

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS for strengthening integration in early childhood systems

PORTUGAL

General recommendations

For practitioners

- Practitioners need to understand that practices are part of a broader system where other professionals and services operate;
- Understand their double role in working with children and working with families
- Engage in or promote joint activities with other services in the community in order to devise practices based on an holistic view of the child;
- Care for their professional development (in-service training; communities of practices; action-research projects) in key areas such as working with families in a responsive way, empowering parents/carers, inclusion and diversity, integration, human/children's rights

At the institutional level

- Deepen understanding, ability and disposition to implement participatory practices with children, families, different professionals and members of the community
- Services ought to encourage /support professional participation in joint activities/networks and training with other professionals from different sectors

For research/innovation

- Devise studies:
 - about children and families' quality of life based on a systemic view
 - about the view of the child and the family by professionals from different sectors;

Recommendations for policy makers

- Ensure continuity of education from birth based on a holistic and integrated vision, as a right and a condition for citizenship.
- Ensure access to quality ECEC services by creating an effective network management, focusing on the diversification of services and responses as well as rethinking financing models.
- Ensure legislation towards integration of services and systems including consistency between principles, values and approaches in the areas of education, health, social action.
- Co-construct a family policy emerging from participatory processes, in a perspective of anticipation and not of remediation, with a long-term vision and social and cultural sustainability.
- Rethink the initial training models and professional development to tackle the complexity of contemporary society - enhance multidisciplinary knowledge and care ethics; systemic and integrative interventions with families and the community; valuing diversity and intercultural awareness; human/children's rights.
- Consolidate models and practices of integrated governance and citizen participation, especially at local and regional level.