**HUB & SPOKE MODEL - GOVERNANCE GUIDELINES**

**REGIONAL DIRECTORATE**

**FOR PRIMARY & SECONDARY EDUCATION**

**IN THESSALY**

**INTRODUCTION**

**Aim of the F.R.I.E.N.D.E.S.K. European program**

F.R.I.E.N.D.E.S.K means “Foster Reception for Inclusive Educational Needs: Development of Educational Support for Kids” and it is a KA 201 (Strategic Partnership for School Education) project aiming at reducing social exclusion of children 0-6 years old coming from marginalized contexts through the implementation of an innovative ECEC (Early Childhood Education and Care) model.

**The participating Organizations** **of the F.R.I.E.N.D.E.S.K. European program**

The project brings together the following 8 partner organisations with longstanding experience in the field of social inclusion and children education so that they provide children households with an inclusive and all-encompassing service:

“FISM” (Federazione Italiana Scuole Materne della Regione Toscana) organization in Italy, which is the coordinator organization,

“Kentro Merimnas Oikogeneias kai paidiou” in Greece

“Universita Delgli Universita Studi di Firenze” in Italy

“Asociata Europanet” in Romania,

“World University Services of the Mediterranean Wusmed” in Spain

“Sdrudzennie Znam I Moga” in Bulgaria

“Perifereiaki Diefthynsi Protovathmias & Defterovathmias Ekpaidefsis Thessalias” in Greece,

and the “Blue Room Innovation” in Spain.

**The aim of the F.R.I.E.N.D.E.S.K. “Hub & Spoke Model Governance Guidelines”**

The **“Hub & Spoke Model Governance Guidelines”** is the 5th Intellectual Output of the European program F.R.I.E.N.D.E.S.K aiming at providing **governance guidelines** for public entities on how to tackle child poverty and social exclusion through measures such as family support and benefits, quality childcare and early childhood education. It also aims to make recommendations about social policies referring to care and educational centers for early childhood inclusion (administrative and financial systems, legal aspects) and thus to provide a clear map of the intervention frame.

The objective is to influence the authorities in order to improve the local contexts within the social inclusion of children.

**The expected** **impact and transferability of the** **“Hub & Spoke Model Governance Guidelines”**

**The** **“Hub & Spoke Model Governance Guidelines”** expects to ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of the activities, collaborations and initiatives undertaken by the ECEC of the “FrienDesk” project taking into consideration that the way in which ECEC is designed and organized is highly dependent on the responsible authorities, which may be Ministries or Regions or Municipalities on local, national and international level.

The guidelines will take into account the strengths and weaknesses of the local contexts identifying common points starting from the analysis produced by the IO1 based on the comparative analysis made to explain the different ECEC systems at national level and focused on a benchmarking about the qualitative indicators in the local contexts of involved partner countries.

Impact can only be ensured by involving relevant stakeholders and gatekeepers while the free access and the free availability of the recommendations to public bodies will be kept readily available to all interested stakeholders, and will be maintained to attract further input. There will be recommendations to public bodies across partner countries for usage beyond the project duration.

**CHAPTER 1**

**Description & Explanation of the data gathering** **from international report**

**Exploitation of the results- survey IO1**

*Comparative Studies on ECEC systems and Hub & Spoke Model Guideline*

**UNIT 1:** **GOVERNANCE**

1. EUROPEAN POLICIES ON HOW TO TACKLE CHILD EXCLUSION

All the European documents underline the importance to consider Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) as the “foundation for lifelong learning and development” (EuCom/EACEA/Eurydice, 2019, p. 9).

Additionally, European Commission stresses that “Investments in health and in cognitive, emotional and social development in the very first years of life are those which guarantee the highest economic return for individuals and for society” (EuCom, 2011).

European Pillar of Social Rights in 2017 declares that “children have the right to affordable early childhood education and care of good quality.”

Last but not least, European Council adopted a Recommendation on High Quality Early Childhood Education and Care Systems in May 2019, in order to give a common framework on the topic of ECEC for all the European countries.

1. CURRENT SITUATION OF THE ECEC POLICIES IN THE 5 COUNTRIES - PARTNERS

The data analysis of ECEC in the European countries participated in the FRIENDESK survey (Italy, Spain, Bulgaria, Romania and Greece) presents the current situation on ECEC in the mentioned countries.

Regarding the dimension of ECEC policy integration regarding the provision for children over 3 years, all countries have an equal level of integration, which conceives ECEC as a «services with an intentional educational component to support child development and prepare for primary school» (EuCom/EACEA/Eurydice, 2019, p. 12).

In all partner countries center-based ECEC is provided in two separate types of age-dependent settings. In Italy, Bulgaria and Spain coexist separate setting and unitary setting for the whole age range. In ECEC Systems with separate setting, the transition between the two different types of settings takes place at the age of 3.

Only in Greece the transition takes place later, at the age of 4.

In countries where the model is dual, the local authorities are responsible for ECEC provision for children under 3 years while the ECEC provision for children aged 3 and over is under the control and responsibility of the Ministry of Education. In countries where the model is single the Ministry of Education is responsible for all center-based ECEC provision (0-3 and 3-6).

**UNIT 2:** **ACCESS** (place guarantee: entitlement, mandatory attendance)

1. POLICIES ON HOW TO SUPPORT ACCESS

The access dimension is a fundamental indicator in understanding the level of quality of educational services for children aged 0-6.

EU Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care, ensuring “access to ECEC, represents a protection factor for children and contributes to their healthy development and educational success” (EuCom/EACEA/Eurydice, 2019, p. 43).

Home based provision and child minders support the offer of ECEC provision in center- based for children aged 0-6, especially in countries where there are no guaranteed places and where ECEC attendance is not compulsory.

Bulgaria and Greece make ECEC attendance compulsory, while Spain provides a legal entitlement to an ECEC place.

1. MEASURES TO FACILITAE THE ACCESS IN ECEC

The main measures common to all countries aimed at facilitating the integration of children in disadvantaged situations within the ECEC system are:

1. Fee reductions,

2. Priority admission,

3. National program to reduce poverty and social exclusion and to encourage the enrolment in ECEC system,

4. National plan for integration of minority and refugee preschool.

**UNIT 3:** **STAFF**

(initial training, continuing education, professional development, workload)

The 2019 Council Recommendation on High-Quality ECEC Systems states that “in order to fulfill their professional role in supporting children and their families, early childhood education and care staff require complex skills and competences, a deep knowledge and understanding of child development and an awareness of early childhood pedagogy” (p. 3).

According to this, it emerges clearly that staff skills are essential for a quality ECEC service.

1. QUALIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

* Early foreign language learning
* Digital awareness
* Reading literacy
* Numerical and logical reasoning
* Civic and democratic competences
* Learning to learn
* Health education
* Cooperation skills
* Understanding of the world Language & communication skills Expressive arts and development of creativity
* Physical development and movement
* Emotional, personal and social development

1. EDUCATIONAL GUIDELINES

National curriculum by Ministry of National Education

OBJECTIVES:

* Development of the child personality
* Development of the capacity to interact with others (children, adults, environment)
* Encouraging autonomous learning
* Discovery of own identity, oneself and others,
* Development of positive self-image
* Acquisition of knowledge, abilities, skills, attitudes required for his school entry and throughout life
* Knowledge on the self, the others and the world, movements, sounds, colors, speech and words
* Language and literature of the host country
* Mathematics
* Arts, music (creation and expression)
* Construction and Technology
* ICT
* Emotional, mental, motion development

EDUCATIONAL METHODS

* Free and structured play
* Adults listening to children play and encouraging their thinking
* Balance between group and individual learning
* ICT-based activities
* Parent – family involvement in children’s learning

ASSESMENT METHODS

* Narrative assessment
* Observation with written summary
* Portfolios of children
* Children’s self-assessment

TRANSITION TO PRIMARY SCHOOL

* Continuity between ECEC and Primary School
* Same location
* Collaboration of the ECEC staff and the staff of primary school
* Collaboration between parents and staff
* Meetings with parents on their role in the transition phase
* Passing information on the child development to primary school
* Developing a common educational project
* Formal visits of ECEC children to the primary school

**CHAPTER 2**

**Approachability and Ability to Perceive Child Care Need**

How do the families know that ECEC programs exist as well as hear about their benefits?

**UNIT 1:** **AWARENESS AND CONFIDENCE IN SERVICES**

The framework brings individual interventions into a coherent and comprehensive structure that recognizes the importance of the follow-up/complementarity of interventions between different partners working towards a common goal, so as all responsible parts to understand the overlapping processes factors and stages affecting access to ECEC and to help decision makers coordinate their efforts and maximize their impact.

1. PROFESSIONALS (TEACHERS, HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS etc)

Health care and social care system professionals were identified as potentially efficient information sources about ECEC programs.

1. PARENTS

A beneficial effect of ECEC is allowing mothers to go back to work and therefore raising family income and fostering economic development.

1. MUNICIPALITY & LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) can have substantial beneficial effects on overall child development and educational success for children from disadvantaged backgrounds, making ECEC a powerful strategy to reduce child development inequities.

Awareness and information campaigns can be useful to encourage confidence in ECEC programs by publicizing their benefits, qualities, costs and registration procedures.

Public policies investing in early childhood are one of the best investments one can make in human capital and most of all for families with low socioeconomic status and vulnerable people, immigrants, disadvantaged families, families in need, children at risk, poor families.

**UNIT 2:** **OUTREACH**

Families living in difficult financial conditions are hard to reach through conventional channels. In this context important source of information and encouragement are:

1. OTHER PARENTS

In order for families to recognize their need for child care, they have first to know that ECEC programs exist as well as to hear about their benefits. So other parents of their community may be a rich source of useful information on ECEC programs.

1. MUNICIPALITY & LOCAL COMMUNITIES

It is recommended for them to use social and organizational connection channels to attract disadvantaged families.

**UNIT 3:** **DIVERSITY IN CULTURE, LANGUAGES AND USE OF TECHNOLOGIES**

Child care options should also correspond with their beliefs and values.

1. TEACHERS

Communicating in multiple languages is also a good practice to reach immigrant families, as well as using information technologies, not only to reach these families, but also to keep in touch after they enroll in ECEC programs. This can be done by sharing day-to-day information about their children.

1. OTHER PARENTS

Negative perceptions of child care and rumours about the poor quality of child care services can reinforce these beliefs and are significant barriers to ECEC use. Indeed, according to a review of family public policies of 31 European countries, the higher the perceived quality of ECEC is in a country, the less access inequities there are.

1. MUNICIPALITY & LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Community organizations are able to reach young children and their families in their milieu through home visits by mothers from the same culture, mobile libraries, or through language development outreach interventions.

**CHAPTER 3**

**Acceptability and Ability to Seek**

**UNIT 1:** **FLEXIBILITY AND INVOLVING PARENTS**

It is important to develop welcoming practices by adapting services to the needs of underprivileged and immigrant families.

1. PUBLIC SERVICES & SOCIAL NETWORKS

The services themselves must be acceptable and compatible with family needs and favor good-quality interactions between ECEC staff and families.

The role of social networks is also important. When families hear about new spots opening in ECEC programs through neighbors, colleagues, and friends, they can have a better idea of ECEC programs that are of better quality or in line with their values.

1. GOOD QUALITY INTERACTIONS BETWEEN ECEC STAFF & FAMILIES

This can be done:

* by providing staff with training and guidance
* by having parents be part of decisional processes at the ECEC program

Flexibility and the friendliness of services by, for example, allowing parents to stay in the room with their children as long as they want or offering flexible hours of attendance.

These practices allow parents the opportunity to become familiar and comfortable with routines, activities and the functioning of an ECEC, before they leave their children on a regular basis.

**UNIT 2:** **CULTURAL SENSITIVITY**

Cultural sensitivity and language awareness are important for strengthening the relationship between ECEC staff and immigrant mothers to develop confidence.

1. GOOD QUALITY INTERACTIONS BETWEEN ECEC STAFF & FAMILIES

This can be done:

* by providing staff with training and guidance
* by hiring childcare workers from minority groups, and who are sensitive to the cultural norms of the population in question, are other examples of good practice, which favor acceptability of services in multicultural contexts.

**UNIT 3:** **AUTONOMY AND SOCIAL SUPPORT**

1. PUBLIC SERVICES

Demanding administrative burdens, such as the necessity to show a birth certificate, is a barrier to enrolment for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. Because of the unavailability of identity documents or of the cost and complexity of steps for obtaining them, this can be discouraging for many families.

To overcome this barrier, it is suggested to accept less formal documentation, such as evidence of residency for demonstrating eligibility for ECEC services or a letter from a landlord, some official email sent to a member of the family or/and the library card (Vesely 2013).

1. SOCIAL NETWORKS

It is known that parents who are unemployed have fewer contacts with their peers, are less informed, and are often in a position of waiting for services to come to them, so that they are especially in need of improved social integration.

They can also learn about services in the community that can help with registration processes. Therefore, interventions to increase social integration can have a positive effect on different characteristics and stages of the access continuum, such as knowing about ECEC programs and services, favoring confidence toward ECEC, and strengthening social networks.

**CHAPTER 4**

**Availability, Accommodation and Ability to Reach**

**UNIT 1:** **SUFFICIENT NUMBER OF SPOTS TO FACE** **GEOGRAPHICAL INEQUITIES**

There is inequity in the number of ECEC spaces available across neighborhoods.

The problem of availability is therefore also a problem of geographic distribution of spaces.

As such, increasing the supply of quality ECEC spaces in neighborhoods -where there are fewer services- should be a priority.

**UNIT 2: SOCIAL CRITERIA**

The following social criteria must be taken into consideration:

* low income
* ethnicity
* family situation

**UNIT 3:** **EQUITABLE WAITING LIST**

In a context where demand outstrips supply, the way waiting lists are managed can also have an impact on access.

First-come-first-served management can indirectly discriminate underprivileged families who tend to subscribe to services later than more privileged families.

Additionally, parents who have less regular work conditions have bigger difficulty to plan the moment when they are going to need childcare.

Giving less weight to criteria like parental employment status and initial registration date, and more weight to social criteria like low income, ethnicity and family situation.

**UNIT 4:** **EQUITABLE ACCESS INCLUDED IN QUALITY EVALUATION (based on LOCAL CRITERIA)**

In addition to how spaces are distributed, it has also been suggested that the way in which service quality is evaluated can affect the availability of ECEC spaces for underprivileged families. In particular, it is suggested to include in service quality evaluation, a criterion that reflects whether services are accessible to a socially diverse clientele.

**CHAPTER 5**

**Affordability and Ability to Pay**

Costs of services are directly affected by public and fiscal policies targeting families and naturally also influence the degree to which disadvantaged families will use ECECs.

**UNIT 1:** **PUBLIC FUNDING AND MANAGING**

1. PUBLIC SERVICES

Available data suggests that public financing and managing of ECEC programs favor better uniformity in quality and coverage of services, as well as reduce access inequity (Organization for Economic (OECD, 2003).

Not only is the amount of money invested by governments in ECEC for service quality and access equity important, but even more important is how this money is invested.

Governments who favor financing the supply of services (public networks of ECEC) have seen better results than those who favor leaving the choice to families (demand side) by giving them an amount of money to cover part of services costs (Bigras et al. 2011; Friendly 2013).

1. FISCAL POLICIES

Costs of services are directly affected by public and fiscal policies targeting families and naturally also influence the degree to which disadvantaged families will use ECECs.

1. FISCAL POLICIES FOR NEW IMMIGRANTS

Free time-slots for children from new immigrant families could be offered in ECECs. This practice was found not only to help with progressive familiarization to services in a non-constraining way but also to speed up the learning of by children and their parents.

Free lunches and snacks increase families’ adhesion to ECECs (Pichette 2013).

**UNIT 2:** **POLICIES FOR FAMILIES ON SOCIAL ASSISTANCE**

The amount of money parents have to pay - to benefit from services- is a major determinant of access on ECEC.

Even a reduced contribution can still be too high for some family budgets.

Similarly, it has been found that any cost reductions have to be relatively significant for families to take advantage of them.

Free ECEC public services for social assistance beneficiaries can be a decisional factor for families.

**CHAPTER 6**

**Appropriateness and Ability to Engage**

**UNIT 1:** **HOW TO ENGAGE FAMILIES**

1. PROGRAMS & PRACTICIES IN SCHOOL LEVEL

When parents are satisfied with services and the services respond to their needs, attendance at ECECs becomes more regular and continuous. Such regularity and continuity of attendance in quality ECECs is what should be sought for better outcomes One review has shown that maternal attitudes towards ECEC and their perceptions of the impact of ECEC change over time.

Mothers were found to be more reticent to leave their children in ECEC care at first, but as they recognized the positive benefits of attendance, they became more comfortable over time

1. PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN ECEC & COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

ECEC attendance can also serve as a focal point that favors the integration of mothers within the community. In this context could be offered the following services:

Employment integration services

Language courses associated with ECECs

To promise avenues for community integration. In order to do this, it is suggested to put in place partnerships between ECECs and community organizations working towards literacy to offer services to parents at ECECs (Vesely, 2013).

1. INTERSECTORAL ACTIONS & AFTER SCHOOL ACTIVITES

Moreover, intersectoral actions (ECECs, after-school programs, parents and communities) favor the integration of immigrant families.

**UNIT 2:** **HOW TO ENGAGE CHILDREN**

1. PROGRAMS & PRACTICIES IN SCHOOL LEVEL

Schools have to organize projects or/and to make holistic interactive expositions in different fields, such as “Experimental Mathematics”, “Local History”, “Technology”, ICT on various occasions like an “entertaining science festivals”. In a similar vein, students have to present mathematics, history, new Technologies in a new, unusual perspective, to explain about the role of experiments in mathematical discoveries or the importance of the local monuments in self-discovery and to permit feel themselves like real cultural and historic researchers and experimental mathematicians.

Schools can also organize a series of projects -in the context of informal education- based on puzzle, quiz, magic tricks involving cards and magic squares that demonstrate to students that math, history, ICT is beautiful, fun, interesting, exciting, and extremely useful. In addition, these projects provide various applications and connections to other fields. Moreover, they increase students’ self- confidence in their own abilities.

1. PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN ECEC & COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

Collaboration between ECEC centers and elderly settings to promote both social inclusion. Especially, elderly’s narratives to children of ECEC centers could help the interaction with the local society.

1. INTERSECTORAL ACTIONS & AFTER SCHOOL ACTIVITES

Visiting museums, galleries and participating in art workshops in exhibition centers foster spontaneous creativity of children and support the inclusive procedure.

The creative nature of the art activities implemented in the museums, galleries and art workshops help participants to shape their ego supporting their sublimation process while their non-verbal nature offers wider possibilities of expression than the spoken word and therefore allows the participants to express themselves in a more direct and emotional way and develop a "new" symbolic and metaphorical language.

As trainers - during the participation of children in these art activities- utilize their therapeutic, artistic and teaching competences, they support the children to develop self-awareness, to deal with stressful and traumatic experiences, and discover oneself and the world.

Especially in the case of marginalized students, the connection with others through art is the way to bring order out of chaos – chaotic feelings and impulses inside, a dizzying mass of sensations.

Throughout the entire creative process implemented in the art spaces, internal and external realities are mixed into a new being, so that students suffering from traumatic experiences, young people facing various challenges or struggling with problems related to exclusion or social anxiety, could develop their cognitive and emotional skills and be supported mentally and emotionally as well, as they "free themselves from the feeling of isolation" by sharing impressions and emotions with others. (Ioannides E., 2017).

**UNIT 5:** **SPORTS**

Social inclusion of marginalized children is broadly recognized as a priority to accomplish at an international level by ECEC centers. Because of the fact that the influence of sport toward this social mission has been largely debated, the challenge of sport has to be utilized when it comes to promote social inclusion.

In this context, the impact of a multi-stakeholder sport initiative developing social inclusion for socially vulnerable children and the related challenges of the intervention through in-depth interviews with diverse program stakeholders may be very helpful. It is suggested to reinforce sport-based programs to ensure the social inclusion and to maximize the societal impact of such interventions (D’Angelo, 2021).

**UNIT 6:** **GAME BASED LEARNING**

Game based learning have increasingly been viewed as essential in many contexts, such as in schools (e.g., OECD, 2017), informal learning settings (e.g., Huang et al., 2018), online learning (e. g., Rosen, Wolf, & Stoeffler, 2020), military settings (e.g., Swiecki, Ruis, Farrell, & Shaffer, 2020), business services (Aarikka-Stenroos & Jaak- kola, 2012), and marketing innovations (Heirati & Siahtiri, 2019) as well, to support the development of essential skills of children of the 21st century facilitating team interactions between children of different cultural backgrounds (Sun et al., 2022).

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