



The role and place of ECEC in integrated working, benefitting vulnerable groups such as Roma

NESET Analytical Report No 1/2018
Summary

The main purpose of this report is to examine the added value provided by, and the prerequisites for, integrated working – as well as the crucial role played by ECEC services – in order to better serve all families, but especially those who are vulnerable and disadvantaged. Separate attention is devoted to Roma children and their families as one of the most vulnerable groups in Europe, often trapped in a vicious circle of poverty, exclusion and discrimination.

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The Network is one of the seven key knowledge providers that contribute evidence-based advice to DG EAC. NESET provides reliable, independent and rigorous scientific support, country-specific expertise and advice to the European Commission in relation to equity and social aspects at all levels of education and training. NESET acts as a knowledge broker, bridging the gap between EU policy coordination and the academic world.

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Context

High-quality **early childhood education and care (ECEC)** is crucial for today's children and families. However, the needs of children are multi-faceted and cannot be addressed by ECEC services alone. For the families, especially those in vulnerable situations, such as living in poverty, being of Roma origin, or coming from a migration or asylum context, a comprehensive set of integrated services is required.

The report

The report examines the added value of integrated working and the crucial role that ECEC services can play. It also highlights the prerequisites for integrated working to have a positive influence on children and families, especially those who are vulnerable and disadvantaged.

Key findings

Making services better connected to one another can have a positive impact on children and families in terms of improved access and speedier responses, as well as better and clearer agreements on information sharing and communication between services, seamless services and a more holistic approach. ECEC services can fulfil a pivotal role in connecting children and families with services that can support them: providing adequate referrals; connecting together services; cooperating to improve service delivery; helping children and families to discover other services; and making ECEC better known to other services.

Integrated ECEC systems and services should be based on support for children's rights, and should be committed to delivering universal services for all families. In addition, it is vital that services recognise parents as first educators and work together to support them in ways that make them feel appreciated rather than judged.

Integrated working can bring measurable improvements in access to ECEC, as well as improving attendance and facilitating easier transition to primary schools. Integrated working that focuses on early intervention and places ECEC at its centre contributes to the strengthening of communities and the development of stronger local partnerships, and increases social inclusion. Combined delivery and integration of services can improve efficiency and increase cost-effectiveness via synergies between interventions, as well as by promoting social inclusion.

Health services

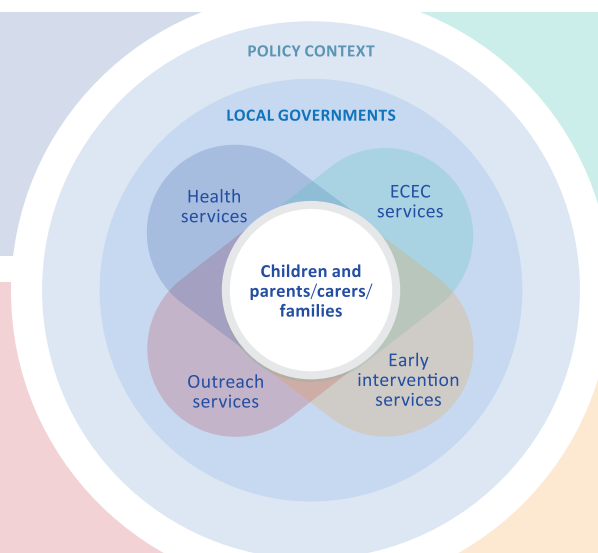
Medical centres, hospitals

- Mobile health and dental screening services
- Pre-natal care, maternal healthcare and gynaecological consultations
- Parental consultations

Outreach services

Community mediators, visiting nurses, teaching assistants

- Home visits
- Parental support and parental engagement
- Referrals to services
- Bridging with communities



ECEC services

Nurseries/ crèches, kindergartens, playgroups, libraries and toy libraries

- Early daycare and development
- Holistic development
- Culturally relevant learning, responsive to children's needs
- Support with transitions
- Active parental participation
- Support for parents to actively engage in children's learning activities at home

Early intervention services

Children's centres, community centres, family centres

- Speech therapy, language support, early screening, sensory or physical therapy, psychological services
- Parental support and empowerment

Figure above: A comprehensive, multi-dimensional model for early-years intervention, adapted from Bruner C. (2010). What Young Children and their Families Need for School Readiness and Success. Child and Family Policy Center, USA.

Key prerequisites for integrated working

A shared vision, starting from the needs of children and their families

A competent system with strong leadership and reflective staff

Supportive policy and funding

Family and community involvement



Scan the QR code using your smartphone to access the full report, including detailed policy recommendations for integrated working in ECEC services. The report is available free of charge at www.nesetweb.eu