To make it even more complex the concept of inclusion has a different meaning in different countries. But with all the differences we found much common ground, especially in our basic values and in our view of “the child”.

Three questions were central in our discussions and in our research: what is inclusion and why is inclusion important? And: can we find a common understanding among different views and different circumstances?

An important element of our common understanding was our shared understanding of the importance of education and care and common elements of practice.

We also shared some values like:

Every life is of equal value.

Everyone should be made to feel that they belong.

Differences between children and between adults should be seen as resources for learning.

The right of children to an education of high quality in their community should be acknowledged.

These values have become a legal basis in the UN convention on the Rights of the child³. All the countries that participate in our project have ratified this convention. So in the countries of this Erasmus+ project inclusion is more than a value. It is legally binding and has a political basis. Too often this legal basis is forgotten in the discussions in our societies.

¹ Handelsblatt 24-07-2015

² See attachment

³ Ratification and signed 20 November 1989

But we can see that the legal basis is important but not enough. In Europe we can see that in countries and cities exclusion is growing. The discussion on inclusion and exclusion has never been so important as in recent years.

If we want to stop the trend to exclusion, we have to convince the citizens in our cities and countries and win their hearts and minds. A central conclusion of this policy paper will be that we must demonstrate with values why inclusion is good for society and for the great majority of citizens.

We have to convince people with arguments and with a good set of policy arrangements that inclusion can work. The policy arrangements are the central issue in this paper. The underlying assumption of this paper is that a good set of policies that is proven to be beneficial for all or the great majority of citizens and children will have a positive effect on the debate on inclusion (exclusion). One of the conclusions of our project is that in the six cities and five countries that are part of this Erasmus+ project some very important and positive policy arrangements are already in place and have a positive effect in practice. There are already very good examples of well-functioning inclusive policies. Although they often prove to be successful, too many citizens in the cities and countries do not know about the positive effects.

We have seen that sometimes new policy arrangements have been formulated that lack some essential conditions for successful practice. Sometimes good intentions in combination with lacking conditions do more harm, especially in a time of growing support for exclusion.

So the central part of this paper is a description of positive examples, based on sound policies. But this emphasis on sound politics alone without a story on the values and benefits of inclusion is not enough. These more fundamental descriptions are found in some of the other Intellectual outputs of our Erasmus+ project. So this paper must be read in the context of the total programme. But first we have to answer the question what is inclusion? This is not a trivial question that is easy to answer.

2. What is inclusion?

How is inclusive education/ECEC seen in our different countries? In our present Erasmus + project, the political recommendations were just one part of the total report. Another part was the description of the different interpretations of inclusive education⁴ in the participating countries and cities. From that part we learned that the interpretations are changing and are different in the participating cities and countries. We have recognised two main elements of a definition of inclusion: the strategy of creating equal opportunities and considering diversity as an added value: equality of opportunities and diversity as assets.

The inequality of socio-economic-status and inequality of opportunities of young people are the main reason for the strategy of equal opportunities. The added value of inclusion is the basis of the strategy of diversity, creating opportunities to learn from each other. Both strategies can be helpful to create the best possibilities in the development of children. The aim is to offer (high) minimum standards for all children, to give equal access, to achieve the fullest potential of all children, to enhance citizenship and to use identity as a positive agent of change.

Therefore in this paper, Inclusive education is *"an ongoing process aimed at offering quality education for all while respecting diversity and the different needs and abilities, characteristics and learning expectations of the students and communities, eliminating all forms of discrimination"*⁵ (In this definition both strategies can be identified. *"A systematic approach to inclusion focuses on providing high quality education in Early Childcare Education and Care (ECEC) in mainstream schools that effectively meets the academic and social learning needs of all the learners in the local*

⁴ IO1, 2018.

⁵ UNESCO IBE, 2008, p.18).

community, including children and students with migrant background, a multi- and/or minority language background, gifted students, LGBT families and students with disabilities.”

In the beginning the concept of inclusion was primarily focused on ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious diversity and on children with handicaps.

Whereas economic motives played a major role in immigration in the 80's, since the influx of refugees from former Yugoslavia Europe has faced a new challenge of including immigrants who come from war zones surrounding Europe.

More than three decades after the first major demographic changes in ECEC and, related to this, the theoretical debate, significant changes in our societies pose new challenges for current ECEC professionals and for local policy. A significantly larger number of minorities, increasing heterogeneity between and among minorities, and a broader definition of identities of parents and children have widened the horizon but have also posed new challenges for ECEC practices. The changes in our societies make it important to make inclusion a major topic of discussion and seek effective policies. In the next chapter we will try to explore further the concepts of equality and diversity in relation to inclusion.

3. Why inclusion and a growing urgency for an effective set of policies on inclusion?

Diversity cannot be denied in most of the world, especially in countries of the EU. Diversity is a fact of life in some cities more than in other cities, also in our Erasmus+ project. Amsterdam for example is a city of majorities of minorities. There is no group that represents more than 50% of all inhabitants. Ljubljana on the other end of the spectrum is more homogeneous. But where diversity is more or less a fact it is not always regarded as positive. The debate in many countries in the EU is about the effects of diversity on the development of society, or some special groups in society. We believe that effective policies on inclusion can diminish the negative discussion on diversity and inclusion. That is why we will concentrate on effective policies in our cities and countries. But it is good to stipulate that in our definition we see diversity not only as a fact or a problem but also as a positive value:

- We believe that valuing some people more than others is unethical.
- Maintaining barriers to some students' participation in the cultures, curricula and communities of local schools is unacceptable.
- Preserving school cultures, policies and practices that are non-responsive to the diversity of learners perpetuates inequalities.
- Thinking that school changes made for some will not benefit others is short-sighted.
- Viewing differences between students as problems to be overcome is disrespectful and limits learning opportunities.

The issues are not simple and answers are far from straightforward. But as stated in our definition of inclusion we see diversity as an asset, but inclusion is also a means to more equal opportunities for (all) children. If we look at inclusion as a means to achieve more equal opportunities the question must be answered if equal opportunities are always linked to inclusion. For example in the Netherlands the equal opportunities of minority-groups in the 19th and 20th centuries was enhanced by a policy of exclusion between different religious groups. The so called "*verzuiling*" (pillar policy) had a positive effect on the opportunities of children from these groups. But it lost its dominance in the third quarter of the 20th century. But it is always good to look at specific circumstances and not see diversity and inclusion as nearly two equal concepts.

If we see inclusion as a mean to more equal opportunities, we have a growing body of research on equal opportunities, especially for young children (the group of ECEC children).

Some research by Heckman⁶ shows that the highest rate of economic return to provide more equality is in the investment in good (childcare) provisions for disadvantaged young children and their parents. Recently van Huizen and Plantenga⁷ and Havnes and Mogstad⁸ put Heckmann's conclusions in a more European context but found in general that the conclusion that high quality childcare provisions were beneficial to the development of young children was only true for disadvantaged groups.

⁶ Heckman, J.J., S.H. Moon, R. Pinto, P.A. Savelyev, A. Yavitz (2010) The rate of return to the HighScope Perry Preschool Program, *Journal of Public Economics* 114-128 and Heckmann, J.J. Skill formation and the Economics of Investing in Disadvantaged Children, vol. 312 Issue 5782 pp. 1900-1902c

⁷ Van Huizen & Plantenga (2015): Universal Child Care and Children's Outcomes Van Huizen, T.M. and Plantenga, J.; UU 2015: Universal Childcare and Children's Outcomes – A Meta-Analysis of Evidence from Natural Experiments.

⁸ Havnes, T. & Mogstad, M. (2014). Is universal childcare leveling the playing field? *Journal of Public Economics*, 127, pp 100-114

Van Huizen and Plantenga conclude: „One of the most robust findings of this study is that quality matters significantly: across many different specifications, using different samples and controls, and measuring child care quality in different ways, high quality ECEC arrangements consistently produce more favorable outcomes. Furthermore, there is no evidence that the effects of ECEC fade out. Interestingly, our results from the US show that the effects may fade out within the first years of school, but that the long run effects (in terms of completed education and labor market success during adulthood) are more favorable than the immediate effects (measured during early childhood). The results show that the gains of ECEC are concentrated within the group of disadvantaged children. A study that underpins the positive effects of early intervention for some of the most important subgroups of inclusive policies. But it specifies also that given that the gains from quality investments materialize in the long run, it is important that policies focusing on increasing coverage should take these longer-term gains into account and not compromise on quality.“⁹

Children of parents with a higher Socio Economic Status (SES) did not benefit from good quality childcare provisions or benefited less. The premise is that high quality care was essential to a positive effect on development and to more equality. This was an eye-opening insight: it shows the economic benefits of investing in the development of children in their early years, piles up skills, provides greater success to more children, creates more productivity and reduces social spending for society, but only if the quality of the services is adequate. A policy paper like this one cannot ignore ECEC quality. The debate on benefits of inclusion is therefore linked with the (European) discussion on quality as stated in the CoRe report¹⁰. Most prominent is the plea for an emphasis on the systemic quality. The competent system is placed in the centre of the quality discussions.

Among others in Intellectual Output no 1 (Fukkink cs.) and 4 (Anckie van Kerkhoven) there is an extended description on the consequences of the findings of the CoRe research and among others the research by Fukkink on the importance of high quality pre-service training and high standards of in service training¹¹. In this Intellectual Output we want to refer to this part of our Erasmus+ project (Intellectual Output no. 1 and no. 4)

The implication of the need for high quality standards for local communities is, however, that they usually cannot set standards themselves since in most countries the national government is responsible for quality arrangements such as child-staff ratio. In this policy paper we can only emphasize the importance of quality arrangements and conclude that the conclusions of this part of the project must be linked with among others the Intellectual Output no 1 and no 4.

⁹ Huizen, T. van & Plantenga, J. (2015) Universal Child Care and Children's Outcomes: A Meta-Analysis from natural experiments, Tjalling C. Koopmans Research Institute, Discussion paper Series 15-13

¹⁰ Competence Requirements in Early Childhood Education and Care, A study for the European Commission Directorate-general for Education and Culture. University of East London, Cass School of Education and University of Ghent for Social Welfare Studies. London and Ghent September 2011. Authors: Mathois Urban, Michel van den Broek e.o.

¹¹ Egert, F, Fukkink, R., & Eckhardt, A.G. (2018). Impact of in-service professional development programs for early childhood teachers on quality ratings and child outcomes: A meta-analysis. *Review of Educational Research* 88(3), 401-433.

Another important question that has to be answered is if universal provisions or targeted provisions have a more beneficial effect on the development of children, especially children from low SES families or migrant children. Akgündüz and Leseman¹², De Haan and Fukkink tend to advocate universal provisions, instead of special arrangements for the children from low SES families and migrant families. De Haan's study suggests bigger learning effects for those children if they are part of a more mixed class- environment. Fukkink points at the fact that restricted effects of "Vroeg- en Voorschoolse Educatie" (VVE) (Early education in childcare and primary schools) programmes in the Netherlands are due among others to the segregation of provisions in these programmes.¹³

The results of the scientific research on this matters tend to prove that high quality early intervention programmes (high quality childcare) tend to be beneficial for children of low SES parents or with a migrant background. There are also some robust indications that quality matters very much and that inclusive provisions tend to be positive especially for those children. This is the basis for the recommendations for and good practices of policies for young children. These recommendations and good practices on inclusion will be the content of our next chapter.

4. Recommendation for a successful policy on inclusion in general

In the first place this policy paper sees inclusive policies not only as a policy-recommendation for so-called target groups: we have described the equality-argument in the previous chapter. However important this argument is, we have a broader definition. In the definition we use in this policy paper we also see inclusion as an enrichment for all groups if people/children with different backgrounds can live and learn together. This part of the definition that we use is often forgotten. Of course it is also seen as part of the problem. But our understanding is that these problems are to a certain extent caused by the circumstances of institutions. The problem is not the diversity or inclusion but the circumstances people live in.

In general ECEC can only play such an important social, economic and pedagogical role if the following requirements are met:

- access to ECEC Provisions for all with particular attention to specific groups;
- a holistic perspective, when ECEC is linked to health care and social care;
- high-quality ECEC programmes;
- qualified staff;
- coherent policies and
- adequate funding.

We will come back to these requirements later.

For us it is a strong argument to try to mix different groups better in cities, or as we will describe later, try to mix groups of children better in ECEC institutions (as we will see for example in Ghent).

¹² Arkgündüz en Leseman, CARE ECEC congres Utrecht 3 november 2015. And De Haan (et al) (2013) Targeted versus mixed preschools and kindergartens. Fukkink (et al) (2015) Met een blik op de toekomst: Een meta-analyse van de effecten van VVE op de ontwikkeling van kinderen in Nederland.

¹³ Fukkink, R., Jilink, L , & Oostdam, R. (2017). A meta-analysis of the Impact of early Childhood Interventions on the Development of Children in the Netherlands: An inconvenient Truth? European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, 5, 656-666. Doi:10.1080/1350293X.2017.1356579

A second remark is that in some cases inclusion does not work or not enough. Inclusion is no law in itself. Inclusive institutions are preferable to special institutions. This is the main recommendation of this policy paper, based on scientific research. But special institutions are a necessity if the child is not supported in a regular facility or if the other children are seriously hindered in their development. This sounds contrary to the general policies of inclusion. But the acceptance of inclusion by parents and professionals will be encouraged if, in necessary cases, exceptions to the general inclusion policy are made. In some countries and cities the exception became more or less the rule and special institutions were no longer an escape route. But the costs of special institutions became exceptionally high (up to 30% of education costs in Denmark for example). But there is a group of children who benefit from special arrangements. Each city has its own definition for children who attend special schools. The percentages vary between 1.7% of all children in Amsterdam who go to a special primary school to 5% of all children in Ljubljana. The percentage of children with special needs in ECEC varies from nearly 0% to 3.6 %. This is of course less than the percentage and costs in Denmark mentioned above.

It seems that recently the cities of our project have found a good balance in ECEC between regular and special ECEC. In general this is not always the case for the education system.

4.1 What are the target groups for inclusive policies?

The remarks made above are very important but we must not forget that a central argument for inclusion (the second part of our definition) is the equality argument.

In general, if we restricted this paper to children with special needs, we would fail to see the broader picture of inclusion. We would miss children from families with a low SES or from other cultures. To give an indication: in Amsterdam 1.7% of the children from 4-12 years are entitled to special education. But 15% of all children of that age group have a low SES. In Rotterdam this percentage is 19.9%. This group of children is much larger than the group entitled to special education or special ECEC.

In practice the following target groups are mentioned in the current policies of the participating cities:

- Children from a country with a different cultural background (“Nicht-Deutscher-Herkunft”= Non German Origin). These children often speak another language than German at home).
- Children from families with a low socio-economic-status (SES).
- Children (in all socio-economic groups) with behavior problems, for instance ADHD.
- Children (in all socio-economic groups) with physical problems like hearing problems or blind children.
- Sometimes specific groups like Roma children.
- In recent times the influx of refugee children. These specifications, except for refugee children, are also mentioned in the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on special needs in education (June 1994).¹⁴

4.2 Strategies for a more inclusive society.

¹⁴ The Salamanca Statement and framework for action on special needs education. Salamanca, Spain 7-10 June 1994.

Based on research by Nicaïsse from the KU Leuven ¹⁵ we can distinguish three different strategies in the 6 cities and 4 nations of our EU project and City Network. These strategies aim to bring the right balance in the elements of a good ECEC and educational system to create the best rights and best practices for children.

Nicaïsse describes 3 sets of policies to create the right balance:

- *Compensation approach*
- *Non-discrimination approach*
- *Intercultural educational approach*

The main characteristics of the three approaches are:

Compensation for disadvantages: as early as possible, as holistic as possible. Instruments are parenting support, early intervention and extended schools.

Non-discrimination: transforming the selection machine into an emancipation boost. Instruments are among others mixed schools, late tracking, importance of higher education, no grade retention.

Intercultural education: recognition of varieties of acculturation but fostering of consensual pathways. Instruments are among others: legal measures, bilingual education, training for diversity, school-community liaison.

Nicaïsse sees all the strategies as useful strategies. And we have seen all three strategies in the 6 cities of our project. He makes no explicit choice, it is not either/or but all elements can be fruitful, but in our project we have seen that in some cities some strategies fit the culture of the city or the history of the cities or the political preferences better.

These three instruments can be seen in one way or another in our six cities and five countries, but as stated above with different emphasis.

4.3 National level and local level

The focus of this report is the recommendations on the local level. But for some of the cities policies on a local level are dependent on decisions made on the national level. Some countries already have quality and financial systems that support inclusion. Other countries lack some elements that could be favourable for inclusive policies. In the Netherlands, for example, there is no national curriculum for young children and there are no specific arrangements for some children till the age of 2 or 2 ½ years old. In Flanders the structural quality arrangements for children from up to 3 years old could be better. These recommendations on a national level are extremely important for the work done on the local level. Our main focus is, however, the local level. In addition to in-classroom professional development supports, the pre-service training and education of ECEC staff is of great importance.

¹⁵ Idesbald Nicaïsse: Towards greater social equity in education, main challenges, steps forward for European education systems.

These recommendations are also made in different publications, be it in other words, for example in the CoRe report ¹⁶ and the report by Jan Peeters and Eurofound.¹⁷

5. Recommendations for local policy-makers.

1. Long-term commitment, openness to debate and scientific evidence

A successful inclusive local policy needs long term stable commitment. Long-term commitment does not mean that the communities should stick to a course once chosen. It means commitment to the goal of inclusion in ECEC and the willingness to learn from successful (or unsuccessful) programmes or ideas. All the cities in our project have a long standing tradition in inclusive local policies on ECEC, even with different political coalitions. This is the proof of a long-term commitment: does it stick even after local coalition governments have been changed. One proposal for reaching this goal is a fundament of the policy that is built on a broad consensus that is supported by different local parties with different political backgrounds and, furthermore, a tradition of evaluation of programmes and initiatives and making use of scientific research.

Examples of a long term commitment can be found in all cities. In Ljubljana there is a 10-year strategy on ECEC. This strategy is part of a long term commitment to high quality ECEC. The work to come to a strategy is not only a responsibility of the local council. Experts from the field of ECEC and parents have an important role in the drafting of the 10-year plan. The plan is of course in the end a political decision. Since 2003 Berlin has had a recognisable strategy, which started with the Berliner “Bildungsprogram” (Berlin’s Early Years Programme) and “Sprachförderung” (language-program) as the basis of the work. The formulation of the “Bildungsprogram” was, as in Ljubljana, a cooperation between scientific researchers, experts from the field and the city of Berlin. The cities of Ghent and Copenhagen have a long history of investing in ECEC provisions and in professional support in the ECEC sector. In Ghent over 35 years of pedagogical coaching have supported the design of innovative practices and improved the work with different vulnerable groups, such as children living in poverty, children with special needs etc. In Copenhagen dialogue is a central concept of the administration working together with the field of ECEC. Amsterdam and Rotterdam have since 2004, when the system changed in the Netherlands, arrived at a coherent strategy. This was not made easy by a change to a more national system, with a greater role of the sector and a greater emphasis on the relation with the labour market. The consequences could be seen in the period between 2004 and 2018 with in the first years an enormous extension of the system and a also very great decline between 2009 and 2015. The national system was also changed in 2018 and now in 2019. For these two cities the circumstances were less favourable. But the openness in debate could also been seen in Amsterdam and Rotterdam within the given framework. The Dutch system makes it less easy to come to a long-term commitment and an open debate on diversity especially with the role of national government and the mixed system of non-profit and profit providers.

The city’s departments in Ghent, Berlin, Ljubljana and Copenhagen have been developing a clear vision on ECEC, of which being inclusive is one of the key elements. Also, the principles developed by The Diversity in Early Childhood Education Network (DECET) are used in training and implemented on the work floor. The ECEC departments of all cities continuously work on systemic quality and on developing innovative practice, for which partnerships are developed with universities and university colleges.

¹⁶ Competence Requirements in Early Childhood Education and Care, A study for the European Commission Directorate-general for Education and Culture. University of East London, Cass School of Education and University of Ghent for Social Welfare Studies. London and Ghent September 2011. Authors: Mathois Urban, Michel van den Broek e.o.

¹⁷ <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/report/2015/working-condition-social-policies/early-childhood-care-working-conditions-training-and-quality-of-services-a-systematic-review>

In Berlin there is a long-term commitment but this commitment has a different outlay than the ones mentioned above, for example, Copenhagen and Ghent. In Berlin the emphasis is more on the responsibility of the providers. For example the provisions for internal and external evaluation have a very important role for the providers. And the support for providers for inclusion measures is more on the basis of providing good conditions (extra personnel if needed) but leaves a lot of responsibility with the providers.

Of course unexpected events can happen. An example was the influx of many refugees in Berlin, in 2015. With a great effort and extra money many so called “Willkommensklassen” (Welcome classes in primary schools) were created. The city of Berlin had to improvise and at the same time not forget the demand for places by regular inhabitants. However they encountered a very tense situation, since the need for nursery places had been extremely high in recent years. Missing places and missing staff could not be filled in the short or even medium term.

But in general a well devised long-term commitment with professional support for the providers/personnel is the most important factor. Without this long-term commitment, especially the part of inclusion is vulnerable.

2. Universal provisions instead of targeted provisions

By building a broad coalition of support among low-income as well as middle class groups, high-quality ECEC is more likely to be maintained as a social and political priority even through times of economic austerity and frequent administrative and political changes. The core of inclusion, in the opinion of the participants is that all children can visit (non-special) institutions together. The forces that drive toward targeted provisions are in practice very strong. Parents want the best institutions for their children and they regard provisions where all children come from the same sociological/economic background as the best choice. The result can be very homogeneous with non-diverse groups of children. But if the quality of the services is good and visible for parents, then universal provisions will be supported by a majority of parents.

The important lesson is that winning the middle-class majority’s support is important and needs more than arguments alone. Quality of the services will win over most of the parents.

Investments in disadvantaged groups are beneficial for the whole society. Services with a social mix are important for positive child development and to avoid ‘ghettoization’, but they are highly challenging to achieve in segregated neighbourhoods. But it must also be stated that inclusion at any price is not always the right way. It will not be in the interest of the quality in the institutions either if there is a forced strategy, which will lead to resistance from middle class parents in the end.

The driving forces of segregation are strong and inclusion has only a chance in the local policy as a counter-segregation strategy. To come to an accepted mix and to avoid segregation is difficult but the cities in our project have developed some very successful strategies, which can be divided in three main groups

1. Central registration of children for childcare institutions to prevent segregation (Tinkelbel)

This strategy is used in Ghent. The city operates a central registration point. This registration point seeks to create a social mix in all facilities that reflects the true diversity in Ghent. The aims of the system are: increase accessibility (especially for groups who do not always find ECEC at a glance and as a preferred provision), come to a social mix, provide childcare in the community. Instead of “first come, first served”, 20% of places are “reserved” for priority groups. Tinkelbel is for all provisions and has a very positive effect on inclusion. Various schemes like Tinkelbel have been tried in different cities. The success in Ghent is very encouraging.

2. Inclusion of all children in regular institutions instead of special ones

Try to persuade parents to bring their children to “normal” providers instead of special provisions by strengthening the workforce when children with special needs or with extra need of empowerment become part of a group in a regular institution.

This strategy was developed in Berlin. Regular institutions have the possibility to get extra staff if certain children need extra attention. Depending on the amount of extra support, institutions can get extra staff. . There are extra hours per child depending on the kind of support needed (A and B children with $\frac{1}{4}$ resp. $\frac{1}{2}$ of the full time contract per child). The targets of the policy are the institutions and the teachers/caregivers.

The positive aspect does not only concern better/more attention to the child in the group and for the group. It is also the recognition that extra attention is possible if extra attention is needed. The importance of this recognition can be seen in different countries where inclusion is claimed by politics but the tools and workforce are not enough for the extra work that is needed. This is the most important reason why inclusion schemes are not trusted by professionals and parents. In the education system (not the childcare part) In Germany and the Netherlands parents and professionals ask for a moratorium in the inclusion policies (especially in primary education). The Berlin example is a very sophisticated example as a counter argument to parents and professionals. Strategies for extra qualified staff are also in place in other cities. This sounds contrary to the general policies of inclusion. But the acceptance of inclusion by parents and professionals will be encouraged if, in necessary cases, exceptions to the general inclusion policy are made. In some countries and cities the exception became more or less the rule and special institutions did not only become an escape route for institutions. But the costs of special institutions became exceptionally high (up to 30% of education costs in Denmark for example). It seems that recently the cities of our project have found a good balance between regular and special institutions. This cannot be said generally about the education systems. They do not wish to 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 environments, 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 that it becomes unnoticeable.

3. Highly qualified support system for teachers/caregivers for the different questions and challenges in the practice

This strategy is also used in most cities (for instance Ghent, Ljubljana, Amsterdam and Rotterdam). But the practice in Copenhagen is exemplary. The city of Copenhagen did not only provide some districts with the greatest challenges regarding inclusion with extra staff in the groups, with good pre- and in-service training but also with a support system of psychologist, speech therapists, specialised educationalist and a backing for teachers/caregivers and the managers of the institutions. The direct effect is a trusted claim to try to come to an inclusive system. In Copenhagen the area in and around Norebro with around 100.000 inhabitants has a support-staff of over 140 specialist.

There are of course more strategies but these three strategies already have a positive track record and can function in all systems (with the support of national agencies if the system is to a great extent centralised).

3. Inclusion requires extra funding compared to the "normal" cost of ECEC, and requires active local government.

From the examples above it is clear that a long-term commitment from local government and administrations is needed. This entails additional funding for the support-system and for the facilities - additional compared with "normal", "standard" facilities. But for special facilities (like special education in primary-schools), the costs are already very high. The result of fewer special facilities, with less costs, but extra funding for inclusive facilities is not clear from the start. It is always risky to start looking for extra money. But the examples of partly failed inclusive policies were to an extent the result of insufficient extra money for the new policy.

The result is that practitioners or parent-organisations are against new policies because the financial considerations seem to be the driving force behind inclusive policies. Mistrust of new inclusive experiments is now normal in many European countries.

Another factor is that short time costs are visible directly but long time benefits will only be visible in the future. This conclusion is valid for the extra costs for the administration and the long term effects on the society. But if we look to what we saw in the six cities of our project, it is a sensible recommendation that you cannot put costs on hold at the start of a new policy. It will be an extra argument against sensible policy arrangements. And sometimes sensible policies (see the example of Danish politics on special schools) do not always cost more money. But the money saved has to be used for a new inclusive arrangement.

4. Cooperation with parents.

It is a general principle that the parents are the first educators. Caring for children and educating them is ideally a question of cooperation, of mutual trust, of responsibility shared between parents and professionals. While this is easy enough to understand and agree with, it is not all that simple to put into practice.

As a top-down attitude of "teacher knows best" is not very conducive to the creation of a relation of openness and trust with parents. Competent ECEC systems recognise parents as the first educators and engage in a process of co-constructing education, sharing the responsibility and looking for ways to support the child and respond to his/her needs.

Discussing the child's development with the parents can be very tricky. It is important not to antagonise the parents, to try to follow their pace in accepting that there may be some issues with their child.

The "introduction" period with and for parents and children is quite a positive practice (very often applied in childcare, not as often in pre-school) for all families but certainly for families in vulnerable situations. Parents and children get to know the centre and vice versa. During the first period the basis for mutual trust is laid. The same goes for involving the parents in discussing the child's strengths and weaknesses and how to work with the child.

In Berlin there is a much elaborated system of introduction that was developed in cooperation with parents' organisations, scientific institutions, providers and the city of Berlin.

The truth is that cooperation of (professional) provision and their staff with parents is one of the most extensively studied but also one of the most difficult subjects. Without extra support from local communities and local government this will stay a difficult problem for all those involved.

The staff needs to develop a pedagogical approach that welcomes diverse family cultures and facilitates a reciprocal dialogue with parents by building a relationship of trust. Such reciprocal and respectful exchange benefits both parties involved. It allows families to benefit from the support provided by the service. It also provides the staff with the parents' expert knowledge of their children and can support a deeper understanding of each child's development.

The pedagogical practices developed within the ECEC centre should reflect different understanding about care, education and upbringing of young children that are negotiated in contexts where contrasting values and beliefs emerge. When serving children and families living in difficult conditions, cooperation with local agencies responsible for education, health and social services becomes crucial. Early childhood practitioners should therefore work in close collaboration with other professionals (school teachers, social workers...). Teachers and managers should listen to and negotiate with parents about practices. That is not to say that teachers should drop their beliefs and values and do whatever parents ask. But they should be willing to enter into discussions with parents.

Sometimes it is even difficult to bring parents and provision together. In Ghent an interesting experiment was started with the so called “Brugfunctionaris” (Bridge person), who tries to build a bridge between parents and institutions.

These “Brugfunctionarissen” are able to convince parents that they will continue to lead the way in educating their children, but that children are also part of a sometimes different value system in ECEC and schools.

5. A coherent quality system is needed.

Quality matters! High quality ECEC is the basis for successful inclusion. Quality is not only the sum of structural quality measures, such as child-teacher ratio, or the number of children in a group or the number of square meters inside and outside the provision. Quality is the characteristic of the entire childhood system.

All teams and practitioners must have trust in a pedagogical coaching system and have ample Continuing Professional Development (CPD). In addition to in-classroom professional development support, the pre-service training and education of ECEC staff is of critical concern. These recommendations were also made in other terms in different publications, such as the CoRe report¹⁸ and the report by Jan Peeters and Eurofound.¹⁹

A sole focus on individual practitioners gives too narrow an approach. First competences need to be present on the individual level but ECEC quality requires more and affects different levels: appropriate staffing, contact-free hours, shared reflection, pedagogical support, strong leadership, professional networks, supportive policies etc., or as it is stated in the CoRe report: “A key finding is that ‘competence’ in the early childhood education and care context has to be understood as a characteristic of the entire early childhood system. A key feature of a ‘competent system’ is its support for individuals to realise their capability to develop responsible and responsive practices that respond to the needs of children and families in ever-changing societal contexts.”

¹⁸ Competence Requirements in Early Childhood Education and Care, A study for the European Commission Directorate-general for Education and Culture. University of East London, Cass School of Education and University of Ghent for Social Welfare Studies. London and Ghent September 2011. Authors: Mathois Urban, Michel van den Broek e.o.

¹⁹ <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/report/2015/working-condition-social-policies/early-childhood-care-working-conditions-training-and-quality-of-services-a-systematic-review>



While CoRe did not specifically focus on certain groups of children and families (e.g. context of poverty, migration or children with specific needs) this quote does show how a competent system can deliver the required quality in changing contexts, in contexts of diversity. Competent systems are expected to be able to go beyond the “mainstream” service delivery.

The question would then no longer be “who can fit in our ECEC service”; it would be “How would you like us to answer your needs?”, which may well be the essence of inclusion. This way, a really competent system would be able to deal with relevant issues in ECEC, such as diversity and inclusion, in a professional, inquiring, searching and solution oriented way.

In this sense, the search is not for competences that are specifically required to work with specific groups (families in poverty, children with special needs and so forth) but for overall competent systems, benefitting all children and families, including those that may require some specific attention.

A positive aspect is how there seems to be a willingness to make (even minor) adjustments to the setting and materials to accommodate children with special needs. Being open to such changes to make more children feel welcome and at ease, could maybe lead to considerations on more fundamental adjustments (e.g. in curricula, approach of “special needs”): to no longer have the child to adjust to the school system, but the school to adjust to children?

Inspiring practices are mentioned in the other intellectual output of this project, such as allowing children to use their mother tongue.

6. Cooperation with other services.

The idea of a more integrated approach is now on many policy and research agendas. The underlying concept is that 1 plus 1 equals more than 2.

In several cities, for example in Berlin, the idea of “family centres” is being introduced (also in Sweden and the UK). The idea is simple but compelling: parents who bring their children to a kindergarten or pre-school can get information, advice and help on other issues such as the labour market, finances, health and so on. Sometimes provisions for direct help such as dental aid or language teaching are in the centre.

Another variation is a kind of “first step” provision to a kindergarten or pre-school. In or near the ECEC provision parents can just come and talk or play together with their children and get used to the ECEC practice that is sometimes different from the ideas or practice parents have. In Amsterdam and Rotterdam there are also provisions like the Family centres (in a location or as a service). As we cannot expect ECEC professionals to be able to deal with every possible problem, getting engaged in a cooperative kind of network can be very supportive.

Ideally, these provisions can focus on the problem at hand more effectively and it can give the ECEC professional the required support. But cooperation with other services can also be the cooperation of different professionals in an ECEC provision without them being in the same building or the same team. It is clear that ECEC professionals need to be trained and instructed to be able to work together.

This needs an extra effort from the ECEC provisions. This is only successful if the local government is in some way or another a partner in the project that can help to bring professionals together and to support the provisions with extra training. In Ghent and Copenhagen we have seen support programmes from the local government, especially for ECEC personnel.

7. Support across transitions.

Transitions (for example from childcare to school or from one institution to another) are in general the hardest for children from different cultures or from poor families. In our project, especially in the Netherlands (in Amsterdam and Rotterdam), there is a very extensive programme of so called “Integrale Kindercentra” (IKC = Integrated children provision, mostly childcare, school but also health provisions etc.) IKCs have been started on a very large scale. Among other benefits the transitions are simpler: children and parents and teachers/practitioners know the child, the building, the core values etc. already.

8. The space as third educator

In the Reggio Pedagogy ²⁰“the space” is the third “pedagogue”. This is even truer if we think about inclusion. In practice there is the need for a new look at the space regarding inclusion. Not everything is thoroughly studied, but there are indications that for example more small rooms, quiet rooms or part of rooms are needed for children and pedagogues to work with small groups, in quiet conditions. For universities and university colleges in cooperation, for example, with architects a European funded study of this aspect would be very useful. We do not know enough about the space in ECEC and especially not for children with in some ways different wants. This recommendation was made during our discussions. It was not part of the study visits itself.

9. Children with (physical) needs can be part of the provisions.

Interestingly, the definition of inclusion in the minds of non-professionals is the inclusion of children with special needs and children that are called handicapped (physical need for extra support). In our project we have a broader definition and we tried to avoid an emphasis on special needs alone. There are very good examples of an integration of children with special needs (especially physical needs) in a normal institutions. In our project we saw very good examples in Berlin, Copenhagen and Ljubljana and in the end these institutions are not only better for children but the integration also reduces costs for society.

One special problem must be mentioned: the many language programmes used, especially in the Netherlands (Rotterdam and Amsterdam). Language development is a goal for all cities, for example the “Sprachförderung” in Berlin. But special language developmental programs, like “Vroeg en Voorschoolse Educatie” (VVE = Early educational Programs), is a sub-species in all the efforts to enhance language, especially for children with a different language background or children from families that do not speak and read enough with young children. The research by Fukkink and others tends to conclude that these programmes can be beneficial but only if the quality of the educators, the classroom organisation and instructional support and the pedagogical climate in the group have a high standard. In practice the Instructional Support is not organised well enough. And another factor is that the programmes must continue in the first years of primary school (especially in countries with a low entry age to primary schools such as Flanders and the Netherlands in our project). Recent research has shown that the “extra” quality of the childcare years tends to fade away in the first two classes of primary schools.

²⁰ The pedagogy developed in the region of Reggio Emilia

Conclusion for the EU agenda

This list of recommendations has been formulated on the basis of existing practice in one or more cities of our project. Support for further development is needed, in the first place from national governments but also at the European level. ECEC is an important topic on the EU agenda.

The EU issued some highly relevant recommendations and increased the focus on professional development in the field of ECEC in several programmes and funding schemes. Some elements are worth mentioning here:

- the development of the European Quality Framework (EQF);
- the focus on the importance of initial training, combined with Continuous Professional Development (CPD), the on-the-job training;
- the recognition of the complexity of the job and the plea to invest in support for professionals;
- the plea for a systemic approach to professionalization ;
- the plea for more emphasis on the “space” as third pedagogue in relation to inclusion.

We thank the European Union for the opportunity to participate in this European project and we hope that the result of this project will stimulate the participating countries (cities). We also hope that the result will enable the EU to support other countries and agencies on the important issue of inclusion in children's first years of life.”

Serv Vinders and Yvette Vervoort: Childcare International

Attachment

Social Inclusion, Education and Urban Policy for Young Children

Erasmus+ KA2 project 2016-1-NL01-KA203-022974

Intellectual Outputs

<p>01</p>	<p>Literature Review</p> <p><i>A literature review is made with contributions from all participating countries,. In this way a (first) overview over existing knowledge in the field is established and exchange between the researchers/lecturers is taking place. This literature review will also contain descriptions of projects on social inclusion and their methodology. If available, also evaluations of already finished projects are included in the review.</i></p>	<p>Pedagogski Institut, Ljubljana</p> <p>Jerneja jager jerneja.jager@pei.si</p>
<p>02</p>	<p>A competence profile for (coming) professionals in the educational ECEC field</p> <p><i>A profile describing competences for (coming) professionals in the educational ECEC field. Competences include knowledge, values and practice (attitude) – and also include the conditions/measures that are needed to develop these competences. The exchange of knowledge and experience between the participating partners, including students and professionals, is crucial in the development of this set of competences.</i></p>	<p>Professionshøjskolen UCC</p>
<p>03</p>	<p>A film about the ‘inclusive pedagogue’ at work</p> <p><i>An educational film showing best practices of inclusive work in the participating countries and explaining the theories that this practice is based upon.</i></p>	<p>HvA: Hogeschool van Amsterdam</p> <p>Kirsten Nøhr k.nohr@hva.nl</p>

	<p><i>This film helps to communicate the innovative educational views and educational skills for persons who work in the field of social inclusion and urban policy in Europe.</i></p> <p><i>This film gives hand-on instruction and shares the build-up expertise of three of the participating partners.</i></p> <p><i>The film will be produced by a professional film producer (Script Factory) and will be produced in close connection with the partners in the project.</i></p>		
04	<p>Framework for an educational program</p> <p><i>Based on the literature review (01) on inclusion and inter-professional competences profile (02) a concept framework will be designed for an educational program for HE students.</i></p>	<p>HvA</p> <p>Kirsten Nøhr k.nohr@hva.nl</p>	
05	<p>Publication for local policy makers</p> <p><i>Publication for local policy makers on inclusive education and child care with good practices and recommendations or and from the six cities involved.</i></p>	<p>Stichting Kinderopvang Internationaal</p> <p>Yvette Vervoort info@buro8020.nl</p>	

