



Education and Culture DG

Lifelong Learning Programme

Mainstream framework for inter-institutional European ECI training courses



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**Mainstream Framework towards a European Master in Early Childhood
Intervention**

TRAINING NEEDS ON ECI IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES

Paper presented within the PRECIOUS meeting

Budapest, 15th, 16th and 17th of April, 2009

INTRODUCTION

Following the agreement of the last PRECIOUS kick-off Meeting (Graz, 3rd and 4th of November, 2008), the purpose of this REPORT is to summarize the present situation of Early Intervention in several European countries regarding to:

- a) The status quo of training situation and the training needs.
- b) The contribution that PRECIOUS project could make due to improve the Early Intervention Training in Europe.

Therefore, the present paper is organized in two different parts. Firstly, we describe the present situation of ECI training and how the PRECIOUS could contribute to promote ECI training; at this time, we consider the contributions of the different partners. Secondly, we point out which are the training needs of each country.

The information collected comes from a questionnaire that has been built up taking into account the conclusions of the EBIFF project Curriculum and the own contributions of the different partners of the PRECIOS project that have answered it.

**1. PRESENT SITUATION OF EARLY INTERVENTION TRAINING IN
EUROPEAN COUNTRIES**

Referring how ECI training is organized in the different countries; we have found that training is organized in three different modalities.

First, **at degree level**. ECI training is integrated into a variety of professional courses. Some of these include teaching, early years professional, social work, nursing, educational psychology, clinical psychology, therapeutic pedagogy, speech pedagogy, etc. ECI contents are offered through different lectures that students can choose.

Second, **at master level**. We have found two different modalities. (a) Different aspects of ECI are addressed in some modules of different MA programs, for example, MA Special and Inclusive Education, MA Early Childhood, MA Social Work, MA Advanced Social Care, Health Care Studies, MA Study Program of therapeutic pedagogy, speech pedagogy, etc. (b) As an ECI Master, with its own identity.

Third, **at informal level**. Training can be found as seminars, courses, summers courses, conferences... about the topic.

Thus, the majority part of the countries have the ECI training organized into the others related disciplines studies.

Referring to the institutions that provided these different modalities of trainings we have found that in almost all cases the training is offered by Universities and High Schools and are university professors with practical experiences who carry on the lessons. In some other cases, others institutions like government initiative, local authorities, private organizations also organized this training.

In relation to what is need due to have a good ECI Training, the answers indicate different aspects:

- 1- A specific ECI training program like a master (with its own identity) with a certificate, and it's important that all professionals that work with children and families could participated of this ECI Training program
- 2- We need the Administration and other organizations to demand this training for the professionals will be hired

- 3- We need professors with experience in this field and with the capacity to supervise the different tasks.
- 4- More relationship and collaboration between the Universities and the organizations who work on the field.
- 5- We need that all statements implicated in ECI have the same point of view (collaborative relationship professionals and families).

In relation to the responsible who is in charge of the ECI training change, the majority of the PRECIOUS members think that there are different stakeholders involved in this change such as university professors, government (politician, ministry of education, ministry of social welfare that finances services), and professionals who working in ECI centers.

Another aspect is what would be the best way to implement a structured training. About this point, the majority of the PRECIUS members consider that the best way would be to build on the initiatives that there are currently implemented at the University, or by non-governmental organizations.

However, in some cases the problem would be the requirements that are necessities due to become a master's professors.

Referring what it is needed in order to implement a structured training, the answers of the questionnaire indicate the following needs:

- a- To have an agreement between Universities and systems of in-service training and government in order to formulate a global proposition (from initial training till lifelong training), and to have professors that fulfill the government and university requirements (PhD, lectures professors, etc.) and with CI practice.
- b- To ensure an evaluation process of the course's quality.
- c- To ensure a market (people interested in that Master, and the completion with other masters).

- d- The public authorities need to be aware that we have to improve the training of professionals in ECI and to show them some possibilities to do at regional level, at national level and at European level.
- e- The funding of the course.

According to the opinion of different members, PRECIOUS project can improve several initiatives at different levels in order to reach these goals:

- **Training:** to implement master/postgraduate studies in each country language; To offer ODL-training (some face to face units, ODL-units for knowledge, internship with mentoring in the local context, peer-intervision in the local context; a self audit of professional skills) which can also provide students to assess their background regarding EI/ECSE. To organize some seminar (with colleagues from various European countries) and with the support of EAECI.
- **Materials:** create information pool; provide resources in various languages and support the training have a professional development portfolio for their future; share international experiences, to identify minimal knowledge for EI professionals.
- **European level:** promote collaboration between Universities and High Schools at European level in order to develop adequate training and to share with best practices and experiences.
- **National or regional level:** to make public authorities (both political and administrative) more aware about the need and the possibility to organize adequate training in the field of ECI.

2. TRAINING NEEDS OF EUROPEAN COUNTRIES – Based on the framework of the European Curriculum on Early Childhood Intervention (www.ebiff.org)

Results from the second part of the questionnaire (Training needs about the common areas/clusters of the European Curriculum on Early Childhood Intervention) show significant differences between the training profiles from different countries. It could be thought that these differences are due to two main factors. Firstly, the fact that some countries may provide a specific postgraduate studies (such as masters) on ECI or they offer those contents, that are necessary due to intervention, throughout some other programmes (such as subjects from other studies that are close to the ECI. Secondly, according to the dominant approaches on each the teaching modalities.

Having in mind the clusters which compose the European Curriculum on Early Childhood Intervention, it is exposed a brief summary of the training characteristics' offer. Furthermore, it is also considered the different partners proposals due to improve its quality.

To start with, the first cluster **Recognition / detection** (normal development, various disabilities, related domains, etc.) 37,5% of the partners that have answered the questionnaire think that in their countries this is an area that has been more developed. In general, the countries' representatives believe that the success of it is because these contents are taught in detail in undergraduate and in more specific studies such as masters about people with disabilities.

Another 37,5% said that there is not enough training offer. In other words, there is a lack on the knowledge taught to the future professionals on ECI about Recognition/detection. Therefore, they suggest that it should be improved the knowledge in some areas due to improve the training offer about this cluster. The areas they suggest are as follow: selective prevention, effective accessibility, _development of the child and developmental stimulation, diagnostics, screening programs, knowledge and availability of tools for differentiated assessment in ECI, context analysis, teamwork of different specialists, transdisciplinary view , etc.

The last 25% of the participants did not answer the question or they believed that training does not involve a global perspective. In other words, undergraduate studies

teach the contents from a clinical perspective and focused on the child; but it is forgotten a perspective based on the contextual development.

About the second cluster **Joining the family** (various challenges families encounter, family-systems coping with disabilities, empower families, etc.), most of the countries believe that this is an area without recognition (with independence of what kind of training exist on each country). In its essence, all partners think that the ECI Curriculum should include theoretical knowledge about supporting parents group, go along with parents, systemic approach, counseling as a new knowledge, parent as a partner, interdisciplinary team work and decision making including parents, key person to coordinate continuous services, various challenges families encounter, family-systems coping with disabilities and empower families. From a practical point of view, it is suggested that it is needed to reinforce professionals' competencies in joining the families.

All the countries (except United Kingdom) do agree that those contents about the cluster **Team Work** are not well developed in their different training on ECI modalities. These contents referred to Team Work include making teams to work, ethics in ECI, quality of ECI and research ECI. Specifically, the countries consider the need to empower this kind of knowledge to ECI students. It is also suggested that it should be pointed out various aspects of the learning such as making teams to work, ethics in ECI, quality of ECI, research ECI, supervision, transdisciplinary view, including parent in decision making and practical exercises how to create a team around the child, how to create a family plan, how to communicate with other professionals throughout the Master, practicum and continuous training.

About the following cluster **Individual intervention methods** (key concepts and philosophies in ECI, evidence based intervention methods; documentation, etc.) 50% of the people who answered the questionnaire think that these aspects receive enough attention from the training curriculums on ECI (as no specific masters in ECI as specific masters). However, the other 50% consider that there is a lack on specific contents about methods of documentation, basic philosophies need support, evaluation and specific methods in their training curriculums on ECI.

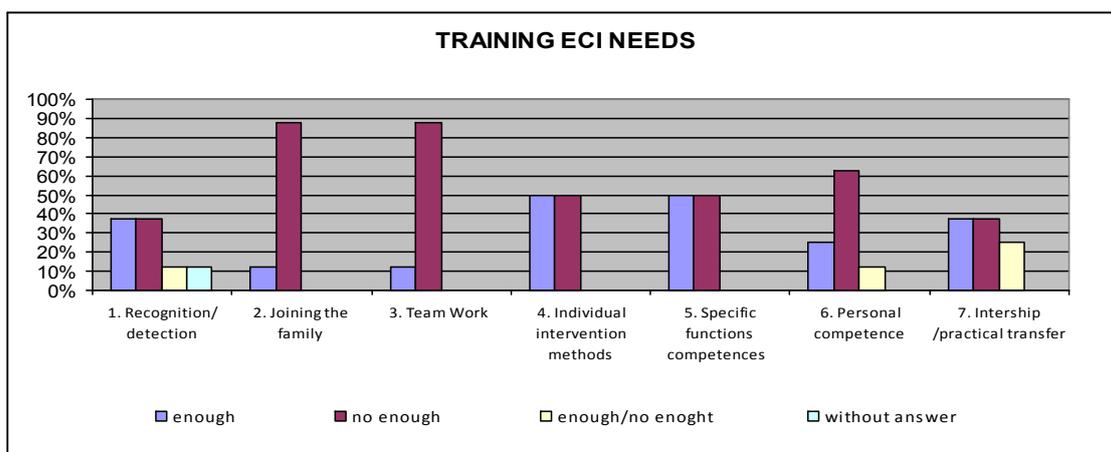
The 50% of the partners who answered the questionnaire believe that there is enough training about the cluster **Specific functions competences** (due to the function in an ECI team, due to the target groups, due to institutional requirements, due to legal requirements); independently of the courses (specific masters, others masters not specifics in this field, some subjects of bachelors). Nevertheless, they also point out that it may be necessary to unify the learning of these knowledge because some differences exist. On the contrary, the other 50% think that the cluster **Specific functions competences** should take more importance in the ECI training curriculum. They believe that it should be improved the training on the function in an ECI team and the target groups.

Moving on to the cluster **Personal competence** (using internal and external resources, process and competences, preconceptions and perceptions) the countries, who have participated on this research, manifest different opinions. A 25% of the countries think that these are contents well worked. A 62,5% believe that the training offer about this issue should be improve. Their reason mainly remains on the fact the current programmes are focused on knowledge instead of competences. Thus, they suggest that the necessary competences on ECI's practices should be worked. Specifically, this group (62,5%) think that it should be necessary to work on contents about self awareness/knowledge, family focused view, counseling as a tool, lots of knowledge on early childhood assessment and development, using internal and external resources, process and competences, preconceptions and perceptions etc. Due to mention all points of view, the last 12,5% believe that this cluster is partially worked with the actual training.

About the last cluster, **Intership /practical transfer**, about 37,5%% of the countries believe that ECI training programs give a good Intership /practical transfer to ECI students. A 25% consider that they can not give a clear answer because it depends on the training program and that this is not usually a well resolved issue for all ECI training offers in their country. Finally, a 37,5% think that in their countries the Intership /practical transfer is not worked as it should be. Due to improve this situation they suggest to increase theoretical knowledge and intership possibilities and critical

thinking (how to apply theories in solving practical situation, how to be self-flourishing practitioner etc.).

To sum up, and as graph 1 shows, PRECIOUS’ partners believe that the clusters **Individual intervention methods and Specific functions competences** are those who get more emphasis across the different trainings. In contrary, the clusters **Joining the family and Team Work** are considered as those that have less attentions from the different training offers.



Data based on a survey in AT, TR, LT, SK, BE, UK, HU, ES

3. SUGGESTIONS towards a European mainstream integration of ECI-training

Finally, the initiatives that have been suggested from different partners due to improve the ECI training offer can be summarized as follow:

- Change of point of view from a social and politic level about the ECI: to develop change of public opinion, legislation
- Formal training: more hours in gradual trainings in the field of ECI, MA training in ECI with certificate, Ph.D in ECI with certificate, adaptation of the existing curricula (search for new trainers), international mobility of training teachers (exchange knowledge and experiences), lectures and illustration with invitation of experts from others european countries, in-service-training by focus groups

(professionals + families, teams of professionals etc.), supervision, organized practical work during initial and continuous training, reflective learning, reflective practice, etc.

- Informal training: online information pool, projects, interdisciplinary conferences, staff meetings summers courses...

