

# 5 Steps to Quality

TRAINING PACKAGE FOR  
EARLY CHILDHOOD TRAINING PROVIDERS  
European Quality Framework for  
Early Childhood Education and Care



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## I. INTRODUCTION

The goal of this training pack is to introduce the **European Quality Framework for Early childhood Education and Care (EQF<sup>1</sup>)** to ECEC<sup>2</sup> professionals to help them become better acquainted with it in the context of their own practice. The EQF comprehensively deals with the most relevant issues of quality in ECEC. Therefore, effectively disseminating the EQF's content throughout the ECEC sector in Europe (and beyond) towards policymakers, researchers and professionals in the field will benefit the quality of ECEC. With this training for ECEC professionals, the EQF can support the work that is being done on quality within each professional's own provision.

This training pack also makes the link with any relevant or binding national, regional or local frameworks or curricula in any given country. It was designed in Dutch and tested on practitioners in both the Netherlands and Flanders. After adding the experiences of these pilot trainings, the documents were translated into English on behalf of all interested ISSA members.

Trainers who use this pack will need to do some preparatory work, linking the content to the target group and adapting it where necessary. Existing curricula, frameworks, and materials will possibly need to be added. While the training needs to cover all elements in a comprehensive manner, there is some leeway and freedom for the trainer in using this pack. Trainers can choose what to emphasize in relation to the national, regional, or local context.

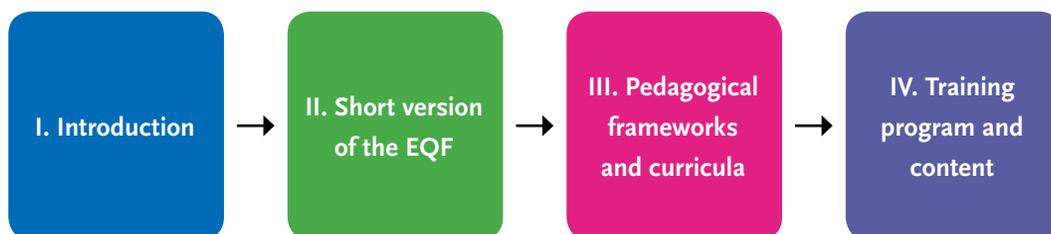
This training pack was designed as a Peer Learning Activity supported by ISSA ([www.issa.nl](http://www.issa.nl)), as an initiative of VBJK (Flanders, Jan Peeters, Ankie Vandekerckhove, Chris De Kimpe, ([www.vbjk.be](http://www.vbjk.be)) and Bureau Mutant (the Netherlands, Anke van Keulen, ([www.mutant.nl](http://www.mutant.nl))). In collecting the content and delivering the pilot trainings, ISSA received the much appreciated support of several partners in Flanders and the Netherlands, for which we would like to express our appreciation: VCOK (Fien Lannoye en Annelies Roelandt), Nederlands Jeugd Instituut (Josette Hoex), Landelijk Pedagogienplatform Kindercentra (Erna Reiling), ZAAK! (Carla Bienemann) and Ana Del Barrio Training & Consulting (Ana Del Barrio Saiz).

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1 European Quality Framework. This abbreviation will be used throughout the training pack.

2 We use the term ECEC (Early Childhood Education and Care) as an overall term for all provision for young children in Europe, ages 0 to 6, such as childcare centres, preschools etc.

The training pack consists of several parts, which all are interrelated and support each other:



I. The introduction explains in order to prepare for this training, the trainer must adapt the contents to the place and content group receiving the training.

II. The short version of the EQF is meant for training participants. It is a short adaptation of the 'Proposal for Key principles of a Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care' (EQF), as it was drafted by the working group of the EU Commission, DG Education. We strongly advise the trainer to review the full text of the EQF prior to providing the training. The full text can be downloaded on EQF.pdf. EQF also contains some key concepts, which may be useful to understand. This short version can be distributed to the participants before the actual training so that they can familiarise themselves with the content. This text will remain the same, irrespective of where the training takes place, but can of course be translated into the language of the participants, depending on the needs of the target group.

III. The link with national, regional, or local (pedagogical) frameworks and/or curricula is vital. While the original training pack links this to Dutch and Flemish documents, it is necessary to adapt these links to the relevant documents in the country where the training will be done. This way, every main theme in the EQF can be connected to the local working context and regulations. The trainer will have to check beforehand what documents are relevant for this pack. What frameworks are used, what curricula are being implemented, what regulation needs to be followed, etc.

IV. The actual training consists of three parts:

**Part IV A** contains guidelines for the trainer, with training modules and a possible program. Again, adaptations are possible here, depending on the context and the target group.

**Part IV B** gives several reflection questions, cases, and statements on every main theme of the EQF. For this part, the trainer has some liberty for adaptations: not all questions or exercises need to be completed or dealt with, other questions can be added. Some issues can be more relevant in the given context than others. It is, however, important to keep the five main themes connected.

**Part IV C** lists some materials that can be used in the training. At this point, we have left some English materials that can be used, but the trainer can add to this list as he/she sees fit and relevant for the group.

## II. EUROPEAN QUALITY FRAMEWORK (EQF)

*EQF p. 7: “Childhood is a time to be, to seek, and to make meaning of the world. The early childhood years are not solely preparation for the future but also about the present.”*

This text is a brief summary of the “Proposal for Key Principles of a Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care” (EQF), composed by a working group within the EU Commission, DG Education and Culture. The full text, containing all research evidence and inspiring practices, can be downloaded at [EQF](#).

### Why is the EQF relevant?

- The EQF talks about **the most relevant themes** in current EU policies on ECEC in a comprehensive way, and formulates clear recommendations on each topic.
- The EQF uses some **fundamental starting points** and places ECEC in a broader societal framework.
- The EQF was made by a **working group** of experts, government officials, and policy advisers from almost every member state.
- Within that working group, there is a **consensus** about the content of the EQF.
- Each principle in the EQF is substantiated with results of **scientific research**.
- The content of the EQF is reinforced with illustrative **inspiring practices and policies**.

### Connection with national or regional educational frameworks, directives, and curricula.

This framework must be connected to the existing educational frameworks and curricula in the proper professional context. Throughout the training it becomes clear where and how this can happen.

## Starting points of the EQF

For a better understanding of the EQF, some important fundamental issues are essential. The EU starts off with the assessment that ECEC not only stimulates development opportunities for children, it also contributes to the greater involvement of and a support for parents. Since it has been shown that these positive effects can only be accomplished if the centres offer high quality care and education, the way in which this quality is defined is of the highest importance.

**A shared vision on quality:** The notion of quality is complex and relative. It is constantly in motion, according to the development of new insights or reigning convictions and values. The EQF strives to stimulate thought about quality and keep it in the forefront of professionals and other stakeholders during actual practice.

- The *structural* quality deals with the system and the organization (conditions of recognition, financing, safety prescriptions, etc.)
- The *process* quality deals with the educational practice in an ECEC setting (curriculum, relationships with parents, interactions with children, etc.)
- The *outcome* quality looks at the benefits for (the development of) young children, parents, communities, and society (well-being, involvement, social skills and learning opportunities, etc.)

**A shared child image:** Every child is unique, with its own personality, potential, needs, living conditions, etc. The child is considered to be a competent, active meaning maker and agent, eager to learn, living in the here and now, co-constructing his/her own development. The child also has rights, such as the right to education and care. In this holistic child image, ECEC needs to give each child the opportunity to develop in the best possible way and care and education constitute an undivided unity in that respect.

**A shared vision on parents:** Parents are the first educators and they need to be actively involved in the practice of ECEC. It is also important to take into account and respect the diversity of families and their different convictions and views on education. In other words, while ECEC needs to add to and support the education at home, it should never replace or compensate it.

## Content of the EQF

1 ACCESSIBILITY	<i>1. Available and affordable for everyone</i> <i>2. Participation, social cohesion, and diversity</i>
2 STAFF AND WORKING CONDITIONS	<i>3. Training and permanent learning</i> <i>4. Supporting working conditions</i>
3 CURRICULUM	<i>5. Holistic development of the child</i> <i>6. Collaboration and reflection</i>
4 MONITORING AND EVALUATION	<i>7. Information to support the improvement of quality</i> <i>8. In the child's best interest</i>
5 POLICY AND FINANCING	<i>9. Responsibility and collaboration</i> <i>10. Right to access</i>

## How to read this document

This version of the EQF serves as a tool for the training. In this text the essence of the EQF is explained, consisting of five main themes, each with two statements. It is important to consider the cohesion between the themes, because only this comprehensive approach can guarantee the continuation of quality. For example, working towards accessibility is ineffective when there is no sufficient structural policy supporting it. Also, a rich curriculum does not mean much, if the trainers or child caregivers don't get the necessary training, education, and coaching to work with it constructively. Depending on the target group or the context (in policy or practice), one of the themes can be given more or less attention.

## Theme 1: Accessibility

Given the positive effects of ECEC on all the children, and in particular those from vulnerable groups, everyone should have access to these centres. Access barriers, whether by law or in practice, need to be tackled. These barriers are either apparent and formal, or informal. For some families the costs can be too high (especially with privately financed systems), sometimes there are long waiting lists or certain groups are given priority, such as working parents. In addition, different opinions on education, e.g. 'a child is better off at home with mom', insufficient knowledge of ECEC, or lack of confidence in ECEC, can be a threshold. On a very practical level, a service can be too far away, or the opening hours can be incompatible with the working situation of the parents. In addition, there is often a shortage of places available (contrary to compulsory school), especially in times of economic decline and budget cuts. All of these are practical barriers to access.

### Statement 1: Provision that is available and affordable to all families and their children.

*The potential benefits of high quality universal provision are particularly significant for children from disadvantaged and/or marginalised groups. ECEC provision should be made available from birth to the age at which children start compulsory primary school. To respond to parental circumstances and encourage all families to use ECEC services, provision needs to offer flexibility in relation to opening hours and the content of the program.*

Accessibility refers to different aspects:

- **Available:** Too often, most centres continue to be located in the more affluent neighbourhoods, so that poor families cannot easily reach them. Without making a plea for targeted centres for families 'at risk', qualitative ECEC should be offered in all neighbourhoods, and policies should be rights-based, rather than based on certain needs or risks.
- **Affordable:** Free access or income-related fees usually exist within systems with public financing, with centres which are available to everyone. This is preferable. More specific centres aiming at families 'in need' can create an extra barrier because parents have to reveal need that may have been kept private or feel stigmatized.
- **Accessible:** Centres should quite literally have their doors open. Barriers such as language, procedures, waiting lists, or rules of primacy can be very excluding. Careful planning with attention to families in precarious situations is necessary (e.g. in enrolment policy): getting to know the existing barriers, outreach work, knowledge of families in the community, etc.

- *Useful*: Families should see ECEC as helpful, supportive, and responding to their actual needs. This can relate to very practical issues: opening hours or open dialogue with the local community, for example.
- *Comprehensible*: Families need to feel understood and respected in their views on education and care. These views need to be negotiated and discussed. Structural concertation and interpersonal dialogue is vital here. Delivering good services means that you know and understand the children's background, and that you try to respond to the parents' needs and expectations. This seems more effective in integrated services (with preventive health, childcare, family support) or in services where parents are involved and where the workforce reflects the diversity of the community.

Too often, these criteria still are not or are insufficiently met, due to the shortage of places. Policies can change this by working on these barriers, e.g. priority rules for working parents, 'first come, first served' practices, or high fees.

### **Statement 2: Provision that encourages participation, strengthens social inclusion, and embraces diversity.**

*Successful inclusion in ECEC is based on: a collaborative approach to promoting the benefits of ECEC which involves local organisations and community groups; approaches which respect and value the beliefs, needs and culture of parents; an assurance that all children and families are welcome in an ECEC setting/centre; a pro-active approach to encouraging all parents to use ECEC services; a recognition that staff should be trained to help parents and families to value ECEC services and to assure them that their beliefs and cultures will be respected – this training can be supported by parenting programmes which promote ECEC; by close cooperation between the staff in ECEC centres, health and social services, local authorities and the school sector.*

A high quality pedagogical practice respects different views on education and makes all families feel welcome, making it possible for them to trust the services. This includes actively working on diversity and inclusion: on social status, cultural and religious background, gender, disability, etc. respect and trust are mutual concepts that can be supported by interpersonal contact, being interested in one another, and dialogue. Parents need to be involved, and staff should reflect the diversity of the population being served. This way practice is co-constructed together with parents, the team, and the community. Diversity should not only be an item on a checklist, but should really be part of the service's DNA among the management and all professionals. In this practice, the child has a central place. Feeling welcome and being allowed to be who you really are can be reinforced when the parents are also welcomed and considered as equal partners. This, in turn, requires democratic decision making processes, an open minded team willing to reflect on their own practice, and involving parents (including outreach) and co-constructing practice.

This kind of welcome is not only needed at the doorstep, but needs to be shaped throughout the service delivery as long as children and parents are using it.

## Theme 2: The ECEC Workforce

Qualified staff, good working conditions, and strong leadership are salient factors in the quality of ECEC. Better and higher educated team members on all levels (child caregivers, coaches, team leaders, management, etc.) contribute to the optimum development of children on the cognitive, social, emotional, as well as physical levels.

Education does not only contain initial training, but also continuous professional development and in-service training. However, not all trainings are equally effective. It has become clear that a single day of training for one practitioner isn't really that effective, compared to learning in teams with colleagues in longer training processes. Learning to reflect on one's own practice is key here, individually as well as collectively within the team.

Education and training should also respond to concrete needs and should always connect theory with practice. It should be evident that the child is the central focus.

It is vital that not only the individual professional requires and possesses the necessary competences, but also that the whole system is competent: the team, the pedagogical leadership and management, the administrators, the organization, the policies, etc.

Working conditions such as child/adult ratio, wages, and group size also influence the quality and the possible outcomes for children.

### Statement 3: Well-qualified staff whose initial and continuing training enables them to fulfil their professional role.

*Recognising the ECEC workforce as professionals is key. Professional development has a huge impact on the quality of staff pedagogy and children's outcomes. Developing common education and training programmes for all staff working in an ECEC context (e.g. preschool teachers, assistants, educators, family day carers, etc.) helps to create a shared agenda and understanding of quality.*

A good training results in professionals' ability to engage in warm, supportive, and stimulating interactions with the children, which facilitates their development. Not only is the training or education as such essential, but the content of it and the way it takes places, the used methods, are key. Bridging practice and theory and reflection have proven to be the most successful. Training

is never finished: ongoing learning opportunities maintain the level of quality. This can happen in different ways: team reflection, mentoring, pedagogical coaching, action research, projects, professional exchange, etc.

Having the training content adapted for practitioners working with more vulnerable groups can help them to better respond to possible additional needs these families may have. Explicit attention for diversity and inclusion needs to be part of the training in order to be fully integrated in the professional practice. Another way of meeting the needs of disadvantaged groups is to have professionals in the team from diverse backgrounds and to arrange for alternative pathways to obtain the necessary qualifications.

#### **Statement 4: Supportive working conditions including professional leadership which creates opportunities for observation, reflection, planning, teamwork and cooperation with parents.**

*Good working conditions benefit staff and contribute to their retention. Policy measures affect the structural quality of ECEC provision including locally-determined arrangements on the size of a group; children to adult ratios; working hours, and wage levels which can help to make employment in an ECEC context an attractive option. Good working conditions can also reduce the constant and detrimental staff turnover in ECEC.*

Different factors influence the wellbeing of the staff and the way they relate to and work with the children. For example, a higher number of practitioners per group of children often positively affects the sensitive-responsive work towards both the individual child and the group. We also see other influential factors, such as wages and education level. More specifically, we see considerable differences within split systems<sup>1</sup>: professionals working with the youngest children often have lower wages and education levels than teachers in schools.

Leadership is vital, not only in terms of management, but also in a pedagogical sense and in the valuing of the team. Teams should be well supported by regular team meetings, learning opportunities, pedagogical coaching, child free hours for preparation and reflection, etc.

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<sup>1</sup> These are systems that have a clear division between early years provision (like childcare) and pre-school provision. In these systems we see different regulations on qualifications, wages, curriculum, adult/child ratio, etc. These sectors are also under the competence of separate ministries and administrations.

## Theme 3: Curriculum

In ECEC a well-designed curriculum with an explicit pedagogical approach and goals contributes to higher quality and support for practitioners. While the content of curricula may differ from country to country, some elements seem to recur. Most curricula are based on a holistic vision, focussing not only on the cognitive, but also on the emotional, social, and personal development of the child as an individual. We also see that play and communication are highly valued. The clear differences between curricula in terms of pedagogical approach, goals and vision are mostly to be found in the value of formal learning and to what extent 'school readiness' is an important goal.

Strong curricula don't only focus on child development, but also add shared views on pedagogical practice and the involvement of the child and the practitioner. Basic elements for early years curricula include:

- A children's rights approach, in which children are seen as active agents and parents are the first educator
- A broad spectrum of care and education
- A holistic view on child development
- A focus on communication, interaction, dialogue, and learning together
- Valuing reflection on practice
- Cooperation with parents and shared democratic values in the context of diversity

### Statement 5: A curriculum based on pedagogic goals, values and approaches which enable children to reach their full potential in a holistic way.

*Children's education and care as well as their cognitive, social, emotional, physical and language development are important. The curriculum should set common goals, values and approaches which reflect society's expectation about the role and responsibilities of ECEC settings in encouraging children's development towards their full potential. All children are active and capable learners whose diverse competences are supported by the curriculum. At the same time the implementation of the curriculum needs to be planned within an open framework which acknowledges and addresses the diverse interests and needs of children in a holistic manner. A well-balanced combination of education and care can promote children's well-being, positive self-image, physical development and their social and cognitive development. Children's experiences and their active participation are valued, and the significance of learning through play is understood and supported.*

It is important to keep a link between the care, the education, and the socialisation of the child. For a while now, caring for children has been so much more than just feeding them and putting them to sleep. It is about intense and responsive interactions between children and adults and about following the rhythm and personal interest of each child. It is exactly through interactions with practitioners and other children that a child can learn and grow. Moments of care are, at the same time, moments of learning. ‘Learning’ with young children should not be understood as formal learning; it is learning through giving meaning to the surrounding world, developing one’s own identity, being allowed to make choices, being with peers and enjoying meaningful time with them, feelings of belonging and exploring the wider world outside one’s own family. The more children enjoy warm interactions with others, the more they can go and explore the world in a safe and playful environment, the more they will learn. In this approach, play is not an extra or a luxury, it is a fundamental part of the learning and development process of the young child.

### **Statement 6: A curriculum which requires staff to collaborate with children, colleagues and parents and to reflect on their own practice.**

*A curriculum is an important instrument to stimulate the creation of a shared understanding and trust between children; and between children, parents and ECEC staff in order to encourage development and learning. At a system or national level a curriculum can guide the work of all ECEC settings and contexts – and at a local or setting level, it can describe the practices and priorities in the context of each centre. An essential factor in developing a collaborative approach to the curriculum is the ability of individual staff to analyse their own practice, identify what has been effective and, in partnership with their colleagues, develop new approaches based on evidence. The quality of ECEC is enhanced when staff discuss the implementation of the curriculum within the context of their centre/setting and take account of the needs of the children, their parents and the team. The curriculum can enhance this approach by promoting children’s learning through experimentation and innovation; and encouraging cooperation with parents on how ECEC provision contributes to supporting children’s development and learning.*

To stimulate children’s overall development, it is important to make links to their personal interests, their experiences, and their own living environment, including their families and background. This needs participation and involvement of the child, the practitioners and the parents. Practitioners have to be able to critically reflect on their work as well as on the practice in the team and the whole organisation. Useful methods to do so are: pedagogical documentation, observations and discussion, participating in action research.

This looking back on practice should also be done with parents on a regular basis. This can happen informally (at pick up times, over a cup of coffee) or in a more formal way (a parent’s council). Having parents involved offers a win-win situation for all parties. Practitioners get to know more about a child by what parents can tell them, parents feel better connected with the service, the

mutual respect and trust increases, which can only serve the child in the end. Investing in reflective professionals and parent participation creates a dynamic in which everyone can continue to learn and to shape the content of the curriculum, in close connexion to the existing context and needs.

Practice can be improved even further by cooperating with other services (preventive health or social services, other services that can be of support to families with children).

## Theme 4: Monitoring And Evaluation

As stated, quality is a complex concept. It is important to keep in mind what is meant by this and to monitor closely whether all is done to consistently offer high quality services. Relevant questions here are the ‘Who? What? Why?’ questions. Quality deals with all aspects of ECEC: the service, the staff, the implementation of the curriculum and the opportunities for the development of children. Monitoring quality can serve many goals and have different forms: checking whether budgets are used adequately, whether regulations are being followed, whether the children’s wellbeing and development is being supported and guaranteed. Attention is also needed for pedagogical practice and the interactions with children and parents. Service providers need to keep an eye on their own practice and its strengths and weaknesses; they need to learn from evaluations and continuously work on improvement. Involving staff and parents in evaluations makes them more meaningful and relevant. Does it meet their expectations? How do they view quality?

### Statement 7: Monitoring and evaluating produces information at the relevant local, regional and/or national level to support continuing improvements in the quality of policy and practice.

*Systematic monitoring of ECEC allows for the generation of appropriate information and feedback at the relevant local, regional or national level. This information should support open exchange, coherent planning, review, evaluation and the development of ECEC in the pursuit of high quality at all levels in the system. Monitoring and evaluation is more effective when the information collected at a provider level is aligned with the information collected at a municipal, regional and system level.*

To evaluate well, data are needed on what really works, in what context and for whom. This is the only way to get relevant information out of it to serve policy. Monitoring quality is not an ad hoc activity, but a continuous process with all parties involved, top-down as well as bottom-up. Relevant data are: accessibility for diverse groups (or the lack thereof), team composition, level of training, quality of pedagogical practice working conditions, the finance system, and the cost for families.

### Statement 8: Monitoring and evaluation which is in the best interest of the child.

*Monitoring and evaluation processes are conducted to support children, families and communities. All stakeholders, including ECEC staff, should be engaged and empowered during the implementation of any monitoring and evaluation process. While monitoring can focus on the quality of structures, processes or outcomes; a focus on the interest of the child and staff engagement strengthens the importance of looking at the quality of the processes used in ECEC settings.*

To be in sync with the expectations of parents and the experiences of practitioners, it is logical that they get involved in the quality monitoring. The question is also what exactly is or should be monitored. For example, it has been proven that measuring school readiness can have a negative impact on the self-esteem and development of children. Children's progress can be checked in better ways by more informal and indirect instruments, such as observation, documentation, and portfolios, from which you can see how children evolve on different levels and what they experience. Children should not be compared with each other. What needs to be documented is their personality, their talents, and their growth and development in all senses of the word. No matter what method is used, evaluation or monitoring should focus on the rights, needs, and interests of the children. Parents, researchers, and practitioners have a relevant say in this and can, together with policymakers, continue to work on improving quality.

## Theme 5: Governance And Funding

The overwhelming evidence of the multiple benefits of ECEC for children and families should urge governments to invest heavily in this sector. Investment should support ECEC from a very young age, as this period is hugely important for the child's development. Embedded in broader welfare and social policies, high quality ECEC can be empowering and stimulating, especially for vulnerable families (those in poverty, minorities, migrants, etc.). At the same time, it must be clear that ECEC alone will never be able to eradicate inequality; policies on housing, health and employment also have a role to play here. All involved in ECEC need to have a clear view and a shared vision on their own role and responsibilities and they have to be aware that they need to cooperate with partner organisations.

### Statement 9: Stakeholders in the ECEC system have a clear and shared understanding of their role and responsibilities, and know that they are expected to collaborate with partner organisations.

*Given the cross-sectoral nature of ECEC provision, government, stakeholders and social partners need to work together to secure the success of ECEC services. Legislation, regulation and guid-*

*ance can be used to create clear expectations about the importance of collaborative working which supports high quality outcomes for children, families and local communities.*

The wellbeing of children and stimulation of their development is not only a call for ECEC. To generate more opportunities for all children, cooperation, both locally and nationally, is required between several services and sectors working with families and children (social services, schools, youth work, etc.) At the coordinating level, more coherence is needed.

Too many different settings (regulations, wages, qualifications...) cause too much fragmentation. More integration of services is called for in order to create more coherent policies for quality improvement and more efficient use of public funds.

**Statement 10: Legislation, regulation and/or funding supports progress towards a universal legal entitlement to publicly subsidised or funded ECEC, and progress is regularly reported to all stakeholders.**

*Structural or legislative arrangements support access to ECEC by giving families the right to access affordable ECEC provision. Approaches which support progress towards the universal availability of ECEC recognise that providing additional funds to support access for disadvantaged groups can be an effective strategy for increasing access, especially for children from migrant, disadvantaged or low-income families. Monitoring the uptake of ECEC ensures that funding is used effectively. In order to make progress towards universal entitlement to provision, measures to emphasise the attractiveness and value of ECEC services need to be in place.*

Vulnerable groups experience way too many barriers in accessing ECEC, and this is even more the case when funding is insufficient. Those who would benefit the most from ECEC have the hardest time getting in. A privatized sector and reliance on private funding stimulates this exclusion even more so. There is a growing consensus on the idea of 'progressive universalism': accessible mainstream services for all, with a more targeted approach for certain disadvantaged groups, as a priority, as well as a necessity, if we want to tackle and stop these existing segregating and excluding mechanisms. While this is hard to defend in times of austerity, it is vital for our society and its social justice in the short and long term.

### III. PEDAGOGICAL FRAMEWORKS AND CURRICULA

In order to be able to use the EQF effectively, making the connection to the given context is necessary. Every country or region will have its own frameworks, curricula, and/or regulations to take into account. The trainer will have to collect these documents to use in the training and possibly look into these according to the main themes of the EQF.

## IV A: PROGRAM AND INSTRUCTIONS FOR TRAINERS

### Aim Of The Training

This training was developed to introduce the European Quality Framework for ECEC (EQF), in order to make it known in the ECEC sector<sup>1</sup> and to provide it for use as an instrument for reflection to improve the quality of practice. It also serves as inspiration for quality innovation and as recognition of the existing pedagogical quality in the ECEC sector by:

- linking the EQF to existing national, regional, or local frameworks and to deepen the knowledge about these;
- exploring one's own practices and policies;
- improving one's own quality of practice through reflection exercises related to the five main themes of the EQF.

The training aims to share information and to strengthen understanding of the EQF in relation to:

- The relevance of the EQF;
- The underlying assumptions of the EQF: the vision on quality, on children, and on families;
- The 5 main themes of the EQF:
  1. Accessibility;
  2. Workforce;
  3. Curriculum;
  4. Evaluation and monitoring;
  5. Governance and finance<sup>2</sup>.

These themes are all interrelated, and it is important to keep these linked throughout the training, as they all fit into an integral approach of quality.

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1 We use the term ECEC as an overall term for all services and provision for young children, ages 0 to 6: childcare, preschools, etc.

2 These are the EQF themes, but this training will not focus on the financing issue as such.

## Target Group

The training is primarily aimed at professionals who work and have some influence on the policy of quality and service delivery within the ECEC organisation. These can be: pedagogical staff, team coaches, coordinators, middle management, directors, etc. It is meant for those people who lead, support, and coach the ECEC practitioners working with the young children.

It can also be used for teachers in training centres for ECEC and training centres for management and staff. The seminar (see modalities) could also be offered to members of upper management, local and national policymakers, administrations, branch organisations, project leaders for innovation, and other stakeholders working on quality improvement in ECEC.

## Prior To The Training

The training was designed by a team of ECEC experts in Flanders (Belgium) and the Netherlands and was tested in several pilots. In order for this training to be efficient and reach its goals in different countries, it is necessary to make adaptations where needed and to link the training to the applicable existing pedagogical frameworks and policy context in the location in which the training is being offered. This implies some preparatory work for the trainer.

The trainer needs to look into the following questions:

- Who will be in the target group?
- What materials need to be used: pedagogical frameworks, curriculum, regulations, etc.?
- Who could be an ‘ambassador’ for the EQF?
- What is the urgency to learn about the EQF and work on its implementation (at the policy level, as an impulse for quality improvement, changes in policies, etc.)?

The potential added value of this training should also be determined. What can participants take away from this? How can they use this to influence quality in their own practice?

For the ECEC sector, the EQF is relevant on several levels:

- The EQF is based on solid and scientific research.
- The EQF shows the relevant issues on which there is a consensus throughout the EU which gives the EQF a high moral authority, even though it is not legally binding.

- The EQF has a comprehensive view on the meaning of quality, which can strengthen the vision of quality in the participants' organisations.
- The EQF offers a complete and integral concept of quality, as well as guidelines to meet that quality.
- The training makes the connection between the EQF and the current frameworks and guidelines in a given country or location.
- The EQF recognises the importance and the value of the work done in ECEC and of the professionals delivering the work.

The materials added at the end of the training document were primarily focused on Dutch speaking participants. We have kept some materials that are also available in English. Trainers who want to use this EQF-training should adapt this list and add materials and relevant information for their context and target groups.

## Possible Modalities Of The Training

- **A two day training:** the whole training consists of four half days. It covers a general introduction (background, vision, relevance, the five main themes of the EQF, etc.) and in depth coverage of the five themes with reflection questions, case discussions, and debate on statements. Participants are expected to actively engage. The training also contains guidelines for follow-up.
- **A seminar or masterclass:** this is a training of 1 or 2 half days and it contains the general introduction to the five themes, with some possible reflection exercises and discussion on a selection of issues.

Both modalities require participants to come prepared. They should have read the short version of the EQF (part of this training pack) and they should be or should become familiarised with the current frameworks and curricula that are relevant for their working context.

## Follow Up

We advise that this training be accompanied by follow-up. It is up to the trainer to propose and develop follow-up plans in cooperation with the participants. Depending on the participants and their working contact, some or all of the following possibilities can be discussed:

- A follow-up (half) day to share how the information and learning experience was ‘imported’ onto the work floor.
- Online follow-up meetings for the whole group.
- Starting a learning community on the EQF themes.
- Exchange of information on follow-up among pairs of colleagues.
- Giving an exercise for the practitioners in their work setting to be discussed and to give feedback on in a future meeting.
- Other possibilities suggested by the trainer or participants.

## Program For The 2-Day Training (4 Parts)

<b>DAY 1</b>	<b>Part 1</b> 9 AM – 12:30 PM	<b>Part 2</b> 1:30 PM – 4:45 PM
	The EQF <i>THEME 1: ACCESSIBILITY</i>	<i>THEME 2: WORKFORCE</i>
<b>DAY 2</b>	<b>Part 3</b> 9 AM – 12:30 PM	<b>Part 4</b> 1:30 PM – 4:45 PM
	<i>THEME 3: CURRICULUM THEME 4: MONITORING AND EVALUATION</i>	<i>THEME 5: GOVERNANCE AND FINANCING FOLLOW-UP</i>

A detailed training manual is added here as a guideline. It is up to the trainer to adapt this to the context and the target group. He/she can choose to devote more or less time to some themes, but it is important to keep an eye on the comprehensiveness of the EQF.

## Part 1: Program and Instructions for the Trainer



### Prior to the training

#### Invitation letter and documents (or links) to be sent to participants:

- Practical information about the program, location, group composition, etc.
- Short text of the EQF and link to the full version
- The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Pedagogical frameworks/curricula
- (Optional) Ask participants to bring information about their organisation

**Intake** (possibly)

#### Needed materials:

- Information letter
- short text EQF (see doc II)
- the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (see materials in IV C
- (Summary of) the General Comment nr. 7 on Early Years (see materials in IV C)
- pedagogical frameworks and curricula

#### Aim of the documents:

- Share information on EQF and training

#### Aim:

- collect information on participants

## Introduction and the EQF



### Welcome and explanation (20')

#### Explanation on the program:

- What is the aim?
- Short intro on the 4 parts of the training
- Expectations
- Explanation on the documents
- Info on working method: sharing information, reflection, films, good practices, statements, and cases.

#### Presentation of participants – to do:

- Write on a post-it your main motivation to take part in this training. What do I want to learn/ change?
- Paste the post-its on flip-over.
- State your name and organisation.

#### Plenary:

The trainer points out the different motivations of the participants.

#### Needed materials:

- Flipchart or video-projector
- On the flip-over or Power point:
  - aims of the training
  - program
  - working methods
- post-its or flipchart

#### Aim:

- to document

## Introduction exercise (40')

### Part 1 – Individually:

- Intro: The UN Convention states that children have rights to protection, participation, and provision.
- What does high quality ECEC mean to you? Name the top 3 elements.
- Choose one or more objects from the location and describe this along the lines of your top 3.

### Part 2 – In plenary:

The trainer writes all named elements (words, metaphors, etc.) on the flip-chart and can use these in the explanation on the comprehensive view on quality in the EQF.

### Needed to have read:

- (Summary of) General Comment nr. 7
- Info on children's rights, e.g. in Children in Europe nr. 17 (see materials in IV C)
- Short text EQF (doc II)

### Aim:

- **Have participants express their view on ECEC quality**
- document
- later in the training a link can be made to their brainstorm (their own words and metaphors)

## Presentation of the EQF (30')

Presentation the 5 EQF themes and discussion

**Needed materials:**

- Power point EQF (see IV C: EQF and CORE)

**Aim:**

- share information
- link to frameworks

## Break (10')

During the break, the trainer notes the cases, statements, and reflection questions on accessibility on flipchart paper.

**Needed materials:**

- tables, according to number of participants (3 - max. 5 per table)
- 1 work sheet per person/ per table
- 1 flipchart paper per table for the conclusions after group consultation

## THEME 1: ACCESSIBILITY



## Explanation of the 5 elements of accessibility and warming up exercise (20')

<p>EQF Statement 1 and 2</p>	<p><b>Needed material:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ EQF Statements 1 and 2 on flipchart or Power point slide</li> </ul>
<p><b>Explanation: the 5 components of accessibility</b></p> <p>Accessibility + Affordability + Availability + Usefulness + Comprehensibility</p> <p>The trainer explains</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ these elements of accessibility</li> <li>■ the goals of the exercise</li> <li>■ what the EQF recommends on accessibility (including good practices in Europe)</li> </ul> <p><b>Warming up exercise:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ fragment Childcare Stories (e.g. Antero) <i>or</i></li> <li>■ fragment DVD Hamza</li> </ul>	<p><b>Needed materials:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ the 5 components on a flipchart or Power point (see PPT EQF, sheet 8 in IV C)</li> <li>■ DVD Childcare Stories</li> </ul> <p><b>Aim:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ stimulate reflection</li> <li>■ explore: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ what do you do already</li> <li>○ how do you work on this</li> <li>○ what is new</li> <li>○ what are your plans</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

## Work in pairs or small groups: reflection, cases, statements (30')

The training pack contains several reflections, cases, and statements from which a trainer can make a selection.

### To do:

- Reflect together on the given questions (see doc IV B)
- Write the conclusions of your consultation on a flipchart
- Choose someone to present these to the group

### Guidelines for group discussion:

- What question, case, or statement is an eye-opener for you or your organisation?
- What is a real barrier for your organisation or the ECEC sector as such?
- Where do you think you have a good practice?
- What links do you see in the pedagogical framework or curriculum?

*(see also Doc IV B on accessibility)*

### Needed materials:

- Doc IV B: work sheets (A4) with reflections, cases and statements, chosen by the trainer
- 1 worksheet per person
- a big sheet per table to write down the conclusions

**Note:** When working in small groups, having a coach is advised.

### Aim:

- Obtain views on some good practices or problems from the group.
- Reflect on accessibility.

### (Optional)

- Use the 'barrier list.'

## Plenary presentations and link to the own frameworks (30')

### Plenary:

- Participants present the keywords from the discussion.
- Link to relevant frameworks are discussed.

### Needed materials:

- Flipchart papers from all tables and groups
- Doc III: frameworks and curricula

## Round-up on accessibility: *plans, focus of attention, possible actions on the 5 components of accessibility*

### Plenary:

Participants express their plans, focus of attention, and possible actions on the 5 components of accessibility

### For inspiration (Optional):

The trainer brings 4 objects and adds questions to each of them:

- BOOK: What did you learn?
- CAN OPENER: What made me look at the components differently?
- MIRROR: What have I learned from myself? My work? My team?
- TOOLKIT: What do I want to work on? Action points?

### Needed materials:

- flipchart

### Aim:

- Increase understanding and commitment.

## Lunch (60')

## Part 2: Program and Instructions for the Trainer



### THEME 2: WORKFORCE

EQF Statement 3 and 4

#### Needed materials:

- EQF Statements on flipchart or Power point sheet

### Presentation Theme 2 (15') – Link to CoRe: The Competent System

#### Trainer:

- Introduces the core elements of theme 2, and
- Makes a link to CoRe:
- The CoRe scheme shows how a competent system looks like.

#### Needed material:

- Doc IV C Materials:
- CoRe Scheme

#### Aim: to explore:

- where am I/ my organisation now?
- where do I/my organisation want to go to in professionalization?

### Statements: how to learn best (15')

Statements (Doc IV B)

#### Trainer:

- Gives an inventory of some key words from the discussion.

#### Needed material:

- Documents IV B statements

## How do we work on professionalization? This is how we learn! (60')

### Continued Professional development/ learning in teams and in networks

The main question is: how does  
'learning' happen in your organisation?

#### Exercise:

- Individually: fill in the CoRe scheme:
  - Add examples of your practice.
  - What do you notice?  
What is missing?
- Plenary discussion

#### Reflection exercise:

Conditions for professional growth

#### The trainer chooses from the materials in IV B, e.g.:

- Culture of trust
- How to organise time and space  
for reflection, documentation,  
consultation  
Choice of good practice  
Wanda (possibly)

#### Needed material:

- Documents IV B Reflections
- Wanda materials

## Pause (15')

(Theme 2 continued: Workforce)

### *Diversity in my team and organisation: How to create support for diversity?(60')*

#### **Warming up exercise:**

in pairs or plenary

- How diverse is the group of participants in this training?
- How diverse is your team?
- How diverse is your organisation?

Participants reflect on the questions in Doc IV B.

Plenary discussion

#### **Reflection exercise:** (in groups):

How to create support for diversity?

- among colleagues
- throughout the organisation
- with parents

Choose an example from practice and elaborate in 3 phases :

- From incident to self-reflection
- Team reflection
- (Optional) Reconsider the organisation's policy

#### **Needed material:**

- Document IV B Reflections

#### **Aim:**

- Awareness raising on the strength and growth opportunities in teams

#### **Aim:**

- Becoming aware
- Reflection

#### **Needed material:**

- Copies of the chosen case(s)

## Round up theme 2: Workforce

**Plenary:**

- Link to your own frameworks
- Participants express their plans, focus of attention, possible actions on the 5 components of accessibility

**(Optional) For inspiration:**

The trainer brings four objects and adds questions to each of them:

BOOK: What did you learn?

CAN OPENER: What made me look at professionalization differently?

MIRROR: What have I learned from myself? My work? My team?

TOOLKIT: What do I want to work on? Action points?

**Needed material:**

- flipchart
- Doc III frameworks

**Aim:**

- Increase understanding and commitment.

## Evaluation day 1

## Part 3: Program and Instructions for the Trainer



### THEME 3: CURRICULUM

#### Looking back on day 1 (10')

**Aim:**

- Share thoughts, insights, questions, etc.

#### Introduction to Theme 3 and statements (10')

EQF Statement 5 and 6

**Needed material:**

- EQF Statements 5 and 6 on flipchart or Power point sheet

**Trainer:**

Introduces the core elements of Theme 3: Holistic and Systemic work

**Trainer:**

Introduces 2 statements from Doc. IV B: (2x2 groups of supporters and opponents)

1. ECEC must make children ready for school.
2. The care functions (e.g. meals) should be limited in favour of the pedagogical activities.

**Trainer:**

Makes an inventory of the key words from the discussion.

**Needed material:**

- Document IV B Reflections
- Possibly film fragments: The tale of language

**Aim:**

- Becoming aware of what holistic and systemic work means.

## *Achieving pedagogical goals: What choices can you make? (40')*

### **Intro:**

- The trainer shows some excerpts from a film on daily practice (e.g. Film: 'The tale of language' or publication 'The social lives of young children'.)
- Plenary discussion on pedagogical action towards children.

### **Reflection exercise:**

- In pairs or smaller groups, exchange on:
  - What pedagogical goals are important in your organisation? What do you do to achieve these?
  - Collect suggestions on flipchart
- Plenary discussion

### **Link to frameworks (Optional):**

Take some elements of your quality framework and hang them on flipchart pages throughout the room. Participants then add very concrete examples on how they work in this in their daily practice.

### **Needed material:**

- film excerpts
- Doc IV B Reflections
- Doc III Frameworks
- flipchart

### **Aim:**

- What do you actually do?
- What could you do more?
- What do you need?
- Link to current frameworks.

## Reflection 'world tables' (40')

Arrange 4-5 tables (depending on the number of participants) and put one sheet per table with a selection of reflection questions and cases (Doc IV B):

- Together with....colleagues, parents, children...
- Rich learning environment
- Cases

Participants can either move to different tables or stay at the same table. They can visit sites.

- Plenary discussion

### Needed material:

- Document IV B Reflection

### Aim:

- How and with whom do you discuss pedagogical goals?
- Create a learning environment.
- Learn good practice from each other.

## Round up of Theme 3 Curriculum (20')

### Plenary:

- Participants express their plans, focus of attention, possible actions on curricula.

### For inspiration (Optional):

The trainer brings 4 objects and adds questions to each of them:

BOOK: What did you learn?

CAN OPENER: What made me look at workforce differently?

MIRROR: What have I learned from myself? My work? My team?

TOOLKIT: What do I want to work on? Action points?

### Needed material:

- chart

### Aim:

- Increase understanding and commitment.

## THEME 4: MONITORING AND EVALUATION



EQF Statements 7 and 8

### Needed material:

- EQF Statements 7 and 8 on flipchart or Power point sheet

### *Presentation Theme 4: Monitoring and evaluation in the best interest of the child (20')*

#### Trainer

Introduces theme 4 and EQF statements 7 and 8.

**Warming up exercise:** Take a position.

- Divide the group in 2:
- Pro formal monitoring
- Pro informal monitoring
- Both groups explore the arguments in the group, using questions in Doc IV B.
- Both groups stand opposite each other and defend their case.
- Plenary discussion and conclusions.

### Needed material:

- Document IV B Reflections
- Questions on 'Formal – Informal' on a PPT or a sheet of paper

### Aim:

- Exploration of Theme 4, with a focus on the best interest of the child.

## Choice and comparison of possible monitoring instruments (40')

### Plenary:

Discussion and comparison of possible monitoring instruments. Two types of instruments (formal/informal) are being compared: What information can they bring? How could you use them? (See Doc IV B.)

**Scan:** Fill out an informal monitoring instrument:

1. What do you do already?
2. What do you want to do more?
3. What do you need to implement and ensure quality?

**Documentation:** How to do this?

The trainer shows examples (see materials or using his/her own materials).

### Needed material:

- Document IV B
- Book 'Think big, act small'

## Round up theme Monitoring and Evaluation (15')

### Plenary:

- Link to frameworks
- Participants express their plans, focus of attention, possible actions on this theme

### Needed material:

- flipchart
- Document II frameworks

### Aim:

- Increase understanding and commitment.

## Lunch (45')

## Part 4: Program and Instructions for the Trainer



### THEME 5: GOVERNANCE AND FINANCING

EQF Statements 9 and 10

**Needed material:**

- EQF Statements 9 and 10 on flipchart or Power point sheet

#### *Presentation Theme 5 (10')*

**Trainer:** Introduces Theme 5 and the EQF Statements 9 and 10

**Needed material:**

- EQF Statements 9 and 10 on flipchart or Power point sheet

#### *Democratic and transparent decision-making (60')*

**The organisation process:  
democratic and transparent**

- Work individually or in pairs: Draw your role within the organisation, draw the communication lines and decision structures.
  - What can I influence?
  - Draw your own context (partners, organisation, authorities, etc.)

**Participation and co-decision:**

- Follow-up on the drawings: exchange of groups of 3 or 4 participants to discuss the questions in Doc IV.
- Plenary discussion: exchange of basic conditions and strategies.

**Needed material:**

- large flipcharts
- markers, different colours
- Document IV B

**Aim:**

- List the basic conditions for participation.
- Exchange of good practices.

## Cooperation and division of responsibility (30')

### Cooperating with partner

#### organisations:

- Plenary:
  - Reflection questions Doc IV
  - Exchange of good practices (e.g. Utrecht)
  - Statements: discussion

#### Aim:

- Explore cooperation possibilities.
- Understand the relevance of cooperation.
- Share good practices.

## Roundup Theme 5 (20')

### Plenary:

- Link to frameworks.
- Plans, ideas, action pints on this theme.

### Needed material:

- Flipcharts
- Document III Frameworks

#### Aim:

- Increase understanding and commitment.

## *Follow up (45')*

### **Individually, in pairs and in plenary:**

- Make choices and set engagements.
- Define/ensure the first steps of the follow-up.

### **Possible approaches:**

- A one day meeting to reflect
- Online meetings for the group
- Start a learning community on EQF themes.
- Start sets of pairs for an exchange on possible modalities of the follow-up.
- Give all participants some kind of homework, relating to their own practice, to be shared in a future meeting.

## *Evaluation of the overall training (15')*

Method will be chosen by the trainer.

## IV B: REFLECTION – CASES – STATEMENTS

In this part, questions are listed for reflection, as well as cases and statements to discuss. All of these serve to get the dialogue and the discussion going. Not all of this needs to be covered; the trainer can make a selection or use different questions, which may be more relevant or adapted to the given context. In this training, it is the dialogue as such that is important, looking together for possible approaches, not the search for ‘the’ correct answer (which doesn’t exist in most cases).

These questions, cases, and statements serve as inspiration and they are linked to the five main themes of the EQF.

At the end (Part IV C) some materials are suggested, but each trainer should add other relevant training materials related to the context and target group.

### Reflection – Theme 1: Accessibility

#### What parents?

What does your parent population look like? Who attends your centre or school and who doesn’t? Why do you think some parents do not bring their children? What kind of population lives in the area? Are there disadvantaged groups or families? How do you know this? What groups of parents do not seem to attend?

Think about families with different cultural and social backgrounds, about families in different shapes and forms (single parents, ‘new’ families after divorce, adoptive parents) or parents with material or mental problems. Other examples: refugees, migrant families, low-income families, low-schooled parents, people working in shifts, children with disabilities, etc.

Do you work with other services which can refer certain families to yours? Who can make your service known to those who could benefit from it? For example: employment agencies, training centres, social services, integration services, etc.

Are there any priority rules for certain groups? What about procedures for enrolment (administration, use of official language in papers, registration, waiting lists, etc.) and payment (Social or income-related fees, penalties, etc.)? Are these possible barriers for some families?

Are there flexible working hours (part-time enrolment, changing hours, urgencies, weekend care, etc.)?

## **Accessible – available – affordable – useful – comprehensible**

How do you understand these notions? How do you work on these to make your service more accessible?

Did you discover something new that you hadn't considered before? What can be thresholds for parents, and how can you lower these? Consider the importance of language and communication styles in the context of improving access.

What information is readily available about your service? To whom? How is it designed and in what languages? Is it easy to read?

How do you make your service known? What channels are used (leaflets, community papers, internet...) Can you detect possible barriers for some families?

Can people see from the outside what is happening in your centre?

Is the centre easy to reach, regarding opening hours, (public) transport, etc.? Is it accessible for vulnerable children?

Consider what could be done, proactively, towards families that do not attend? Are these 'hard-to-reach' families, or could it be that the service itself is hard-to-reach?

How could this be improved by more integrated services or cooperation agreements with other services?

## **Children's rights**

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that children have the right to protection, to provision, and to participation. What does it mean to you that children have the right to access to quality provision? How can your centre support this right? What could be supportive here?

## **Case: My colleague is a man**

'Floris's mom came up to me (I am her favourite practitioner, as she often says) and kindly requested whether I could guarantee that I, and only I, could change her son's nappies. She said she thinks I do it so well. She thinks I am very professional and caring. She does not want my colleague, Michael, to do this, even when other parents have told her that he is a very friendly person.' (Hanneke, practitioner, example from a Dutch training handbook).

Think about what principles in your service are open for debate and which ones are not? How far can you go along with demands or expectations of parents? How would you deal with this situation or such a request; towards the parent, towards the team, towards the practitioner in question?

### **Case: Antero in Childcare Stories (DVD)**

Antero's story is so significant because it illustrates very nicely how important the first encounter is and how you need to take care of this. The moment when a parent first visits a centre, looking for a place for his/her child, is vital and it sets the tone. When a parent is immediately overwhelmed with administration, procedures, papers, then they may well never come back again. They need to feel that they are really welcome; this is a major first step and the basis for a good working relationship.

What did you notice in Antero's story? What does he say about accessibility? What barriers did he experience? Could there be other barriers for other parents? Have you had similar experiences yourself when trying to access a service?

How can you create a welcoming environment, not only on day one, but also later on?

### **Statements**

- In high quality ECEC settings, the children reflect the population of the surrounding community.
- Low-income parents should be able to enjoy child care free of charge.
- High quality ECEC has priority rules for certain groups (children from the neighbourhood, single parents, and children from parents in training or integration processes, children with special needs, etc.)

## **Reflection – Theme 2: Workforce**

### **Continuous professional development**

How do you work on professional development? What are strengths and what would you like to improve still?

Is there time for reflection, for documentation, for meetings? How do you organise this?

Look for ‘good practices’. What did you learn from them? What actions can you take to move forward?

## Learning in teams and in learning communities

In a learning organisation, learning is not only an individual thing, but a team activity in order to support and simulate the team’s strengths.

What constitutes the strength of your team? How do you support this and how can you improve this?

What do you do to link pedagogical theory, policy, and practice?

How do people in your organisation ‘learn’? In group or not, on different levels, top-down/ bottom-up, etc.

Do you work together with other organisations that can be supportive towards families (e.g. social services, employment agencies, integration centres, etc.)?

## Diversity in your team

How diverse is your team? In what sense: gender, cultural/ethnic background, education level, experience?

Do you think training and education programs are sufficiently oriented in the diversity in our current societies and among families?

How do you create support for diversity? Can you give an example on how you worked on this with the team? How can you deal with resistance?

- With colleagues in the team
- Within the organisation
- With parents

Try to review a training program with a focus on diversity and look what is lacking, what should be added.

## Case: culture of trust

It is advisable to define rules within the organisation on how people should relate to each other and deal with issues of trust and confidentiality. For example: 'We take confidentiality seriously. We guarantee that confidential information is not shared or used in ways that others can define who it is about. Everybody feels free to share as much or as little as they want.'

How important is this in your organisation? What could you do to strengthen this culture of trust?

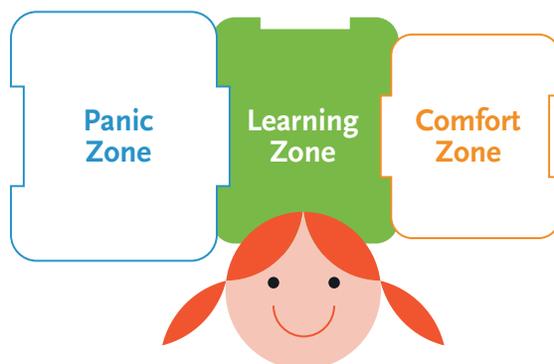
## Case: Wanda (Dutch acronym: value, analyse, do)

Wanda is a method of intervision, team discussion, to work with a group of colleagues on a meaningful incident or issue. The method invites people to look at situations on the work floor from different perspectives, by which the group can raise challenging questions, possible meanings and new views, as well as possible solutions and change. (see [WANDA](#) )

In order to deepen the learning process, it is important to find the right balance between people's comfort zones and their fears or anxiety. People need to be challenged in order to learn, to get pulled out of their comfort zone, but without being paralysed. Simply confirming that they do well, doesn't incite deeper learning, but making them afraid doesn't either. A balance between both needs to be found in order to create a strong learning environment. (See image below)

How do you try to create this balance, this environment? In the team, in the organisation?

Can you give examples of when it was difficult to bring practitioners to such a zone for learning and professional growth?



*Learning Zone Model (Senninger, 2000)*

## Statements

- The most important thing for an ECEC practitioner is to have a heart for children.
- The best learning is done on the work floor.
- Monthly childfree hours for preparation and reflection and team meetings are necessary for high quality ECEC.
- A team of young practitioners will get to a higher quality level more easily.

## Reflection – Theme 3: Curriculum

### Reaching the pedagogical goals

What pedagogical goals are important in your organisation? What do you do to reach these? Think, for example, about the wellbeing of children, strengthening their sense of identity, understanding and exploring the world around them, social interactions, etc. In ECEC it is important to keep the link between care, education, and socialisation of young children.

What information in the EQF could be inspiring for your practice?

What could you do more? And who or what do you need to do this?

### Together with...

Do you discuss pedagogical goals? If so, with whom? How and when? Colleagues, parents, children? How do you incorporate the voice of parents? How do you involve the children? (See examples of children participation in 'Think big, act small.')

### Rich learning environment

What is a rich learning environment for you? How can you create this? Can you give examples?

Think about stimulating social interaction among the children, exploring the physical world, the different areas of development of children, etc.

These issues can be discussed on the basis of pictures taken from the different areas in the centre.

### **Case: The importance of space**

Children in a small child care centre often seem to be very active, almost stressed. They climb on anything and often bother each other (fighting, pushing, etc.) This is noticed by everyone in the team and they start questioning how they can deal with this behaviour.

How do you bring this up with the parents? What can you do to change this? What does the policy state on motor development and stimulation? Would parents have suggestions as well? Are there organisations in the area that might help? What materials are needed for this discussion?

### **Case: A parent complaint**

One parent is into healthy nutrition and complains about the candy, cakes, and sweets that are brought to the centre on birthdays and parties and such. How do you deal with this? Do you stick to the rules, yes or no, and why? Will this be discussed in the team, with other parents?

### **Case: Playing outside, cooperation with parents**

Some parents feel sorry about the fact that their babies don't get to go outside that much. The team takes up this concern and starts thinking about it. They organise an evening team meeting about outside play: Why is it important? What are the ideas on this? What are the practical objections and how can these be overcome? They start a project on outside play: organise a baby corner outside, call for volunteers to arrange walks, set up a changing table in the yard, etc. After a few months, everyone is used to doing things outside with the babies.

What does this case tell you? How can you get parents involved in pedagogical issues? Do you have examples?

### **Case: Toddlers helping each other**

Practitioners in a toddler group notice that the older and younger children are beginning to grow apart and they want to bring back the balance in ages. They start an action-research: How can we make the older children help the younger ones? Prior to this, they made an inventory of what areas in which the children could help each other: getting coats on and off, making sandwiches, tidying up, etc. Next, they asked who wanted to help. Rather spontaneously, children started to be more helpful, and there was more solidarity in the group. It was clear that, when given the space and opportunity, children will often help without being asked. Now it is common behaviour in the group (See 'Think big, act small')

What do you learn from this? How can you get children to influence pedagogical policy? Do you have examples as well?

## Statements

- ECEC should get children ready for school.
- Taking care of babies is also pedagogical action.
- Children learn by themselves; ECEC should not stimulate any specific development goals
- A rich care and educational environment takes care of the needs and wishes of a child almost automatically.
- Participation is a child's right, not a duty; when they don't want to join in an activity, they should not be forced to do so.

## Reflection – Theme 4: Monitoring and evaluation

### What are you already doing?

Do you monitor the work in your organisation? How is this done? Who is involved in these processes? What do you do with the results?

Does the team know what the evaluations are for? Why is the monitoring done in this or that way?

### Changes?

After reading the EQF, would you want to make any changes? What inspires you to do things differently? What forms and methods of monitoring and evaluations could be helpful?

What stakeholders could you get involved (directors, parents, children, etc.)?

What stimulates you or keeps you from really using the results and sharing them (with parents, management, children, etc.)?

Do you consider more informal forms of monitoring, such as conversations with parents? What would you do with their input?

## Formal – informal

Keeping an eye on quality service, ensuring that the needs of all children and parents are met, and that this is being carried out by all practitioners, needs formal as well as informal monitoring.

Formal evaluations take place systematically by given methods and instruments either by the organisation itself or by an external inspection body. (Different systems are used in different countries.) Besides this, the informal ‘control’ on quality is just as important. This information is usually rendered ‘by accident’, e.g. in a conversation with a parent, at pick up times, by children reacting to a given rule, by random comments of practitioners, etc. It is important to pick up on this type of input as well, to receive this and to document this (e.g. in a guestbook, a ‘speak out’ letterbox, or suggestion mail address).

How do you see the balance between formal and informal evaluation in your work? What do practitioners experience in both forms of evaluation? Is there sufficient understanding of the importance of monitoring and quality control? Do you measure to measure or to really work on quality improvement? How can you focus on what actions you can take instead of being fixated on the how and the what?

### Case: My colleague does not celebrate birthdays (monitoring diversity)

In a child care centre, one of the practitioners is a Jehova’s witness and does not celebrate birthdays because of her religion. Her colleagues are not at all happy with this, saying that she shouldn’t be in this line of work, as celebrating is part of it. It leads to frustration, irritation, and arguments.

How can a team learn to deal with such issues? How do you relate on an equal basis with colleagues who do not act like you think they should.

This requires reflection within the team, led by the coach. The attention needs to be moved away from the individual colleague to the whole team; from the specific issue to the overall policy of the organisation on celebrations.

- Reflection on emotions: What emotion do you feel with this example? What are the consequences on your work? Is your emotion geared towards the colleague or towards the organisation?
- Taking a curious, explorative attitude: How do you celebrate birthdays and other festive days? Do you like it? What does it mean? What differences and similarities are there within the team? Do you understand the reason behind this Jehovah’s rule?

- Asking critical questions and taking a stand against prejudice: What is the policy on celebrations? Are there other (religious) celebrations allowed or stimulated? Are all children and their background taken into account? Why or why not? How can you still acknowledge celebrations of certain kinds, even though they are not celebrated in the centre?

## Statements

- Comparing children to ‘the’ norm is not good for their self-image.
- Self-evaluation is even more important than formal evaluations by the authorities.
- Monitoring and evaluations are needed to define the child’s school readiness.
- The most effective instrument for professional development is self-evaluation.

## Reflection – Theme 5: Governance and financing

### Democratic and transparent process

To what extent can you connect to the policy level in your organisation (board of trustees, authorities, etc.)? How is information shared; what are the communication channels? Do you understand how decisions are being taken and by whom? How are the responsibilities divided? Who can be involved in this? Does the higher management really know what everybody does within the organisation?

### Participation and co-deciding

Do all co-workers influence policy at work? How? Formally or informally? How is this organised?

Do parents have a say? Formally or informally? How is this organised?

Consider the same questions for the children.

What strategies can be used, or would you like to use, to have some influence on policy? Within your organisation, but possibly even broader (local council, legislator, etc.)

## Case: Learning community Utrecht (NL)

The city of Utrecht has 20 learning communities, in all the city areas. The goal is to improve one's own educational practice. Within a cooperative network, 200 schools and childcare centres have committed themselves to work together on quality improvement. In this learning community, teachers and ECEC practitioners get together to learn together on a given pedagogical theme or issue. Such a community learns together on content and on a permanent basis. It also facilitates and stimulates cooperation between the ECEC sector and the Education sector. The learning gains are being transferred and shared within the teams, the schools, and the childcare centres. The learning community results in higher quality and strengthens the cooperation between diverse professionals. (See [LCUtrecht](#).)

Do you think a learning community could influence policy? How? Do you cooperate with partners, in or outside the ECEC sector? What is the goal of this cooperation? What is working well and what would need improvement? Are you part of a structural network (community, school, social service, etc.?) What would stimulate you to do so, what would be an obstacle?

### Statements

- The highest quality can only be reached in integrated systems (shared vision and curriculum, equal work conditions, etc.)
- Every child is entitled to good childcare, but some children more than others.
- A child's right to education is self-evident for all; the child's right to ECEC is not.
- Parents have a free and informed choice of ECEC services, based on pedagogical viewpoints.

## IV C: MATERIALS

Every training pack needs the materials that fit the target group in a given country. It is up to the trainer to add the necessary materials to this list.

From the original version (Dutch) we have kept some publications and materials that are available in English and which serve as inspiration. Most of these are available at [www.vbjk.be](http://www.vbjk.be) (see documentation centre) and [www.mutant.nl](http://www.mutant.nl)

### Intro – EQF – ECEC – Diversity – Children's rights

Children in Europe, nr 17: *20 years of children's rights*, [www.vbjk.be](http://www.vbjk.be).

COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD, General Comment nr. 7 on early years. See [www.mutant.nl/trainingen-onderwijs.htm](http://www.mutant.nl/trainingen-onderwijs.htm)

CoRe, scheme of the competent organisation, see [www.mutant.nl/trainingen-onderwijs.htm](http://www.mutant.nl/trainingen-onderwijs.htm).

DECET, DVD Hamza (<http://decet.org/resources/>)

DECET mission (<http://decet.org/>)

DECET, *Making sense of good practice* ([DECET\\_GoodPractice](#))

Van Keulen, A. en Del Barrio, A., *Think big, act small*, Bureau Mutant, Members briefing paper 11.4, Equity and childhood Program University of Melbourne, Australia, Dec. 2012. (<http://www.anadelbarrio.nl/Think%20big,%20act%20small!.pdf>)

### Accessibility

Childcare Stories Film Ordering: VBJK, <http://www.vbjk.be/nl/node/3043>

IMPRES project, *Manual for diversification of programs for preschool education* ([ImpresManual](#))

## Workforce

Brajkovic, S. (2014). *Professional Learning Communities*, ISSA: Leiden.

DECET and ISSA, (2011), Diversity and social inclusion. Exploring Competences for Professionals in Early Childhood Education and Care. [www.decet.org](http://www.decet.org).

De Graaff, F. en Van Keulen, A. van (2008). *Making the Road as We Go: parents and professionals as partners managing diversity in early childhood education*. The Bernard van Leer Foundation P&R series no. 24. [www.bernardvanleer.org](http://www.bernardvanleer.org)

ISSA (2010), *Competent Educators of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Principles of Quality Pedagogy (3-10)*, ISSA, Amsterdam. [www.issa.nl](http://www.issa.nl); [Quality-Principles.pdf](#)

Tankersley, D, Ionescu, M. (ed.). (2015), *Roads to Quality – Strengthening Professionalism in Early Childhood Education and Care Systems: A guidebook illustrating the network’s vision for sustaining high-quality practices in early childhood education and care settings*, ISSA: Leiden.

Trikic, Z, Ionescu, M (ed.) (2013), *Building opportunities in EC from the start. A Teacher’s guide to good practices in inclusive EC services*. ISSA & Roma Education Fund: Budapest. <http://www.issa.nl/sites/default/files/AGS%20Good%20Practice%20Guide.pdf>

Ionescu, M. (ed.), Tankersley, D. (2016), *A Quality Framework for Early Childhood Practices Services for Children Under Three Years of Age*. ISSA: Leiden. <http://www.issa.nl/content/quality-framework-birth-three-services>

Keulen, A. van, The Early Childhood Educator in a Critical Learning Community: towards sustainable change, *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood* . Volume 11 Number 1 2010. [www.wwords.co.uk/CIEC](http://www.wwords.co.uk/CIEC)

Keulen, A. van, Professional development and sustainable change. Example of Professional Learning Communities in Utrecht municipality, in Fortunati, A., (ed.) (2015) *TALE, Tuscan approach learning for early childhood education and care. Activities, results and perspectives*. Florence, Instituto degli Innocenti, 2014. [www.mutant.nl/publicaties-onderwijs.htm](http://www.mutant.nl/publicaties-onderwijs.htm)

Michel Vandenbroeck, Mathias Urban, Jan Peeters (2016) *Pathways to Professionalism in Early Childhood Education and Care*. London, Routledge. <https://www.routledge.com/products/9781138918894>

VBJK and Artevelde Hogeschool, Wanda English [WANDA materials](#)

## Curriculum

De Graaff, F. en Van Keulen, A. (2008), *Making the road as we go. Parents and professionals as partners managing diversity in early childhood education*, The Bernard van Leer Foundation Practice and Reflections (P&R) series no. 24, 2008. [www.bernardvanleer.org](http://www.bernardvanleer.org).

Keulen, A. van and Del Barrio, A., *Think big, act small*, Bureau Mutant, Members briefing paper 11.4, Equity and childhood Program University of Melbourne, Australia, Dec. 2012. (<http://www.anadelbarrio.nl/Think%20big,%20act%20small!.pdf>) .

Singer, E. & D. de Haan, contributions A. van Keulen en N. Bekkema (2006). *The social lives of young children. Play, conflict and moral learning in day-care groups*. Amsterdam: SWP.

VBJK. *The tale of language*, see [www.vbjk.be/en/node/3011](http://www.vbjk.be/en/node/3011).





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