



**KA201 STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS FOR SCHOOL  
EDUCATION**

# **FIRST STEPS PROJECT**

(2020-1-HU01-KA201-078756)



Adaptation of children to preschool environment

## THE FIRST STEPS PROJECT

The transition process should be viewed as an important opportunity for the young child to develop his or her socio-emotional skills. It is important to analyse how the child's first approach to the pre-school institution is managed by professionals and institutions from different backgrounds. Adaptation is a very important stage in the child's socialisation and later personality development, as the nursery scene is the first stage where the child first meets the institution. Adaptation means gradual separation over several weeks, slow adaptation to the new environment, and a gentle transition. Some of the most significant changes a child experiences when they go to nursery are separation from mother/father, new personal and material environment, and change in daily rhythm of life, new microbiological environment, new dietary habits, new types of food, the need for adaptation. During this transition period, children and their parents may experience difficulties due to the differences in the new environment.

The FIRST STEPS project analyses and compares the important activity of socio-behavioural adaptation of the child in childcare services, with a transnational view because the European partnerships helps to identify and share the good practices on the adaptation phase in pre-school services in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Estonia, Hungary, Italy and Spain.

**Disclaimer:** The European Commission's support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents, which reflect the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

## INDEX / SUMMARY

The FIRST STEPS project .....	2
INDEX / SUMMARY .....	3
<b>PROJECT PARTNERS .....</b>	<b>5</b>
ARCA Cooperativa Sociale (Italy) .....	6
CEIP Martínez Valls (Spain) .....	7
Galileo Progetti Nonprofit Kft (Hungary).....	8
Józsefvárosi Egyesített Bölcsődék (Hungary) .....	9
Narva Kindergarden Põngerjas (Estonia).....	10
Privatna predškolska ustanova “Montessori IQ” kutak (Bosnia- Herzegovina) .....	11
<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>12</b>
Definition of the Transition and Adaptation process in preschool institution .....	14
Family role in Transition and Adaptation process in preschool institution .....	16
Collaborative practices as a condition of the successful transition to Kindergarten.....	18
<b>TRANSITION AND ADAPTATION PROCESS IN PERSPECTIVE OF COVID-19 SITUATION ....</b>	<b>20</b>
Bosnia and Herzegovina .....	23
Estonia .....	24
Hungary .....	26
Italy .....	27
Spain .....	29
<b>ORGANIZATION OF ADAPTATION PROCESS OF CHILDREN TO PRESCHOOL ENVIRONMENT AT INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL IN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES.....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>EDUCATION CONTEXT OF PRESCHOOL EDUCATION IN PARTNER COUNTRIES OF “FIRST STEPS” PROJECT.....</b>	<b>31</b>
Bosnia and Herzegovina .....	31
Estonia .....	33
Hungary .....	35
Italy .....	37

Spain ..... 39

INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL OF TRANSITION PROCESS IN PARTNER COUNTRIES ..... 41

**THE ADAPTATION PERIOD IN SHORT IN THE PARTNER ORGANISATIONS ..... 44**

Bosnia and Herzegovina ..... 45

Estonia ..... 49

Hungary ..... 53

Italy ..... 57

Spain ..... 61

**KEY MESSAGE ..... 64**

**REFERENCES ..... 67**

**EXTRA: HOW THIS BOOK WAS MADE ..... 69**

# PROJECT PARTNERS

ARCA COOPERATIVA SOCIALE (ITALY)

CEIP MARTÍNEZ VALLS (SPAIN)

GALILEO PROGETTI NONPROFIT KFT (HUNGARY)

JÓZSEFVÁROSI EGYESÍTETT BÖLCSŐDÉK (HUNGARY)

NARVA KINDERGARDEN PÕNGERJAS (ESTONIA)

PRIVATNA PREDSKOLSKA USTANOVA "MONTESSORI IQ" KUTAK (BOSNIA-  
HERZEGOVINA)

## ARCA COOPERATIVA SOCIALE (ITALY)



<https://www.arcacoop.org/firenze/>



<https://www.facebook.com/arcacooperativasociale/>

Arca Social Cooperative is a non-profit organisation established in 1983 based in Florence. Since 1993, Arca has been a Social Cooperativa type A – based on 381/92 National Law. ARCA deals with the management of social, welfare and educational services both designed and provided privately and in agreement with Public Administrations. It counts over 1250 workers, of which over 475 work in the field of early childhood.

Arca manages services for early childhood, under18, disabled people, elderly people, drug addicts, and people with psychiatric discomfort and in disadvantaged situations or at risks of social exclusion in the Tuscany Region.

Arca has a very solid local and regional network and collaborates with several public bodies, universities, schools and NGOs.

Arca has expanded its dimension at European level, thanks to numerous European projects, and intends to continue in this direction, offering opportunities for professional growth and participation at European level to its workers. Since 1989, it has been managing early childhood services. Actually, it manages over 100 early childhood education services, mostly nursery but also kindergartens and institutions hosting children not living in their families.



## CEIP MARTÍNEZ VALLS (SPAIN)



<https://portal.edu.gva.es/ceipmartinezvalls/es/inici-esp/>



@erasmusmartinezvalls

CEIP Martínez Valls is a Public School (State School) located in the city of Ontinyent (Valencia – Spain). We have children from kindergarten 2 to grade 6 in primary level. We have two groups per level except in kindergarten 2.

We are a school connected to our local traditions but also, we are a school that keeps an eye open towards innovation and to future projection. Some of the pillars of Martínez Valls School are:

- We go along with our students in all the growth period, development, mellowing in their academic, emotional, affective and social learning processes.
- Teachers have the role of being guidance, observant, supporters of the students, offering them opportunities in which they become the main character of their own learning in real and meaningful situations.
- Our vision of childhood is respectful, taking care of different learning rhythms, their needs of play, attention, love and relationship.
- We respect diversity of our students and we learn from each other
- We are a plurilingual, multicultural, plural, inclusive, coeducational, human school that renders accounts, is responsible, democratic, open-minded, innovative and committed to the school community.
- In our school community everyone cares, we are all important to build up the school we want with commitment and continued communication and participation.



## GALILEO PROGETTI NONPROFIT KFT (HUNGARY)



<https://galileoprogetti.hu/language/en/home-english/>



<https://www.facebook.com/galileoprogettinonprofit>

Galileo Progetti Non-profit Ltd. is a non-profit enterprise, it was founded in Budapest in 2009, with the aims to promote well-being, social inclusion, development, and to increase international cooperation.

The main objectives of Galileo are the development of education, social economy and social sector in general and the inclusion policies. Galileo also aims to develop the feeling of civil participation and European citizenship and works with particular attention for the inclusion of disadvantaged people or at risk of social exclusion, such as Roma minorities and disabled people. Galileo have continuous exchange of good practices and experiences among the European Union countries and works in collaboration with private and public local bodies, involving in European experiences organisations that are normally not very active at international level, guided by the belief that international experiences increase personal and professional skills and have a strongly positive impact on the development of the quality of the social sector at local level. Galileo has developed a wide local and international network of social enterprises, educational institutions, VET providers, public organisations, associations, and civil organisations. It's member of the European Network of Social Integration Enterprises ENSIE.

The management is guided by the belief that good practices exchange can increase the local development and the competences of the local organisations, such as sharing and adapting well-functioning training and working processes in the social sector can have a significant impact on the professional performance, on the competitiveness of the local participants. Galileo target groups are mostly vulnerable groups, with attention to the fight against discrimination and the inclusion in the workplace and in the society of the disadvantaged people, particularly disabled people, people belonging to minorities and in situations of economic distress and at risk of social exclusion.





## JÓZSEFVÁROSI EGYESÍTETT BÖLCSŐDÉK (HUNGARY)



<http://www.bolcsode-bp08.hu/kozpont.html>

United Nurseries of Józsefváros (JEB) was founded in 1994 by the municipality of the VIII district of Budapest, a district in which the minority population is particularly relevant. It consists of 7 nurseries in which work 198 persons, an average 70 students in dual training. The number of children attending the nursery is around 492 children from 0 to 3 years of age. JEB's nursery schools provide users with basic mandatory services, as established by the Local Public Administration, and additional services.

The educational mission of JEB is to promote the balanced psychophysical development of children aged 0-3 years, thanks to favourable environmental conditions, the specific training of the staff, offering to children the opportunity, feel comfortable, have a healthy lifestyle and adequate cognitive and social stimuli. JEB works in collaboration with families, respecting their right to privacy, and engaging them in the education of children so that children become open to the world, independent, and healthy and accept the fundamental rules of coexistence. In addition to the seven member institutions, the United Nurseries of Józsefváros also provides space for the Sure Start Children's House. It is a unique service in the capital, which has been proven to increase children's chances for a more successful future. The goal of the Sure Start Children's Home is to create a service environment that, with the active participation of the family and the wider environment, provides equal opportunities for the development of innate abilities in early childhood, for successful participation in kindergarten and starting school. The Sure Start Children's House welcomes disadvantaged families from the VIII. District.



## NARVA KINDERGARDEN PÕNGERJAS (ESTONIA)



<http://www.pongerjas.edu.ee>

Narva Kindergarten Põngerjas is an educational institution, its main objective is providing preschool education, that has been operating since 1968 in Narva, Estonia. Kindergarten has its own symbols: Logo – the happy faces of children against the background of the blue sky symbolize a happy childhood in home Estonia and Anthem - a song based on the theme "Tip-tap steps the little man...". There are children 1,5-7 years old. Children are formed in 10 separate groups according to their age. The kindergarten programme strictly follows the national curriculum. The kindergarten has the mission in Narva city: to educate children with fewer opportunities (learning, social, cultural, economic obstacles, some kids live in remote rural communities, majority of children with immigrant background). The highlight of the kindergarten mission is teaching and inclusion of children belonging to national and ethnic minorities. Traditions, academic achievements of every single child, personal development and the spirit of a big family are feature characteristics of the kindergarten Põngerjas. The kindergarten sets its own work to build positive relationships between children, their parents and the staff, and among the children. These relationships help to motivate personal growth and development that includes understanding of life's values. Our kindergarten teachers are experienced and went through pedagogical professional examinations. Our staff introduce new teaching methods in bilingual and STEAM education and try to be informed by seminars and other inner educational ways. Kindergarten Põngerjas cooperates with other schools, local communities, and parents.



Põngerjas

## PRIVATNA PREDSKOLSKA USTANOVA “MONTESSORI IQ” KUTAK (BOSNIA- HERZEGOVINA)



<https://www.montessorituzla.ba/>



<https://www.facebook.com/montessoriiq/>

Unlike traditional pre-school institutions Private preschool „Montessori IQ Corner“ Tuzla provides a safe and stimulating environment for learning, individual dedication by teachers, effective learning methods and flexible curriculum. As a result, this leads to a child's higher developmental achievements and intelligence.

Private preschool institution „Montessori IQ Corner“ Tuzla established 2017 as the first and only institution in Tuzla Canton (Bosnia and Herzegovina) to provide preschool education based on famous Montessori methodology. MIQ educates 130 children from 0-9 years distributed in multi-age classrooms. Private Pre-school Institution Montessori IQ Corner employs 22 different professionals for early childhood education and care in full time (coordinator, nurseries and pre-primary teachers) and other professionals as a part-time or volunteer (special educators, sport instructor etc). Programs include nursery/toddler program for children from 6 months to three years, program for preschool children from three to six years and program based for school-aged children.

The mission of the Private Pre-school Institution Montessori IQ Corner is to become an institution to raise children to be able to face the reality of our life today, using the Montessori method where “love is not a dependence, and discipline is not subordination”. The vision of a kindergarten is to become the centre of excellence for the Montessori method in Tuzla and Tuzla Canton, as an example of life in the wider community.



# INTRODUCTION

The introduction part of the publication present overview of the most important terms and process related to adaptation of children in preschool environment.

That include definition of terms related to adaptation process as well as presentation of important role of family and preschool professionals.

## DEFINITION OF THE TRANSITION AND ADAPTATION PROCESS IN PRESCHOOL INSTITUTION

Transitions are processes of change that children experience in the first eight years of life, related to access (or lack thereof) to various educational and care services, and the move from one to another. Transitions are understood as a process, where both the "before" and the "after" are important. This process affects not only the child but also his or her parents, teachers and school, and is closely related to early childhood education and care policies and to basic primary education policies, as well as the overlap between them.

The transitional periods and the way children adapt during early childhood age, observed simultaneously as pedagogical continuity and change, represent a challenge for the beginnings of socio-emotional development. Most of the previous studies define transition as a change of context and moving from one institutional framework to another in the educational continuum. Adaptation, which is closely related to transition, can be defined as harmonisation with the environment and can be observed in two ways: as an adjustment and adaptation. Adjustment refers to the process that marks the characteristic way an individual faces new environmental requirements, while adaptation is a child's achievement or success resulting from more or less successful adaptation to environmental conditions.

Therefore, adjustment is expressed as adaptation inside the kindergarten, while adaptation is expressed as an adaptation to the kindergarten (Velan and Tatalović-Vorkapić, 2020).

Vogler, Grivello and Woodhead (2008) define transitions as key events or processes that occur at specific moments and are linked to personal changes (in appearance, activities, status, roles and responsibilities).

Transitions involve psychosocial and cultural adjustments, and the way children experience them will depend on their vulnerability or their resiliency.

The transition to kindergarten is an important developmental milestone for young children, their families, and teachers (McIntyre et al., 2007). The transition to kindergarten is a significant event for young children and their families. Kindergarten transition refers to the process used to provide continuity between a preschool or home and a kindergarten program. Transitions involve sharing of student information, classroom activities and curricular objectives. The methods teachers use to orient children and families to formal schooling can have a long-term effect on academic achievement (Nelson, 2004). Families play an important role in the transition process, and engaging families in this transition is a responsibility shared by families, schools, and communities.

Kindergarten transition marks a child's entry to formal education and sets the foundation for future school experiences and performances (Kang, Horn and Palmer, 2017). Research suggests that children who successfully transition to kindergarten possess multiple skills, including academic and socio-emotional abilities that allow them to meet the demands of the kindergarten classroom. Conversely, children who lack such skills experience early classroom challenges and are likely to face future academic difficulties (Jarrett, 2017).

## FAMILY ROLE IN TRANSITION AND ADAPTATION PROCESS IN PRESCHOOL INSTITUTION

A child's transition from home to an early education program, from one program to another, or from an early childhood program to a new school can be an exciting but stressful time. This major event of moving from a familiar place to an unfamiliar one can be challenging for both young children and their families. For schools, creating new relationships can also be challenging if they are limited in their resources, training, and capacity to interact with families. Effective planning and implementation of a transition plan, in addition to effective program policies and practices, can ease this transition, no matter what setting a child is moving. The focus on this transition process is not a random choice – in fact, extensive research indicates that positive transition experiences are associated with increased family engagement during kindergarten, enhanced social skills in children, and higher academic performance in maths, language, and literacy in kindergarten and beyond. A focus on the transition experience can also help ensure that all children receive the support they need to be successful, including early intervention, language support, wraparound services and other resources.

The research of McIntyre et al. (2007) presents that majority of families wanted more involvement in the transition to kindergarten planning and wanted information about kindergarten readiness, including academic and behavioural expectations. The top concerns expressed by families were attending a new school and difficulties with following directions or other behaviour problems. Families with fewer financial resources reported less involvement in transition activities than families with more resources. Nelson (2004), in the longitudinal study, presents results that most schools do not provide a comprehensive transition plan that allows teachers and parents to exchange important information about child development and school expectations.



This study confirms previous research that found that teachers are less likely to engage in time intensive transition activities such as conducting individual home visits and are more likely to use activities such as sending information through the mail. Also, study revealed that teachers like to have some face-to-face contact with parents. Both teachers with early childhood training and veteran teachers invited parents to visit the classroom. These classroom visits can be used to exchange information about children and classroom expectations.

Parents can provide support to their child before transition to preschool and during the time of adaptation. This support can include following activities:

- Talk enthusiastically with your child about starting with preschool education
- Read to your child every day or every night for fifteen to twenty minutes.
- Have your child practice self-help skills such as buttoning his or her pants, washing hands, using the bathroom, and eating at a table.
- Make sure your child knows important personal information such as his or her name, parent's name, address, and phone number.
- Get your child and your family into a morning and bedtime routine.
- Take a tour of the preschool with your child and meet with teachers and staff.

During transition, communication between preschool institutions and parents is very important for the well-being of children and parents as well as the success of this process in general. Communication should be authentic and reciprocal. Families should give a menu of options, and preschool institutions must be as flexible to meet families' unique needs. Staff should be trained to welcome new children and families, help them navigate the transition process, and foster and maintain positive relationships.

## COLLABORATIVE PRACTICES AS A CONDITION OF THE SUCCESSFUL TRANSITION TO KINDERGARTEN

The word transition refers to the process of change. It involves moving from one situation to another. It can be smooth and satisfying or bumpy and frightening for a young child. The child directly experiences the transition and other groups of people are involved. The transition can be exciting because the child is moving to something new that the adults in his or her life regard as important. He or she may be apprehensive about leaving familiar people and routines and facing the unknown. A child entering preschool must learn to cope with an unfamiliar place, changes in expectations, new role, peer group and authority figure... If not handled well these new experiences and relationships may be stressful for the child. For the family there is pride that their child is entering preschool and will be facing new challenges. Parents hope that the transition to preschool will be a smooth and happy one. For the preschool staff transition means saying hello to a new group of children. They hope the children will be well prepared for preschool expectations from their previous experiences. Developing systematic transition strategies must become a common goal of communities as a way of supporting children and families. Collaboration between the home or preschool, the elementary school, and the community is a way to enhance the children's development while supporting and empowering the family in the process. Positive relationships between children and adults enhance children's ability to learn and help them become more comfortable in their surroundings. Teachers build positive relationships with children's families by initiating conversations and helping them feel comfortable. Daily communication with families (emails, daily journal entries, phone calls, or face-to-face conversations) helps build the family-teacher relationship.

Once teachers and families establish positive relationships, they can work together to find the best strategy to ease the children's home-to-school transition. It is important for teachers and families to periodically re-evaluate strategies to ensure that the plan continues to work. Some basic strategies teachers and families can use to ease transition anxiety

include implementing a “window wave” and hug routine, bringing a familiar object from home, and assigning an arrival-time friend. The window wave is an easy strategy that can be done at a door through a window. After the parent and child say good-bye, the parent gives closure to the transition by waving to the child or blowing kisses. The child will know she is loved and is now ready to begin her day in a positive way. Giving children a hug at the door helps the transition into the classroom and away from their parents. Children are reassured when parents let them know that they will be back to pick them up before saying goodbye. Sensing they are valued, they enter the classroom feeling safe and secure. Bringing a familiar object from home (blanket or small toy), helps children with the home-to-school transition. If children are having a hard time after the morning transition, they can hug the object from home to feel more comfortable. The familiar object can be reassuring throughout the day. Children who form friendships with peers in the classroom often feel more comfortable and may acclimate to the school environment more easily. Teachers can ask peers who consistently arrive before children needing transitional help whether they would like to be an arrival friend. The arrival friend - who has previously received directions from the teacher - guides the child into the classroom, and then takes the child directly to an activity, such as play dough, puzzles, or books. Teachers need to monitor these peer interactions to be sure the arrangement is helping the new child and is not a burden for the arrival friend.

# TRANSITION AND ADAPTATION PROCESS IN PERSPECTIVE OF COVID-19 SITUATION

During the COVID-19 pandemic, it has been very important to keep physical distance between people who don't live together. Early care and education programs and schools have had to limit visitors and changed drop-off and pick-up procedures to limit contact. Teachers have had to wear masks and facial expressions are used to help communicate feelings and provide reassurance, so being around masked faces can add to feelings of uncertainty. For children who return to in-person care, changes to the space and to routines might make everything look and feel different. Children are generally flexible and can adapt, but strategies to protect children's health may make transitions to new situations and new people harder. Parents may feel less comfortable with letting their child start an early care and education program because they can't easily visit and may know less about the program and the teacher than they normally would. Teachers, parents and programs can help children by planning the transition, making strong connections and establishing new routines (CDC, 2021).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the teachers dealt with the situation by applying various techniques:

- Virtual connections with parents, such as video calls and phone meetings, to provide information about the program and share experiences.
- Virtual tours, so that parents can see the facility and classrooms and imagine what it would be like for their child to attend.
- Programs and visits inside the preschools, only for visitors who are fully vaccinated.
- Face to face meetings of the fully vaccinated staff with some members of a single household, if not everyone is fully vaccinated.
- In-person meetings outside on the playground, to let children meet the teacher and other children before starting the program.

- Share information with parents of returning children about how daily routines might be different because of the COVID-19 pandemic, so that they can help to prepare their child for any changes.
- Provide frequent communication to parents about their children's time in the program.

Let's now delve a little into how different countries have dealt with the difficulties in pre-school education during the pandemic.

## BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

The preschool institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina only disposed of the decisions of the political body responsible for management of the crisis caused by COVID-19. Before lockdown, Bosnia and Herzegovina did not have any type of specific measures for COVID-19. Preschools have been closed from 15 of March to 15 of May 2020. Re-opening of the kindergarten has brought certain problems and new measures of work with preschool children. Measures during and after COVID-19 included a prohibition of entering in institutions for parents, and first days of adaptation and transition of children cannot be organised in the same way as before the pandemic. Most public preschool institutions did not provide this service before, but private institutions provided the possibility for children and parents to enter the preschool and stay together with the children during adaptation. In relation to these changes, the institution provides information to parents using online communication (calls, messages, online pictures etc.).

Other measurements included that parents, sport instructors, undergraduate students, volunteers and others cannot enter in the institutions, avoiding contact between children and teachers: one teacher had to work with 10 children in a specific space, and avoid contact with other teachers and children. Entertainment or other celebration events were prohibited.

## ESTONIA

In Estonia, during COVID-19 access of children into preschool child care institutions (kindergarten) was possible only if it was unavoidably necessary. At the request of the parents, the local government must ensure the possibility to attend preschools for all children from the age of 18 months to 7 years of age whose residence is in the territory of the rural municipality or city and coincides with the residence of at least one parent. With the consent of the parent, the place in kindergarten for a child aged from 18 months to 3 years may be replaced by the municipality with a babysitting service. Kindergartens continued to work in their usual groups, but the contacts between groups were avoided in all activities. Children, parents and staff with symptoms weren't admitted to childcare institutions. Each preschool institution followed the rule to avoid contacts between different kindergarten groups, even outside. The Ministry of Education in Estonia worked out the instructions for the local government to provide them to kindergartens and childcare institutions. The organisation of the work of preschool institutions was decided by a local government unit in cooperation with the kindergarten director.

In order to prevent the transmission of infection, nurseries, kindergartens and day-care centres took the following preventive measures into account when organising their work:

- The entry of strangers into the kindergarten/care building was prevented;
- The number of contacts of persons in the building was kept low, gatherings in groups are avoided, and the 2 + 2 rule was followed;
- No movement and contact between groups in preschools;
- Sports facilities, halls, swimming pools, etc. in kindergartens/nurseries had not to be used by children of different groups at the same time;



- Events and closing parties could take place on a limited basis, with a smaller number of children, parents/guest attend virtually;
- It was recommended that staff wear masks in accordance with the instructions on the Health Board's website;
- Preschool teachers and assistant teachers had to organise outdoor activities as possible for children, avoiding group contact. As outdoor learning strengthens health and promotes children's well-being, all kindergartens have been recommended to adapt the kindergarten's rules to arrange outdoor learning regularly.

## HUNGARY

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought new health standards to nurseries in Hungary. General rules have been introduced: upon entry, the body temperature of both the child and the adult was measured. They had to disinfect their hands with the specific sanitizers provided by the preschool, and the parents had to wear a mouth mask and foot bag. The parents declared that they are healthy, and have not been associated with a COVID-19 patient. The restrictions have had an impact on all preschool activities, and on the adjustment process of the new children. Preschools have tried to minimise the impact on children's transition to nursery.

One of the changes was that only one parent (or in general an adult) was involved in the adaptation process for each child, even in case of twin children.

Family visits have been suspended, therefore the parents they could not visit preview the nurseries in person. They could get information based on the information and photos on the websites, as well as by phone communication and emailing with the management of the nurseries. Even the parent group discussions, and the meetings between teachers and parents, had been held only online. Because of the pandemic, the number of enrolments has decreased. From 18 March to 2 June 2020, the nurseries were closed. There were only a few nurseries operating on duty, which could accept a maximum of five children in a group. JEB provided the food delivered at home for the children and families in need. From 2 June to 8 August 2020, the nurseries operated in accordance with the previous epidemiological rules, but in normal operation. From 8 March 2021, the rules tightened again due the epidemic, currently only urgent and justified nursery transition can start.

## ITALY

Related to the transition process in Italy, the bigger changes on the acclimatisation period was related to the presence of parents, which was reduced from 7 to 3 days. In addition, any type of meeting between adults had to be provided only through the online platform: meetings with parents, work group meetings, etc.

Since the new school year started in September 2020, the Italian Government has decreed that:

- The use of respiratory protective devices was mandatory, except for children under the age of 6 years, and for people with pathologies or disabilities incompatible with the use of the mask.
- Free tests have been provided to teachers, to detect SARS-CoV-2 infection, as a preventive tool in the school system.
- In March 2021, the Government consented to preschools to carry out activities in presence if it was necessary the use of the laboratories, or in order to achieve the effective school inclusion of kids with disabilities and special educational needs, even in the regions designated as a "red zone", which means regions subject to stricter restrictions.
- Parents cannot enter the service, they had to stop in the area dedicated to welcoming children, to help their children take off their shoes and jackets.
- Persons who entered the service had to register their presence on a sheet, and to leave a written record in case of contagion.
- Children were split into groups, with 2 or 3 teachers, who worked together, avoiding personal contacts with other teachers and staff, for example when using common areas.
- The garden areas were divided, and dedicated to a specific group.

- The teachers could not eat at the table with children (as they usually do), because they can never take off their masks.

## SPAIN

Spain decided to be organised in groups named “stable living groups”, which means students must not interact with other children that are in other groups. In this way, in case of infection it is easier to find the contacts and keep track of them. One teacher attended one “stable living group”, who stayed with those children all day. A “stable group of living” has a maximum of 20 students. After the lockdown, the most remarkable change related to law decisions was that only teachers, students and technical staff were allowed to enter the school facilities.

This means that families could not enter the school, unless they had an appointment. The Music, English and Art teachers had to keep one metre and a half security distance from the students while they were teaching.

COVID-19 had an impact on the transition and adaptation period process. Before the pandemic, parents were used to entering their children's classroom, and staying a little time until the child was feeling comfortable. But, due to the health situation generated by COVID-19, the adaptation process has taken place in the park opposite the school, involving the families. Preschool students meet in the park every morning. The school adopted a double recess schedule, from 10.45-11.15 and 11.15-11.45, with differentiated zones for recess in the playground, which rotate every week. Every group used one different zone per week, and each group prepared specific boxes with toys, which weren't shared.

**ORGANIZATION OF  
ADAPTATION PROCESS  
OF CHILDREN TO  
PRESCHOOL  
ENVIRONMENT AT  
INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL IN  
EUROPEAN COUNTRIES**

# EDUCATION CONTEXT OF PRESCHOOL EDUCATION IN PARTNER COUNTRIES OF “FIRST STEPS” PROJECT

## BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA



Early education in Bosnia and Herzegovina is an integral part of the educational system. It is regulated by the laws of the relevant educational authorities. It represents part of the overall care of society for quality improvement of life and development of children in early childhood. It is not obligatory, but a children's preschool preparatory programme which lasts 3 months is compulsory before the primary education and it is free of charge.

Preschool education and care is intended for children from 6 months old until they start with primary education (6 years old). It comprises three levels: nursery (for children from 6 months to 3 years old), kindergarten (for children from 3 years to 6 years old) and preschool preparatory programme. In the year before starting school the preschool preparatory programme was implemented and it's first part of compulsory education. This programme attends children between 5 ½ and 6 ½ years old. In the school year 2019/2020, on the territory of B&H, there were 390 pre-school institutions (209 public and 181 private institutions) with 30.587 children. Out of the total number of children, 65.7% of them attended public institutions, while 34.3% of children attended private institutions. The number of children waiting for placement in a preschool institution was 4.316 and this number increased by 39.9% compared to the previous school year. In the school year

2019/2020 there were 6.076 children in nursery school, which represented an increase of 7.3% compared to the previous school year. The largest group was the one of children aged 2 and 3 years (55.8%) (Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2020).

Official standards prescribe number of children in an educational group is:

1. a climbing group of six months to one year - up to six children,
2. a climbing group of one to two years - up to 12 children,
3. a climbing group of two to three years - up to 15 children,
4. mixed climbing group - up to 14 children,
5. a kindergarten group of three to four years - up to the 21st child,
6. kindergarten group from four to five years - up to 24 children,
7. a kindergarten group of five to six years - up to 25 children and
8. mixed kindergarten - up to 25 children.

This official standard in most public institutions can be implemented and the number of children in one educational group is about 30 children and 2 teachers/nurseries per group, which means a ratio of 1:15 children.



## ESTONIA



All children in Estonia have the right to obtain high quality early childhood education (preschool education, according to the Preschool Education Act). Local governments have the duty to ensure all children aged 1.5 to 7 years residing in their catchment area and whose parents so wish an opportunity to attend a preschool. Parents can also choose the type of

pre-school childcare institution-private or municipal. Pre-school childcare institutions must hold an education licence. Estonian preschools offer integrated programmes that include education and childcare services at *ISCED* levels 010–020. (There are two categories of *ISCED level 0* programmes: *ISCED 010* - early childhood educational development and *ISCED 020* - pre-primary education.)

Preschool education is based on the national curriculum and is under the administration of the Ministry of Education and Research. Municipalities have the obligation to guarantee a place in a preschool child care institution of the child's residence for all children aged between 1,5-7 years. Children up to age 3, children attend day-care (*sõim*) and children between 3-7 years attend kindergarten (*lasteaed*). Parents of children under the age of 4 may choose child care provision instead of a preschool child care institution by submitting a relevant application to the local government.

In the school year 2019/2020 in Estonia, there were 614 pre-school institutions (209 public and 181 private institutions) with 66,375 children. In percent, 94% of children from 4 to 7 years old participate in the activities of preschool institutions. The staff-child ratio in Estonia

is lower for three- to six-year-olds, but higher for those under three. The set number of children per staff member is between 7 and 10. The maximum number of special needs children in a group is smaller, ranging from 2 to 6, depending on the special needs of the children.

## HUNGARY



Preschool education in Hungary has two different parts: nursery and kindergarten. The nursery educates and cares for children from 20 weeks to 3 years of age and kindergarten is educated from 3 years to 6 years of age including the school preparatory programme. Services can be provide through public, private, non-profit, church institutions or on contract with another municipality, which already runs a preschool institution.

Nursery is an integral part of the social system and regulated by the laws of the relevant social authorities. The child protection law regulates all of the nurseries. It represents part of the overall care of society for quality improvement of life and development of children in early childhood. Nursery is not obligatory. It is mandatory to establish a public nursery in every city larger than 10,000 people. Types of nurseries: traditional nursery, family nursery, mini nursery and workplace nursery. Parents have to pay for care and meals separately. The local government or the substantive authorities determine the fee.

Kindergarten is an integral part of the educational system and regulated by the laws of the relevant educational authorities. It represents part of the overall care of society for quality improvement of life and development of children in early childhood. Kindergarten is mandatory, but it is possible to request an exemption until the child's 5th birthday. From last year, preparation for school in kindergarten is mandatory. In the school year 2019/2020, on the territory of Hungary, there were 789 traditional nursery, 918 family

nursery, 214 mini nursery and 9 workplace nursery (it cannot be added because there are multifunctional institutions) with 45.889 children (38.611 in traditional nursery, 5.668 in family nursery, 1.556 in mini nursery and 54 in workplace nursery.). In 2019/2020, 63.000 children lived in a settlement without a nursery. In the school year 2019/2020, on the territory of Hungary, there were 4.608 kindergarten with 330.500 children. In 2019/2020, 31% of the children lived in a settlement without kindergarten (Central Agency for Statistics of Hungary, 2020).

One traditional nursery group consists of a maximum of 12 children. However, if all the children are over 2 years old a maximum of 14 children may be cared for in one group.

Groups include two early childhood educators (there should be one educator in the morning and another one in the afternoon with 4 hours overlap) and one nanny for maximum two groups, which means maximum ratio of 1:7 children.

Family nursery is provided in the family day care educators' own home. One nursery group consists of a maximum of 5 children. A group includes one early childhood educator or child-minder. If the service provider employs a helper person too, two more children can be cared for. It means a maximum ratio of 1:8 children.

Mini nursery provides ECEC service for a smaller group of children. One mini nursery group consists of a maximum of 7-8 children. Groups include one early childhood educator and one assistant nurse (technical support) which mean a maximum ratio of 1:8 children.

A workplace nursery is a nursery provided by an employer for their employees' children. One group consists of a maximum of 7-8 children. A group includes one early childhood educator or child-minder. It means a maximum ratio of 1:8 children.

Kindergarten group consists of a maximum of 30 children. Groups include two kindergarten teachers, which means a maximum ratio of 1:15 children.

## ITALY



Early education in Italy is an integral part of the educational system. It is regulated by the laws of the relevant educational authorities; however each region has its own specific legislation. It represents part of the overall care of society for quality improvement of life and development of children in early childhood. It is not obligatory. Preschool education and care is intended for children from 3 months old until they start with primary education (6 years old). In the

2018/2019 educational year, 13,335 early childhood services are active on the national territory, for a total of 355,829 places authorized to operate. 51.6% of the posts are in structures that own the municipalities. The offer consists of traditional nursery school (81%) and spring sections (10%); supplementary early childhood services (play spaces, children's and parents' centres and home education services) contribute 9% of the total supply. Children under 3 years of age attending any educational facility are 25.7% of residents of Italy of the same age (ISTAT Agency for Statistics of Italy, 2020).

In Italy, the educational groups in nurseries are up to 25 children and the ration of teachers and children is:

- Groups of children between 3 to 12 months: 1 educator for 6 children
- Groups of children between 13 to 24 months: 1 educator for 7 children
- Groups of children between 25 to 36 months: 1 educator for 10 children

In educational groups of kindergarten the number of children in each groups is:

- group of three to four years - up to the 21 child
- group from four to five years - up to 24 children
- group of five to six years - up to 25 children and
- mixed group - up to 25 children

In general, the ratio is 25 children with 1 educator.

## SPAIN



The Spanish educational system has different stages, the earliest one is infant education. It is not compulsory but the majority of families send their children to school in order to socialise with other children and then start the learning process. After this stage, when children are six years old, they start Primary level that goes from six to twelve years old. It is obligatory attendance.

The state/public infant education stage comprises three to five years old. It's been four years, when Spanish government included two years old in the state school. We also have one kindergarten 2 class in the public education system. In Spain you can always choose between state and private school. In Spain, zero to two years old students pay a fee to attend a nursery school or day care if parents need that. If not, children stay at home. When a child is two years old, he or she can join the public school system or continue in the private one.

In the school year 2020 – 2021, in the Ontinyent school district there are 11 pre-school institutions (6 public or state schools and 5 charter schools) with 660 children.

Out of the total number of children, 62.03 % of them attend public institutions, whereas 37.96% attend charter schools. The number of children waiting for placement in K2 in a public institution was about 150. Charter institutions do not have vacancies for K2 children and the ratio in the public ones is only 18 children per school and room. This happened 4 years ago. The number of children attending schools increase or decrease depending on the natality of every year so it is not applicable to compare statistics from one year to another.

The percentage of students attending public schools or charter schools has been approximately the same for the past 4 years. However, before that time, we could notice the other way round tendency in this city (Data taken from Town Hall Statistics and Education Department, 2021).



# INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL OF TRANSITION PROCESS IN PARTNER COUNTRIES

The project consortium develops specific questionnaires related to activities of the transitional process which have been filled out at the level of each organisation in partner countries. Results share different activities and perspectives of transition in preschool organisations in partner countries, and they are split in two different processes: activities related to institutional activities before children enter in institution and activities related to activities during the first days of transition.

This part of information include results of Questionnaire for institutional level of transition (Annex 1) which were fill out each partner organisation: ARCA Cooperativa Sociale (Italy), GEDI GESTIO I DISSENY SCCL (Spain), Galileo Progetti Nonprofit Kft (Hungary-coordinator), Józsefvárosi Egyesített Bölcsődék (Hungary), Preschool Põngerjas (Estonia) and Privatna predskolska ustanova "Montessori IQ" kutak (Bosnia and Herzegovina).

Most preschool institutions in partner countries have stated that they provide pre-transition activities at institutional level which include parental meeting and visit to the institution, open day for parents or different types of materials with information about the transition process. Preschool institutions in Hungary had several administration processes before the transition began. The parents can visit the nursery or speak with the head of the nursery before they submit the admission. The families can read a short description about the transition process on the website of the preschool institution. In Spain the pedagogical team held a meeting with parents at the preschool institution to let them know everything about the school routines and general features about the children at this age. Later, each head teacher holds individual interviews with every family before they come to the institution.

The children also have the possibility of getting to know their teacher before starting preschool education. In Italy preschool institutions organise meetings with the group of new members in July while in September the educators have an individual interview with each family. In Bosnia and Herzegovina preschool organisations provide visits for parents before children enrol in preschool institutions. During these visits parents have opportunities for meeting with nurseries, teachers and coordinator of the preschool institution with the purpose to share their expectations and specific information about the child. Documentation relevant for enrolment of children contains this information.

Also, most of the partner organisations check that they have a strict assessment for discovering children's needs and characteristics and parent's needs and expectations about the child, but they haven't provided additional information about tools and activities which are included in kindergarten routines. We can conclude that this type of strict documentation and information for children and parents needs in the pre-transitional process are underrepresented in preschool education.

The transition process and adaptation of children during the first days in preschool institutions differs in relation to the countries but also the institutional organisation of work on this issue of partner organisations. In Hungary the adaptation process generally lasts for two weeks which depends on the children's needs. The child spends more and more time in the nursery with the parent and early childhood educators take the child's care from the parent gradually. The parent is moving away from the group room gradually. Children usually take their first nap in the nursery at the eight day of the adaptation process. In Spain every day of the first week of school welcomes a group of 5 children per class scheduled from 9 to 11 and another group of 5 from 11 to 13, so by the end of the week or at the end of two weeks at the latest, all the children are in the school. According to the law, the entire month of September (first month of school) is dedicated to the adaptation process. In Italy the adaptation process takes place within a week. During this week the child together with a reference parent becomes familiar with the spaces and times of the nursery, at the same

time he gets used to the presence of other children and educators. The detachment from the parent takes place gradually and according to the needs of the child.

Regarding transitional teams, Hungary shows that they have specific Professional Protocols with short descriptions for parents and early childhood educators. Generally, there are four members of the transitional team. The head of the nursery, the parent, the child's own early childhood educator (ECE) and the co-early childhood educator. For the first two days ECE just observes the parents' caring. The third day ECE tries to participate in the caring. Parents are active during the first two weeks of the adaptation and inclusion of the children in a group and they stay for two weeks in the institution, or near to it. They spend less and less time in the group with their child. They leave the group room the first time for a short time on the fifth day of adaptation.

# THE ADAPTATION PERIOD IN SHORT IN THE PARTNER ORGANISATIONS



## BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

### ADAPTATION IN MONTESSORI KINDERGARTEN



#### THE METHODOLOGY

The adaptation process in Montessori kindergarten is related to observation of the child and different activities with parents (visits, workshop). Before a child starts attending kindergarten parents with a child visit the institution. During the visit coordinator (who is the main person for leading the adaptation process) introduces parents with Montessori methodology, environment, teachers, daily routines etc. After the first day of visit when parents spend time in kindergarten together with the child start adaptation and the child stays in the group. First week, children related to behaviour spend different time in the group without parents and adapt to the most important daily routines (food, toilet, interaction with teachers and peers). Time of attendance depends on individual child behaviour but most of the children spend one hour after that two hours and at the end of the week all day in kindergarten. For the younger children adaptation related to sleep and food can be extended. The parents have the possibility of individual meetings with the coordinator and main teacher when they can share experience about the adaptation process and functioning of the child in general. First week during the most important adaptation process coordinator informs parents about child behaviour with messages and pictures that they send to parents, as well as deep communication about specific needs of the child. During the first month of attendance a child can take some object (blanket, toy etc.) in the kindergarten.



## THE EDUCATORS AND TEACHERS

Coordinator of the institution is the first person and person who leads the adaptation process. During the visit coordinator present teachers, daily routines, activities, methodologies, administrative tasks etc.

After that during the first month the coordinator leads communication about adaptation of the child with parents. Coordinator with the lead teacher leads individual meetings and parents meetings in the institution. Teachers provide daily information about children's behaviour and communicate with parents about specific daily situations with children and peers.



## PHASES OF ACCLIMATISATION

- MAY: Open day
- SEPTEMBER: Parents visit and inform about conditions in the institution, adaptation process, teachers etc.
- SEPTEMBER: First parents meeting
- OCTOBER/NOVEMBER: Workshops with parents can be organised with different themes but goals of the organisation of the workshop include improvement of communication with parents, including parents in activities in kindergarten and all of that make the process of adaptation of child easier as well as acceptance of new situations from parents.
- DECEMBER: New Year Celebration, involving new families
- FEBRUARY: Second parents meeting

- MARCH: Day for Mothers (include different workshops such as developing gifts for mom with workshops with dad, celebration of 8 March in a small group and home atmosphere, including voluntary activities etc).



## TIMING

Day 1: Visit of Parents together with child

Day 2 - Day 5: Stay of the child with different duration related to the child behaviour and needs (If needed child will use second week to extend stay in classroom all day)



## INVOLVEMENT OF CHILDREN ALREADY ATTENDING

The adaptation period for children who are already attending the institution can be reflected when children need to change groups of peers and teachers (for example when a child has 4 years old needs to change groups of peers and teachers as well as the environment because the classroom is different for those ages of children).

Adaptation process in this situation include individual meeting of coordinator with parents, deep observation of child and his behaviour in new environment, individual communication of teachers and coordinator, including parents in joint activities in kindergarten (for example parent can visit the classroom and read the story or do some interesting kitchen and sport activities with new group)



## EDUCATIONAL STRATEGIES

- Observation of children

- Reporting parents about child behaviour through emails and pictures
- Creating brochures and providing them to parents
- Presentation to parents importance of unique behaviour and development of each child
- Involving parents in daily activities
- Workshops and meetings with parents

## “ EXAMPLE

- May Parents of Vanja visit kindergarten during Open day ceremony
- August 08 Parents together with Vanja visit kindergarten
- August 09 to 12 Vanja stay in kindergarten from half of hour to 1,5 hour
- August 15 to 17 Vanja stay in kindergarten after the lunch 12.30
- August 18 Vanja start to stay all day in kindergarten
- August 22 Vanja has first time nap in kindergarten
- September Vanja stop bring transitional object
- September Parents participate in meeting
- October Parents participate in workshop
- October Parents participate in individual meeting
- November Vanja start with speech therapy
- December Vanja participate in New Year ceremony
- January Parents participate in individual meeting
- February Parents participate in meeting
- March Vanja participate in Mother day ceremony



### ADAPTATION OF THE CHILD AFTER BEING IN THE NURSERY GROUP TO THE KINDERGARTEN GROUP IN THE SUMMER (AUGUST-SEPTEMBER)



#### THE METHODOLOGY

The first week a child of 2-3 years old comes to the kindergarten group alone, without the participation of parents in the process of getting to know each other. The role of the teacher is to introduce the teachers, their locker, bed, toys, daily routine. The child stays in a group of 2-3 years for about 8-9 hours according to the daily routine of this age.



#### THE EDUCATORS AND TEACHERS

Teachers verbally inform parents at the end of each day for 5-10 minutes about how the child felt, how he played, what he did, how he slept, the mood and feelings of the child are discussed in the first days of the child's stay in the group.

After the child has been in the group for about 1 month, parents are invited to a developmental conversation, which takes place in the presence of teachers and parents individually, and lasts about 20-30 minutes.

After the conversation, the protocol of the conversation is filled in and recommendations are given to parents on how to adapt the child, depending on the needs and individual characteristics of each child.



## PHASES OF ACCLIMATISATION

- August-November: Adaptation period of the child's stay in kindergarten (this applies to children 3 years old)
- September October: Parent conversations, individual conversations, developmental conversations, parent general meetings.
- December: Conducting master classes, joint holidays, joint leisure activities with parents.



## TIMING

Adaptation of children in the nursery group:

- For the first three days, the parent is with the child, accompanies him in actions, can be on a walk, the length of stay depends on the mood of the child (from 1 hour to 2 hours per day).
- The following days, the teacher and the parent agree on the time the child stays without a parent, if the child is calmly left without a loved one), the time the child stays can vary from 2 to 4 hours a day, the time the child stays before daytime sleep.
- After a week or two-week stay in the group, the child remains for daytime sleep, gradually the time of stay increases depending on the wishes of the parents and the mood of the child.



## INVOLVEMENT OF CHILDREN ALREADY ATTENDING

During the adaptation period, teachers observe the child and make notes about his emotional state, inform parents, and agree on the time of the child's stay.

Parents receive feedback about the child's stay in kindergarten, receive information about nutrition, health, ask questions about the upbringing and development of the child.

The teacher uses an individual approach to each family and each child.



## EDUCATIONAL STRATEGIES

Establishing close contact with parents and children, support for parents and children in the process of education and upbringing, ensuring a safe and emotionally positive stay of the child in the group. In order to quickly adapt a child from an early age to the conditions of a preschool institution, first of all, it is necessary to create a positive reaction in him, a positive impression of the kindergarten, so that he goes there with a desire. And this depends primarily on the educators, on their desire and the creation of warmth, kindness, in the group of attention.

Therefore, in the process of adapting a child from a nursery group to a kindergarten group in our kindergarten Põngerjas, such forms and methods of adaptation of children are used as:

- Elements of body therapy (hug, stroke)
- Singing lullabies before bed
- Relaxation games (sand, water)
- Fairy tale therapy
- Music lessons and movement development
- Game methods of interaction with the child.

## ” EXAMPLE

- 5th of August: Ivo comes with his mother to the group, gets acquainted with toys and furnishings, and teachers.
- 8th of August: Ivo plays with a car, builds a garage with his teacher, uses blocks and Lego, laughs and asks to play another game with him. falls asleep to music and wakes up, does rhythmic exercises, eats food on his own, and actively shares his impressions of the day when he meets his mother.
- 10th of August: On a walk, he plays in the sand, uses toys for the sandbox, helps the teacher clean up the play material and holds hands.
- 1st of September: Ivo enters the group, gives his hand to the teacher, washes his hands and goes to breakfast. He plays building blocks, if necessary asks for help from an adult.

## HUNGARY

### TWO WEEK ADAPTATION STEP BY STEP



#### THE METHODOLOGY

The first 3 days, the parent is in the group with the child. Then on the 4th day the parents leave the group for 5-10 minutes. This time is gradually increasing. The 7th day the parent is in the group less than 1- 1,5 hours. The child tried to sleep in the nursery.



#### THE EDUCATORS AND TEACHERS

The childcare educators get to know the parents, the child. The educator strengthens the parents in the parental competence, takes over the education and care of the child.



#### PHASES OF ACCLIMATISATION

- April: Admission procedure week. The applications for admission can be submitted all year round, but not earlier than 3 months before the requested date. An exception to this is the Application Week, when the application can be filed for September of the given year at a separately announced date. Parents visit and inform about conditions in the institution, adaptation process. The application for admission can be submitted in person, or electronic.
- August: Parents meeting.

- Family meeting. The early child educators can visit the family in their home (if the family agreed).
- September: The parents with their child start the adaptation in the nurseries.
- November: Parents meeting about the successful applications.
- December: Workshop with the parents.



One early child educator can only make one child adaptation at the same time.

- Day 1: Child and parent stay at the nursery for 2 hours: in this time they explore the new environment, share the moment of the game, of the change of diapers and if the child wants, she/he can taste the lunch.
- Day 2 - Day 3: Child and parent stay at the nursery for 3 hours. The parent leaves the group for 5-10-20 min.
- Day 4 - Day 5: Child and parent stay at the nursery for 4 hours. The parent leaves the group for 5-10-20 min.
- Day 6 - Day 7: The child stays at the nursery for 4 hours. Parents stay in the room for about half- one hour. The parent is waiting in the nursery hall.
- Day 8 - Day 9: The child tries to sleep in the nursery. If the child wants, she can taste the afternoon snack.
- Day 10: The parent accompanies the child to the group.



## INVOLVEMENT OF CHILDREN ALREADY ATTENDING

The adaptation period for children who are already attending the institution can be reflected when children need to change groups of peers and teachers (for example: when a group with 2 years old children need to change their room into an age- appropriate group, or the teacher). Adaptation process in this situation includes individual meetings of educators with parents.



## EDUCATIONAL STRATEGIES

- Observation of children.
- The educators supports the parent in her/his parental competence
- Family needs
- Reposting parents about child behaviour in the family book
- Involving parents activities workshops and meeting



## EXAMPLE

- September 1: This is Peter's first day in the nursery. He is interested in balls. He tasted lunch, but he was very tired.
- September 3: Peter's mom said goodbye (for 5-10 min). The child was easy to comfort.
- September 6: Peter likes to draw. He needs a lot of hugs during his mother's absence.

- September 8: Peter got tired during the morning. After lunch I showed him the bed where he would sleep. He fell asleep while reading half an hour of stories and being stroked on his back.
- Peter's mother finds it difficult to part with her child in the morning. In the afternoon, we talk a lot about the child, reassuring her that Peter had a good day.



## PARTICIPATORY ADAPTATION



### THE METHODOLOGY

The three days adaptation period foresees, as the name suggests, that the parent and the child live the reality of the nursery context for three full and consecutive days (8.00-12.30) and participate together in all the routines foreseen in the daily routine (change, lunch, play).

On the first day, the parent takes care of the primary needs of the child, while the educator observes the relationship modalities of the couple by adopting the parenting strategies and habits of each little guest.



### THE EDUCATORS AND TEACHERS

Within the group, a reference educator is identified, who represents during the setting the privileged interlocutor for the family and for the child, especially in moments of care.



### PHASES OF ACCLIMATISATION

- April: Open Day
- July: meeting with the new families to introduce the nursery program and briefly the acclimatisation period. During the meeting, the families also receive organisational information about the acclimatisation.

- First week of September: the newly enrolled families take part in a section meeting, the purpose of which is to provide them with information about the organisation of the acclimatisation and to answer their questions. It is also aimed at welcoming and supporting the parents' emotions involved in the acclimatisation.
- First week of September: the parents take part in an individual interview together with an educator before that the acclimatisation takes place.
- Second week of September: first period of attendance period
- End of September: one parent from each family takes part in a workshop to create a diary made up of pictures and words that describe their family. This diary remains in the section throughout the child's journey with us.
- October: small groups meeting with parents post adaptation, to talk about their emotions during this first time at nursery school.
- November: all families attending the nursery take part in a meeting following the completed acclimatisation.



## TIMING

- Day 1 - Day 3: Child and parent stay at the nursery for about 3 hours: in this time they explore the new environment, share the moment of the game, of the change of diapers and of the morning snack.
- Day 4: The parent greets the child, who has the opportunity to increase the frequency at the nursery up to the time slot requested by the family.

Throughout the acclimatisation and on the following days, the educators and parents talk to each other about the progress of the journey of the child and agree on the timing in order to meet the children's needs.



## INVOLVEMENT OF CHILDREN ALREADY ATTENDING

A gradual period of acclimatisation is foreseen even for the children already attending the nursery. In fact, for children there is the possibility to have lunch and nap time, on the 2nd day of attendance, moreover parents and children will be invited to a welcome / welcome snack during which they can regain confidence with environments and to update educators in an informal atmosphere on the changes that occurred during the summer break.

A return interview with parents is also provided for children who are already attending.



## EDUCATIONAL STRATEGIES

- Reception of children and family members of reference in small groups
- The space is neat and attractive
- The educator initially favours an observing and listening position, then he becomes a mediator and facilitator of the child's relationship with the space and other children and adults
- During the meetings with the parents, some communication strategies are proposed to facilitate the path to be taken together with the child
- The acclimatisation period proceeds in compliance with the personal times of the child and the needs of the family



On 5 September, Sofia and her mother, together with a small group of children and their mothers, entered the Turtle Section at the nursery for the first time and began their acclimatisation.

From the first day, they spent the morning in the company of the children already attending and the educators present, and explore the section and the nursery. They take part in breakfast and have the opportunity to experience bath time.

On 7 September, they shared their first lunch at the nursery.

On 8 September, during the family reception, Sofia's mother said goodbye to her child, who spends her first morning at the nursery without her.

From the following day, Sofia spent the whole day at the nursery.

## BONDING PERIOD KINDERGARTEN



### THE METHODOLOGY

The adaptation process is no longer called this way in Martinez Valls School. Our staff team changed that name for “Bonding period” since it has more emotional content and more human connections than the one of “adaptation period”. However, it refers to the first contact the children and sometimes also their parents have with our school.

During that time, usually the entire month of September, children come to school in small groups of four or five with their parents, and stay at school for two hours. The purpose of this is to allow, as we said, children and parents get in close touch with the teacher, the other classmates and also, to get familiarized with the new environment.

Attached you will see the schedule of the three first weeks of school in kindergarten 3 as an example.



### THE EDUCATORS AND TEACHERS

It also allows the teachers to better and deeper get to know their students, their individual needs and approach the families like in a more personalized way, so they have continued feedback about this special and sensitive time of their lives.

During this time, two educators are in these k-3 classrooms providing attention to children and support to teachers’ tasks.



## PHASES OF ACCLIMATISATION

During the month of March, we do celebrate the open house day for potential future families.

During the month of April, is the time for parents to submit application forms.

During the month of June, is the time to formalize enrollment for the families whose children finally got a spot in our school.

At the beginning of July, the families receive a welcome letter from their teachers with some recommendations for the summer, some recommended books, how to help their children get prepared to come to school for the first time in September and most important of all, calling them to come to a first group meeting with the teachers by mid July.

Families also get a Bulletin with all the information regarding school schedule, the school calendar, what they need to bring to school, how to contact the teachers and some recommendations for the classroom.

School starts officially in the month of September as explained before.



## TIMING

Normally every child gets familiarized with school, new children and teachers within the month of September as established by law in the instructions provided by the Government. However, in the event there would be children with special needs or even without special needs but require longer time to get familiarized with school, kindergarten staff will prepare

a personalized plan to help improve the student to get used to school life, as established as well by law in the instructions provided by the Government.

All throughout the school year, parents and other relatives, have the chance to get involved with projects and school activities and celebrations such as, fall party, Christmas, Carnival, Drama Play Week, field trips or end of year school party.



## EDUCATIONAL STRATEGIES

- Straight observation of children
- Reporting parents about child behaviour through emails and pictures
- Creating brochures and providing them to parents
- Involving parents in daily activities
- Workshops and meetings with parents

# KEY MESSAGE



- The moment of adaptation depends on the age of the child, the development stage they are in, previous experiences of separation from the caregiver, the child's characteristics, and any stressful events they may have experienced in their life. Parental responses to separation also play a significant role. If the parent has a positive attitude towards kindergarten and the child develops a safe attachment and adequate coping mechanisms with stress, this will greatly facilitate the child's adjustment.
- During the adaptation process, it is important for parents to be a part of all activities. This means that parents should take their child to kindergarten, spend the first days with them in a group and gradually increase the time the child spends in nursery school. For most parents, leaving a child in kindergarten presents a stressful situation, it is important not to show anxiety in front of the child. Teachers and other professionals need to provide support to parents related to the specific and individual needs of each parent, as well as the child.
- After a rapid and successful adaptation, a child may develop a subsequent aversion to kindergarten, and then these are delayed coping difficulties. The child can expect kindergarten to be only temporary, and when they realize that they will be there for a long time after some time, they may be afraid. It is important for teachers as well as parents to talk about it with the child, but also provide information about this phase to parents.
- Preschool institution for better adaptation process can include these activities as example of the good practices: Sharing information about the setting – written information for parents about how the facility works (opening hours, meal times, types of activities, rest arrangements, mission and vision of the facility and the child's development); Conducting a workshop – meeting with a group of parents of new children just before the beginning of the year; Organising parental and individual meeting; Organising house visit etc.

- Adaptation period include adaptation of new family to kindergarten, but also the group of peers, teacher and other staff to the new member of preschool institution. During the adaptation process for parents and children all professionals are very important, not only teachers (cleaning lady, management, kitchen staff etc.) so all of them need to provide support.
- Adaptation period can be flexible and can be changed related to unexpected situations like COVID 19 pandemia, so management and professional staff need to have other possibilities to take this process with support in the other way.
- During the adaptation period teachers need to point out what information and activities of a child is priority for the parents and support them with this information. Sometimes, some information seems to be not so important for teachers, but parents want to know.
- Adaptation period include child and their parents and need to find understanding between rules and practices of preschool institution and parental expectation.

# REFERENCES

- CDC (2021). COVID-19 pandemic: Helping young children and parents transition back to school. Download 20 September from <https://www.cdc.gov/childrensmentalhealth/features/COVID-19-helping-children-transition-back-to-school.html>
- Kang, J., Horn, E.M. & Palmer, S. (2017). Influences of Family Involvement in Kindergarten Transition Activities on Children's Early School Adjustment. *Early Childhood Educ J* 45, 789–800. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-016-0828-4>
- McIntyre, L.L., Eckert, T.L., Fiese, B.H. et al. (2007). Transition to Kindergarten: Family Experiences and Involvement. *Early Childhood Educ J* 35, 83–88. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-007-0175-6>
- Nelson, R.P. (2004). The Transition to Kindergarten. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, (32): 187–190.
- Velan, D., Tatalović Vorkapić, S. (2020). The voices of the children: what do children have to say about the kindergarten? *EDULEARN20 Proceedings*, doi: 10.21125/edulearn.2020.0733
- Vogler, P., G. Crivello and M. Woodhead (2008) *Early Childhood Transitions Research: A Review of Concepts, Theory and Practice*, Working Paper 48, The Hague: Bernard van Leer Foundation/Young Lives

# EXTRA: HOW THIS BOOK WAS MADE



The aim of FIRST STEPS project was to identify and share European good practices on adaptation phase in pre-schools; to analyze and compare the important activity of socio-behavioral adaptation of the child in childcare services; collect data about the local/regional/international context of partner countries; give the opportunity to the ECEC professional to discuss on project topic, share their experiences and to expand professional knowledge and skills.

This book is the result of cooperation between the project partners. To illustrate this process we present you a photo gallery of how this project took place and how this material was created. We hope that the educational methods and experiences we shared during the project and presented as a result in this publication will be useful and interesting for teachers, parents, and all those interested in preschool education.

Many thanks and appreciation to all the participants of the project for their friendliness, openness, inclusiveness and willingness to share their experiences.















