

## Pedagogical continuity

*Children's need as the starting point (not the institutional organisation) / educate / whole child approach/ participatory work with children*

- Adopt an educate (caring is learning and learning is caring) approach that takes into account children's socio-emotional and physical care needs and values their capabilities along a continuum from home to ECEC and from ECEC to school
- Analyse how existing transitional practices may include or exclude certain children as this can have a significant and lasting effects on their learning opportunities. Become aware that underlying notions of (pre-)school readiness unintentionally exclude the most vulnerable children.
- Rethink a school day of a child, starting from the child, not from the institutional logic. Ensure emotional safety and continuity during the day so children will feel confident enough to explore and become autonomous. Besides the vertical transitions (from one educational environment to the following one), horizontal transitions are also happening on a day to day basis in children's life (e.g. from home to the setting, from the class to the playground, from the class to after school care...
  - Implement a more flexible organisation of time and children's groupings in the daily schedule of (pre-)school work in order to allow children to gradually get acquainted with the new environment.
  - Invest in higher adult-child ratios for preschool/primary school in order to have better educate for a diversity of children during the whole day! (not just in the class)
  - Urge to have flexible policies to deploy teachers, childcare workers, pedagogues, social workers in a school day (e.g. shifts, cooperative time...)
- The necessary resources should be provided for school institutions that have unsuitable lay-outs to rebuild their infrastructure into age-appropriate educate facilities for young children.
- Rethink and rearrange the (pre)school infrastructure and lay-out spaces in order to improve the well-being of children (peaceful eating, toileting, sleeping and appropriate outdoor playing). In primary school institutions, the layout of first-grade classrooms could be re-arranged in a more flexible way in order to allow morning circle conversations, individual and group work, children's self-directed activities and play during free-time.

## Continuity with the home environment and community

*Families' need as the starting point (not the institutional organisation)/co-education/ participatory work with families and communities*

- Prioritise warm welcome policies for newcomer children and parents in (pre-) school instead of lowering children's age for compulsory education in order to increase attendance rates of vulnerable children.
- Develop sustainable familiarisation policies/practices in both ECEC and primary school.
- Create opportunities for daily exchanges and dialogue between teachers and parents in order to facilitate the establishment of reciprocal relationship of trust between families and professionals.
- Introduce activities for involving families on a more flexible basis (drop-in sessions before and after school, informal parent and toddler sessions, workshop in Roma settlements) with the intention of reducing non-attendance of the most vulnerable children.
- Create a community-based network for reaching out to children and families who were not attending ECEC and organise activities (e.g. meeting spaces, playgroups..) for them to get acquainted with the preschool environment

- Implement outreaching activities in communities who are exposed to extreme societal marginalisation such as Roma or Traveller communities, refugee families in closed centres' with the aim of building trust between children, families and educational institution.
- Ensure that the parents and extended family get the advocacy and support they need in an ECEC environment, developing their capacity to cope with the more rigid schools processes such as choice of schools and the application process including appeals.
- Offer a flexible transition program, allowing for all parents, i.e., those who are working, those who have younger children, those with access issues etc. to be able to participate fully in the process.
- Rethink and rearrange the (pre)school infrastructure and lay-out spaces in order to ensure that parents can meet professionals. Creating a welcoming environment for parents will automatically evoke more opportunities to share the educational responsibilities of children.

## Professional continuity

*Inter-institutional professional learning communities and shared critical reflection/future and current staff feels supported and there is an increased shared responsibility and relational expertise of professionals from different institutions to do 'boundary work' together*

- As part of in-service training of professionals, ensure that inter-institutional professional learning communities (of childcare, preschool teachers and primary school teachers) can be established.
  - Invest in pedagogical support of the professional learning communities in order to initiate and accompany the reflection. This can be an external or internal person who takes responsibility for the overall process and can enhance the relational competences of staff to work together and to critically reflect on practices.
  - Support ECEC and schools how they can become better at listening to and translating the voices of children and families in educational practices.
  - Develop a shared vision among ECEC and CSE professionals by challenging the taken for granted assumptions underlying institutional practices (image of the child, image of parents, understanding of learning)
  - Elaborate a joint action-plan for addressing the needs emerged in each context by taking into account the concerns of all actors involved, including plans for outreach work to those children and families who are less present in formal settings
- Jointly implement transition projects by involving ECEC and CSE professionals on an equal basis (reciprocal observations, job shadowing, inter-vision, collective reflection on documentation)
- Evaluate the sustainability of innovative practices developed within the transition projects at each location over the long term – min. two years is required to have sustainable change in vision and organisation that ultimately will make the difference for children and families!
- Develop a deontological framework on information exchange between professionals of different institutions in respect with the privacy law and in respect with the fact that parents are in control and need to give their permission in any case of personal information exchange.
- Invest in good working conditions facilitating INTER-institutional professional collaboration and learning within and across ECEC and CSE institution – such as entitlement to CPD and child-free working hours for collective reflection – even in the context of ECEC split systems.
- In-service training institutions invest in the development of collaborative in-service training for professionals from ECEC and primary schools.
- Revise the pre-service curricula of ECEC professionals and primary school students whether attention is paid to the importance of vertical and horizontal transitions.
- Initiate the debate on curricula alignment of different professional student profiles in relation to transition, image of the child and image of the parent, resisting the top down schoolification pressure and school-readiness thinking.

## Structural continuity

However, a forth consideration is also crucial to support these good practices to work on a broader scale. In order to have warm and inclusive transitions additional work on a structural, more systemic level needs to be done. This is called the importance of *structural continuity* and it concerns the level of governance in order to stimulate pedagogical continuity, continuity with the home and community and professional continuity. Structural measurements and policy visions needs to be developed in order to have systemic change in EU member states.

*Source: Van Laere, K., Boudry, C., Balduzzi, L., Lazzari, A., S., Prodger, A., Welsh, C. Geraghty, S., Režek, M., Mlinar, M., (2019). Sustaining Warm and Inclusive Transitions across the Early Years. Final report with implications for policies and practices. Ljubljana: ERI.*