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# Enabling responsive early childhood strategies

## The Primokiz Approach for local government

*October 6<sup>th</sup>, 2020 | 12.00 - 13.30 CET*

## Topics:

- √ What is **Primokiz** and what is its unique added value in working at the municipality level?
- √ What are the main achievements from implementing the **Primokiz** approach?
- √ What did we learn about the **Primokiz** approach?

## Q&A





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What is Primokiz and what is its unique added value in working at the municipality level?

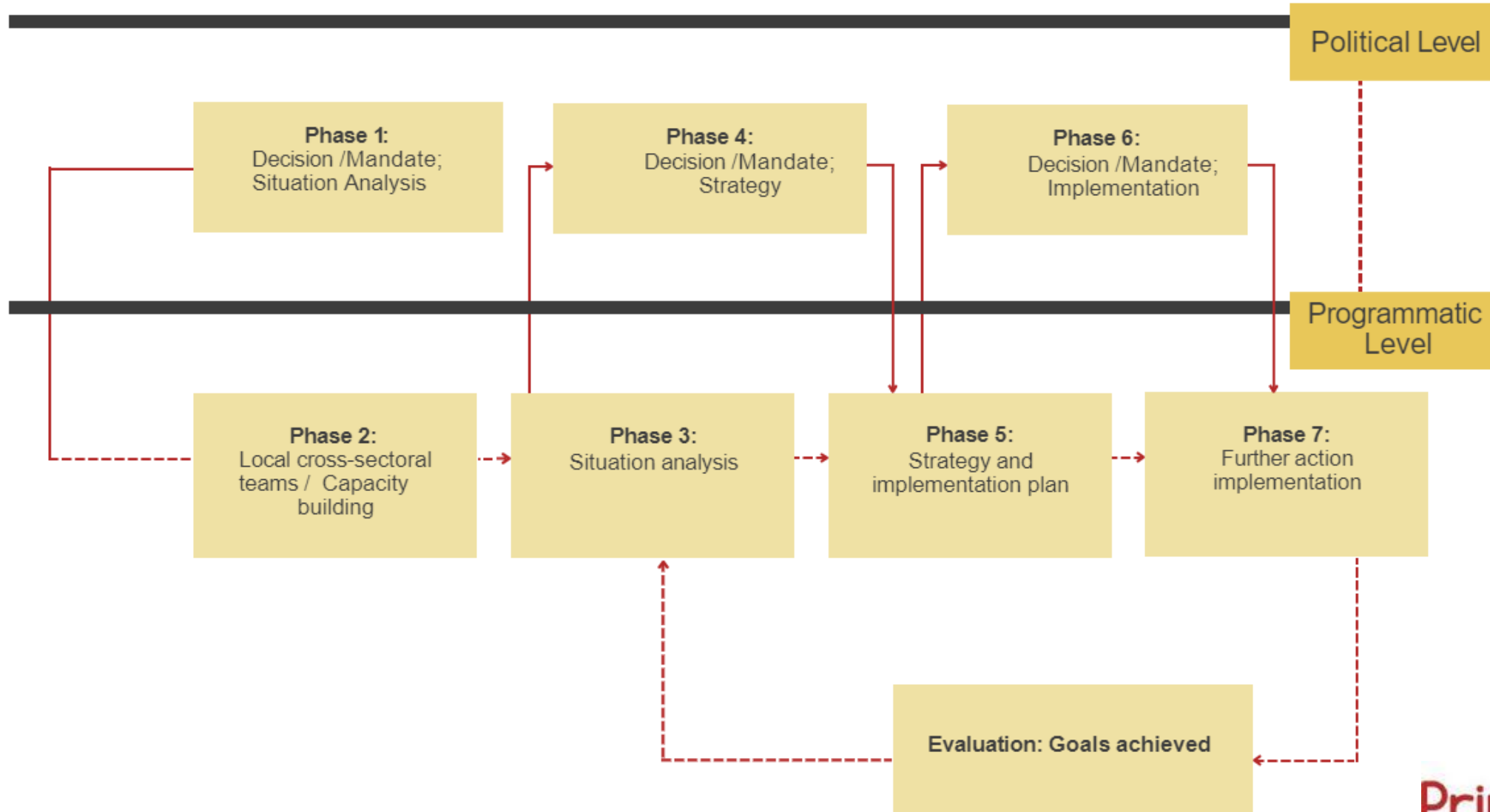
# What is Primokiz?

- An **evidence-based program developed by Jacobs Foundation** for increasing access to quality early childhood services for young children.
- A **phased methodology to be used by local governments** to improve their services for young children, in a strategic, participatory, and responsive way.
- A **licensed program**. The Jacobs Foundation awarded ISSA the license to use it across countries. ISSA sub-licenses Primokiz to its Members or partners, after undergoing a ‘know-how’ capacity building process.

# What challenges is Primokiz addressing?

- Siloed approaches to ECD
- Vacuum of local leadership on ECD
- Community needs unmet and often unknown
- Increasing inequities in accessing/benefitting from early childhood services
- Underfunding of the early childhood sector while increased demand for it
- Insufficient responsiveness of services to real needs
- Inefficient use of existing local resources

# Brief overview of the Primokiz phases



# Key steps in the Primokiz process

1. Get the **buy-in** from the local authorities
2. Set up **local cross-sectoral teams led by the local government**
3. Carry out a **locally-led situation and needs analysis** bringing together specialists and practitioners across early childhood sectors, local govt reps, families, and members of the community
4. Based on the analyzed needs, decide jointly **on short-medium-long term priorities** for improving services across-sectors
5. Develop a **cross-sectoral early childhood strategy/action plan** reflecting the jointly decided priorities
6. **Approve, fund, and implement the action plan** that promotes local partnerships and stakeholders' involvement
7. **Monitor** the implementation of the plan



## What is the added-value of Primokiz?

- ✓ An empowered, well-informed and **strategic local leadership** that addresses place-based early childhood issues
- ✓ Promoting a **cross-sectoral approach** that recognizes and understands the multi-faceted factors that impact young child's development in communities
- ✓ Creating **ownership and empowering local actors** to join forces;
- ✓ Enabling a **participatory and dialogical approach** that brings together different key actors in the local early childhood system, for **shaping responsive answers to local challenges, celebrating the best interest of the child.**
- ✓ The **readiness of local early childhood systems to respond to challenges** brought by disruptive contexts or crisis, such as the COVID 19 and the consequences of the war in Ukraine.





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What are the main achievements from implementing the Primokiz approach?

## Speakers:

### **Romania:**

**Carmen Lica** – Executive Director, Step by Step Center

**Cristiana Boca** – Early Childhood Coordinator, Step by Step Center

### **Slovenia:**

**Mateja Rezek** – Researcher, Education Research Institute – Step by Step Center for Quality in Education

Primokiz

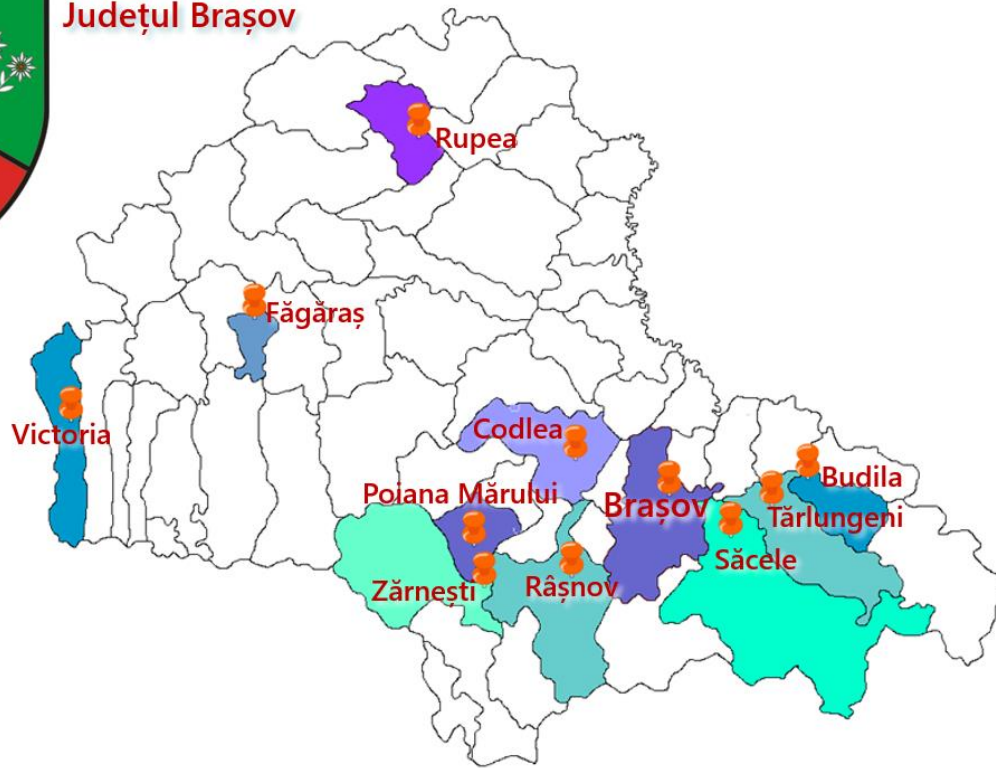


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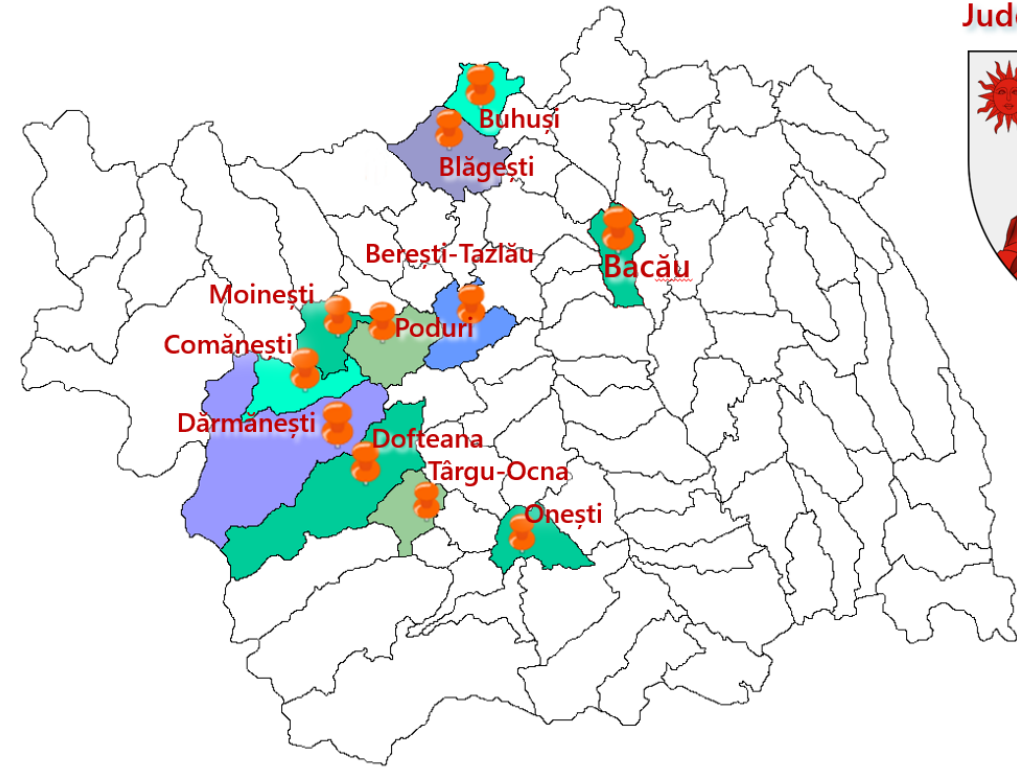
# A learning experience for 22 communities in Romania



Județul Brașov



Județul Bacău





# ACHIEVEMENTS IN ROMANIA

## Cross-sectoral approach to early childhood



### Establishment of a local cross-sectoral team

#### Working together on:

- Situation analysis of the local early childhood system
- Local development /early childhood strategy
- Implementation plan

*“We have been interested to use the Primokiz approach because I was convinced that bringing together specialists from the three fields of activity involved in early childhood, social protection, education and health, contributes to finding the best solutions for the development of services for this age group.”*

Mayor, Urban municipality

*“At local level, team members have not been in such a project where representatives from the fields of protection and social care, health and education work together, concerned about children and early childhood. The period from birth to 6 years was unknown, so they were curious to see what they could do for their children, what challenges and resources they could discover in the community, being highly motivated and eager to get involved.”*

Primokiz Facilitator

# ACHIEVEMENTS IN ROMANIA

## LOCAL SITUATION ANALYSIS

Basic aspects of  
running a Situation  
Analysis

Collecting data

Mapping strengths  
and weaknesses of  
ECD

Situation Analysis  
report with ECD  
priorities

Consultation with local  
administrators and actors

Mandate for strategy  
and implementation  
plan

## Local Development Strategies

*“The development of sectoral strategies is essential for the community development, but when the initiative starts from bottom-up, from practitioners and specialists to authorities, the process is not only anchored in reality, but also internalized by those who will use and benefit from this document, giving it sustainability. [...]*

*Since the update of the City Strategy - by mentioning the early childhood development among its specific objectives – over the course of the year, the ambitions have increased, so today we are working on developing a stand-alone strategy for early childhood development.”*

Education Advisor for the City Hall

### New early childhood services

*“The integrated approach to early childhood development is for the benefit of children, that is why we wanted to implement Primokiz. It helped us diversify services for young children by creating alternatives like the **PrimoHub**.*

*In our community, the services for this age group weren't that diverse, for instance we didn't have any services for children under the age of three. Through the situation analysis made by the local team, Primokiz made it possible for the needs of young children to be highlighted in the Local Council discussions, and to implement the necessary actions identified.”*

*City Hall, Public Administrator*



# ACHIEVEMENTS IN ROMANIA



Activities with children







## Activities with parents



# ACHIEVEMENTS IN ROMANIA

Expansion of existing services: building, extension of the attics, renovation of crèches and kindergartens

Capacity building programs for staff working in existing services (professionals from all 100 crèche groups and almost 400 kindergarten groups)

Support the initial training for professionals to work in services for children from birth to 3 years

New outdoor spaces or playgrounds

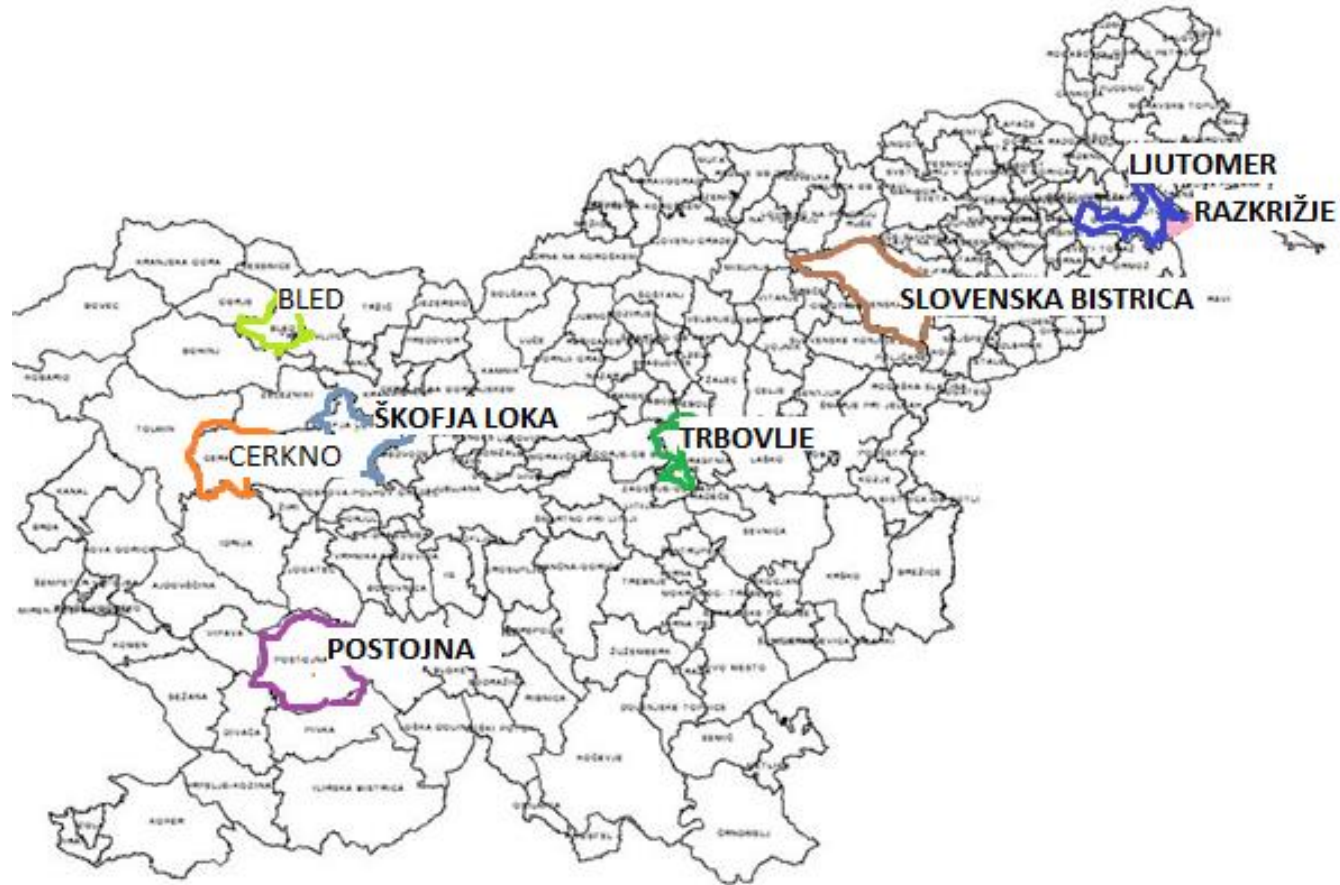
Employment of human resources for child services

Establishment of medical services for children

Setting up 7 new crèches

Developing an online platform with info about childhood services

## A learning experience for 8 municipalities in Slovenia





# ACHIEVEMENTS IN SLOVENIA

## Human capital

### 1. The *Local Action Teams (LAT)*

- **LAT as a tool for connecting services on local level**

*“If we sit together and talk, we connect more quickly and see solutions that we wouldn't otherwise”.* (Naja, Primokiz Local Coordinator)

*“Now that we have been involved in the process for some time, we understand that the task of LAT is to connect services and sectors and jointly research what is happening in the early childhood field. Task of every sector is to identify challenges, needs, problems, also talk to the parents and share all findings with the other LAT members, then jointly search for some solution”.* (Lidija, Primokiz Local Coordinator)



# ACHIEVEMENTS IN SLOVENIA

## Human capital

- **LAT as a connected group of individuals**

*"When we sat down together for the first time, everyone saw just their own field. School and kindergarten saw their own problems, health care their own and social field their own. I think it was crucial to find a common issue and open the discussion, what can each of us contribute to this specific problem. Then we started to see the added value of our joint work". (Karmen, Primokiz Local Coordinator)*

- **Competences for leading LAT are important**

*"A lot depended on the skills and knowledge of those who led the meetings. Mateja (facilitator) used various techniques to activate the LAT members. They were encouraged to participate and through participation took the process as their own". (Karmen, Primokiz Local Coordinator)*



# ACHIEVEMENTS IN SLOVENIA

## Human capital

- **The composition of members in the LAT is key**

*“It is important that LAT members have some decision-making power. For example, one of the LAT members was an assistant of the kindergarten director: She had the power to quickly obtain data for the situation analysis, she was in the position to quickly get the time slot to present the results to kindergarten staff.” (Ivana, Primokiz Facilitator)*



# ACHIEVEMENTS IN SLOVENIA

## Knowledge capital

### Brief analysis of the Situation Analysis

- The most “undernourished” area of services for birth to 3/birth to 1
- Lack of more specialized healthcare services
- The fewest programs for specific group of children
- Poor information of parents regarding services
- More cross-sectoral cooperation is needed
- Many possibilities for activation of existing human, natural and other resources on the level of municipalities



**Perceived challenges were addressed in the local strategies.**



# ACHIEVEMENTS IN SLOVENIA

## Importance of the involvement, support, leadership of mayors, reps of local authorities

- Where the process has stalled a bit, the mayor took over the “mobilizer” role
- Provision of financial resources for LAT members, for the work of the local coordinator
- Good contacts between representatives of local authorities, quick confirmation of local strategy



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**Q&A**





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What did we learn about the Primokiz approach?

## Early childhood is not just about kindergartens!

*“Early childhood is the pillar of a healthy society. We cannot build without a solid foundation, therefore investments in this stage must be assumed, consistent, integrated. The PrimoKiz approach has put us in a position*

- to examine more carefully the existing situation in the community,*
- to listen to the voice of the people, and*
- to take measures for the efficient use of resources in order to implement optimal solutions in the field.”*

*Mayor, Municipality in Romania*

**Competent local human resources, local pool of experts.**

# Lessons from Slovenia

- Strategically addressing the unmet needs
- The local strategy /proposed measures linked to other developmental documents in the municipality
- Raised awareness about early childhood → **an ombudsman for early childhood** as a measure in local strategy

*“... that person will knock on doors and raise attention towards early childhood. We would like to have some continuity in the process that we have started. He or she will be the one who will try again and again to point out that investment in early childhood is a good investment.” (Mateja, Primokiz Facilitator and Karmen, Primokiz Local Coordinator)*

- The continuation of the LAT, after the implementation ends, as a guarantee for cooperation across the sectors (education, health, social protection, etc.).





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