



R.2.3 : Focus group of experts identification report

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Country Reports

Each country involved in the project completed an individual report with the analysis of the focus group findings and these can be found on the Smart- Parenting common partnership Drive in the WP2 section.

Work compiled by: Regina Kalodiki, European Knowledge Spot (Greece)

Contributors:

- Commune d' Oletta (France)
- Institut Corse De Formation Et Recherche En Travail Social (IFRTS - France)
- GESEME (Spain)
- Zavod za izobraževanje odraslih in mladine Lendava (Slovenia)
- Association for the Prevention and Handling Violence in the Family (Cyprus)

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Introduction

This document was produced in the framework of the ERASMUS+ programme, KA220-ADU Cooperation partnerships in adult education under the project entitled: Integrative on-line Parenting Courses: strategies for Raising Children Affected by Adverse Childhood Experiences (SMART PARENTING) and within WP2/A.2.2: *Psychological Dimension key elements of the analysed Parenting programmes identification* and Result 2.3: *Focus Group of Experts Identification report*.

In the framework of R.2.3 *Focus Group of Experts Identification report*, partners proceeded with the elaboration of five focus groups with a total participation of 42 experts to discuss the set of theories which explain mechanisms of behaviour change and gather data that will facilitate the development of the Smart Parenting Curriculum fostering prevention on potential adverse childhood experiences (ACEs).

ACEs include three general categories:

- childhood abuse,
- neglect, and
- household dysfunction (mental illness, divorce, substance abuse)

In the next section of the report, the sampling and data collection methodology will be described followed by the presentation of the specific context and content of the focus groups organised in each Partner country.

Partners and countries involved in the organisation of focus groups with experts:

- Commune d' Oletta (France)
- Institut Corse De Formation Et Recherche En Travail Social (IFRTS): France
- European Knowledge Spot (EKS): Greece
- GESEME (Spain)
- Zavod za izobraževanje odraslih in mladine Lendava (Slovenia)
- Association for the Prevention and Handling Violence in the Family (Cyprus)

Common themes and concerns across the five countries will provide a general description of the most popular intervention and skill-building approaches that can lead to improving parental styles and behaviours and of the most commonly indicated objectives, outcomes

and contents that could formulate the parental training course that could potentially mitigate parental ACEs.

Sampling and data collection

Focus Groups

The aim of the focus groups with experts was to engage with stakeholder and key informant professional participants to gauge their opinions on existing psychological theoretical methods for parenting behavioural change and explore the training needs of supporting families, parents and caregivers to learn positive parenting and avoid the production of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). The backgrounds of the participants included social work, educators, trainers, teachers, family therapists, psychologists, psychiatrists. All participants had experience with family therapy and/or parental counselling..

The focus groups ranged between 50 minutes -1 hour and ½ and were designed to be semi-structured, with a clear but open-ended topic guide. Three questions were distributed to Partners with a view to develop the focus – group conversation with experts as follows:

Issues addressed to Experts in Parenting Support Programmes included the following:

1. In your opinion which is the most effective intervention and skill-building approach that can lead to improving parental style and behaviour and/or strengthening the relationship between parent and child (discuss the set of theories which explain mechanisms of behaviour change, - behaviour change techniques - including social cognitive theory or transtheoretical model of behaviour change-)
2. What do you believe shall be the learning objectives, outcomes and content of a parental training course that can ideally mitigate parental neglect.
3. What do you believe shall be the learning objective, outcomes and content of a parental training course that can ideally mitigate parental abuse.
4. What do you believe shall be the learning objective and content of a parental training course that can ideally mitigate parental household challenges such as mental illness, divorce, substance abuse.

Written and/or oral consent was obtained from all participants which were also informed that the data collected will be confidential and anonymous. They were also reminded of their right to withdraw from the focus groups at any time.

Some focus groups were held on virtual meeting platforms and others in person and were facilitated by one or two team members. They were recorded and transcribed, with detailed notes also taken in case of malfunctioning software. English translations were provided by all partners as part of the data analysis process.

A summary of all participants is at Table 1.

Table 1: Project Data Collection Summary

Country	Number of Focus group participants	Gender distribution ¹		Mode of elaboration
		Female	Male	
France	9	9	0	Online
Greece	6	5	1	Online
Spain	10	Not Declared	Not Declared	Online
Slovenia	9	9	0	Hybrid In person/Online
Cyprus	8	8	0	In person
Totals	42	31	1	

Focus Groups Findings in France

Context

The French Partners held an online focus group with experts on 21st of June 2023. Nine (9) experts took part as follows : 1 Social worker at the Protection Maternelle et Infantile (PMI), 1 Social worker in a children's home, 1 Social worker in a women's home, 1 Primary school teacher, 3 Early childhood trainers, 1 Graduate educator of young children, 1 Day-care center director. All participants were female and some of them had 10+ years of experience in the field of working with people.

The focus group lasted 60 minutes. For the purpose of the analysis, it was agreed that the conversation would be recorded with the participant's permission, and one of the group

¹ In Spain Article. 43 of Law 4/2023, of February 28, regulates legitimation and establishes: People of Spanish nationality over 16 years of age may apply for themselves (for gender change). People under 16 years of age and over 14 years of age may submit the application themselves, assisted by their legal representatives.

leaders took notes on the fly. To facilitate tracking, the French Partner also shared the questions in a word doc that had been sent at the end for the participants who wanted to write down their final answers.

Content of the focus group

With regard to the first question on which method is most effective in improving parents' lifestyle and behaviour, as well as strengthening the parent-child relationship experts' responses emphasised the importance of early education and support for parents, as well as a focus on understanding child development and fostering positive, respectful relationships between parents and children. They also stressed the value of informing parents about available resources and interventions during the crucial early stages of parenthood.

In particular, one expert pointed out that the most effective way to improve parents' lives and their relationship with their children is to provide parenting support and education right from the birth of the child. These courses should focus on the challenges parents might face from the very beginning of parenthood. Topics could include postpartum difficulties, balancing family and work life, and building emotional bonds with children of all ages. The goal is to provide comprehensive support that fosters a strong parent-child relationship and promotes the concept of positive parenting. Further, and when it comes to training in gentle parenting, experts emphasised on the importance of training in gentle parenting methods. This involves understanding the emotional and intellectual development of children to facilitate better parent-child relationships. This expert also highlights the importance of trust and mutual respect in parent-child relationships.

Further, multiple experts stressed the importance of sensitising parents to their child's needs, including sleep, nutrition, care, and the significance of rituals. They advocated educating parents about the challenging phases of child development, the importance of trust and setting boundaries, and the adverse effects of punitive measures. Encouraging quality time spent with children and connecting parents with resources like playgroups and cultural or sports activities is also recommended. Further, experts also suggested informing parents about support resources like the Lieu d' Accueil Enfant Parents, mobile units like the Unité U Liame, and educational programs for parents. These resources can provide additional guidance and assistance.

A different perspective was offered by an expert who suggested that it may not be possible to talk about skill development methods for parenting because there's no formal training for

becoming a parent. Instead, they propose providing information about the "first 1000 days" plan, a government initiative aimed at supporting new parents. This includes prenatal interviews, maternity stays, support upon returning home, and respite care. This expert emphasised the need to intervene during this critical period.

The second question pertained to the learning objectives that should be targeted in a parental training course to ideally mitigate parental neglect. Experts provided a range of cognitive, psychomotor, and affective learning objectives:

- Knowledge of Child Development: Parents should gain knowledge about child development, including understanding the child's developmental stages, needs, and the psychological and physical consequences of neglect. This forms the foundation for effective parenting.
- Recognition of Neglect: Parents should be able to recognize signs of neglect in their own behaviour or in others. They should understand what constitutes neglect and be able to categorise it into various types (physical, educational, medical, emotional neglect, etc.).
- Access to Support Services: Parents need to know where to turn and what support services or organisations are available when they encounter or suspect neglect. This includes being aware of professionals and agencies that can offer assistance and intervention.
- Prevention of Neglect: The primary focus of the learning objectives should be on preventing neglect. This involves educating parents about the definitions and manifestations of neglect, and it should include real-life examples provided by external experts to make the concept tangible.
- Understanding Child's Needs: Parents should be educated about the evolving needs of children at different ages, including emotional, health, hygiene, access to culture, socialisation, and education. This helps parents align their caregiving practices with their child's developmental stage.
- Establishing an Educational Framework: Creating a structured educational framework is crucial. Parents should be guided in setting appropriate boundaries and rules within which they can provide for their child's needs.
- Tools for Remediation: Parents should be equipped with practical tools and strategies to address neglect when they identify it in their own parenting practices or in others. This could involve communication skills, stress management techniques, and problem-solving strategies.

- **Categorising Neglect:** As mentioned earlier, parents should understand the different categories of neglect (physical, educational, medical, emotional, etc.) and their implications for a child's well-being.
- **Consequences of Neglect:** Parents should grasp the long-term consequences of neglect on a child's development and well-being, highlighting the urgency of preventing it.

The overarching objective is to prevent neglect by providing parents with the knowledge, skills, and resources necessary to ensure the well-being of their children. However, one expert raised a valid concern about reaching the target audience effectively, indicating that traditional methods like advertising may not be sufficient. This suggests the need for innovative and community-based approaches to engage parents in parental training courses.

When it comes to the third question and the programmes that deal with abuse, experts mentioned that the learning objectives for addressing parental maltreatment should largely align with those for neglect prevention. This includes helping parents understand the concept of parental maltreatment, where it begins, and how to avoid it. Emphasising prevention as a key objective is crucial.

Further, experts listed various learning objectives for the course under development, including understanding child psychology, addressing health and hygiene needs, nutrition, setting an educational framework, and facilitating access to culture, education, and socialisation. They also highlight the importance of recognizing child maltreatment, understanding its psychological and physical consequences, and knowing where to seek help.

Experts also advocated that the proposed course content shall involve educating parents about child development, providing practical tools, and simulating crisis situations. Skills such as effective communication and stress management were also mentioned. The ultimate goal is to promote positive and nurturing parenting. Experts further emphasised the need for sensitising parents to addiction issues and educating them about the short-term and long-term consequences of family problems on children. They suggested connecting parents with mental health professionals through medical-social structures.

One of the experts expressed scepticism about the effectiveness of parental training in cases of confirmed parental maltreatment. They argued that it may be challenging to change the behaviour of adults who engage in abuse, citing examples of children placed in foster care despite social services' efforts to support parental bonds.

The fourth question centred on the learning objectives and content that should be included in a parental training course to ideally help parents cope with various family-related challenges revealed the importance of developing a comprehensive parental training that not only provides information but also equips parents with practical coping skills and connects them to professional support when dealing with complex family challenges. The involvement of various experts and the use of real-life examples can enhance the effectiveness of such training programs. Below the learning objectives and Content for a parental course that deals with various issues of family dysfunction according to their thematic.

1.Divorce:

- Provide information about the legal aspects of divorce and its implications for children.
- Offer psychological information and support to help families navigate the emotional challenges.
- Address changes in living arrangements and relationships with each parent and between parents.

2. Mental Illness:

- Educate parents about various mental illnesses and their potential impact on family life.
- Discuss issues related to violence, psychological disorders, financial problems, and their effects on children.
- Address housing problems, precarious situations, and social isolation that can result from mental illness.

3. Substance Abuse:

- Inform parents about different types of addictions and how they can affect family life.
- Explore topics related to violence, psychological issues, financial instability, and relationship problems, highlighting their impact on children.
- Discuss housing problems, poverty, and social isolation associated with substance abuse.

4.General Coping Skills:

- Encourage parents to seek professional help to navigate these challenges.

- Suggest media resources like books, films, articles, etc., to facilitate communication between parents and children.
- Promote effective communication between parents and their children.
- Help parents recognize and accept their difficulties, encouraging them to seek assistance from available resources.

Focus Groups Findings in Greece

Context

The Greek Partner, European Knowledge Spot, held an online focus group with professionals on June 1st, 2023. To gather participants, invitations had been sent to various stakeholders (family therapists, psychologists, social workers, professionals in parenting counselling) and relevant organisations. The invitation had also been made public through EKS Facebook page. In total six (6) experts participated in the focus group. From the six (6) experts, two (2) were family therapists, one psychologist with experience in family counselling, one (1) was social worker and two (2) were school educators. All experts had vast experience in family counselling. As regards the gender equality issue, from the six (6) experts all were women except one (1) man. The focus group had been moderated by Ms. Olga Zouzoula psychologist and family therapist and facilitated by Ms. Regina Kalodiki, Project Manager. The duration was 1 hour and 20 minutes.

The purpose of the Smart Parenting focus group(s)/interviews with professionals was to obtain insights into existing psychological theoretical methods for parenting behavioural change and explore the training needs of supporting families, parents and caregivers to learn positive parenting.

Before the start of the focus group discussion, the facilitator thanked the participants for taking part in the project, self-introduced herself and the organisation (EKS) and informed participants that the session would be recorded and that anonymity would be kept. None of the participants objected to the recording of the session.

Participants were also briefed on the aims and objectives of the Smart –Parenting Erasmus+ Project and informed of the purpose of the focus group that would also facilitate the curricula development. The interviews

During the focus group, the coordinator of the focus group asked the following questions.

1. In your opinion which is the most effective intervention and skill-building approach that can lead to improving parental style and behaviour and/or strengthening the relationship between parent and child (discuss the set of theories which explain mechanisms of behaviour change, - behaviour change techniques - including social cognitive theory or transtheoretical model of behaviour change-)

2. What do you believe shall be the learning objectives, outcomes and content of a parental training course that can ideally mitigate parental neglect.

3. What do you believe shall be the learning objective, outcomes and content of a parental training course that can ideally mitigate parental abuse.

4. What do you believe shall be the learning objective and content of a parental training course that can ideally mitigate parental household challenges such as mental illness, divorce, substance abuse

After the focus group ended, a transcript of the discussion was made, decoding the open-ended questions from the recording device and preparing the transcript including a brief report summarising the key findings. Each participant had been given a code for anonymity reasons

Content of the focus group

With regard to the first question dealing with the most effective intervention and skill-building approach that can lead to improving parental style and behaviour and/or strengthening the relationship between parent and child, participants mentioned the need for psychoeducational programmes that if followed by parents these could lead to parental empowerment and overall improvement of parent-child relationship. Parents shall be trained to have critical reflection of themselves and their needs, learn how to take care of themselves in parallel with a training of how to treat and behave to their children. Parental wellbeing equals child wellbeing, reduces stress and can resolve conflicts and problems in the family. Basic knowledge on different stages of child development for boy and girl is also an important issue that all parents should be aware of. In addition participants noted that basic understanding on the different developmental stages for boys and girls is also an important issue that all parents should be knowledgeable of and that different needs exist for parents with children of different stages. Professionals also pointed out that in building a healthy parent-child relationship parents shall also be considered also as Partners and look

at relationships across the whole family, not just at parenting skills, but as parents' relationship together. Strengthening the conjugal role together with the parental role is of critical importance. Roles and responsibilities shall be clearly described. Raising children as a team is also important, whether you're parenting as a couple or after a separation. Good communication can lead to raising healthy children in all developmental stages. In that sense one participant mentioned that : *'Obviously when the couple is not good to each other and have not good relations this reflects on their parenting role - they are not such good parents'*. Another participant also mentioned that: *"We see this from our experience .. when there is a combination of a good spousal relationship and parental role all developmental issues of a child at all ages are better addressed"*

Participants encouraged greater awareness on the importance of active listening and effective communication. Parenting Communication Skills, Understanding what your child has to say, and giving full attention to children is key . One of the participants pointed out that: *"I think that parents focus too much on the word's empathy and acceptance, but they don't know what these words really mean. They need to learn to communicate their love and focus on how to communicate with their children. It is important that they also learn how you can be an active listener and that you need to talk a lot with your child so that he/she too can trust you. It would be a good idea to mention specific examples to parents of what exactly the words COMMUNICATION and ACCEPTANCE mean"*

Participants emphasised how a strong parent – school relationship and good cooperation between parents, schools, and the communities can facilitate parents to learn more about their child behaviour and can lead to strengthening the overall relationship between parent and child. When there is a strong and respectful relationship with the child's school, parents will be in a good position to give them information to help the child get the most out of education. It is true that parents and educators can work together to support the child's learning and wellbeing. One participant pointed out that *"It is also important that training starts with an interface with the school. That there is not only the topic of the family but that there is a connection with the school ... that is, the child in combination with his social environment and efforts to bridge the communication with the teachers.. their peers .. This shall be the framework. Parents at this time are without context ... they see the child as an individual ... they also try to show that they are doing everything well ... and if you tell them they're not doing something right, they see you as an enemy in a battle trying to see who's going to win"*.

Lastly experts added that parenting styles such as authoritarian, over permissive have to be analysed when training parents as it is really important that parents ensure their parenting style is supporting healthy growth and development. In that sense an example was given that overprotective parents do not let their children develop their social skills or be prepared for the next developmental stages.

Concerning the second question of what the learning objective, outcomes and content of a parental training course that can ideally mitigate parental neglect should be; experts consider it important to first analyse what a healthy family environment is and what is a 'normal' family, discuss on how to manage family crisis (crisis management) and how to deal with emotions (create a healthy emotional environment). Active listening is also a subject that should be considered. When it comes to ACE (adverse childhood experiences) including neglect, abuse and household dysfunction, it is true that all these can have poor developmental outcomes on a child. However, when it comes to the training course and how to deal with neglect, abuse and dysfunctional household issues, experts highlighted the need to discuss the family protective factors i.e. the characteristics or strengths of families, that act to mitigate risks and promote positive well-being and healthy development. Discussion on protective factors can reduce incidences of child abuse and neglect. According to research, family protective factors include:

- Parental resilience: Managing stress and functioning well when faced with challenges, adversity and trauma.
- Social connections: Positive relationships that provide emotional, informational, instrumental and spiritual support
- Concrete support in times of need, Referrals and provision of information to access concrete support and services that address a family's needs and help minimise stress caused by challenges
- Knowledge of parenting and child development: Understanding child development and parenting strategies that support physical, social and emotional development and
- Social and emotional competence of children. Family and child interactions that help children develop the ability to communicate clearly, recognize and regulate their emotions and establish and maintain relationships.

Respondents also mentioned the multiple roles that parents have nowadays the need to understand what neglect means and gave some examples as follows: *“We have seen parents who go on holiday and they think that three minor children can stay alone and take care of themselves. Another parent left the kids in the car with the window closed and went shopping. Parents have too many roles, there is no support and sometimes neglect is done unintentionally in the midst of all the stress they experience but certainly and sometimes they don't know what neglect means”* Another participant pointed out that: *children's hygiene and sanitation shall also be considered as a thematic as if it is ignored it can be a factor of neglect, and parent may not be aware of that issue.*

Further experts agreed that: the definition of trauma, how a parent can produce trauma to his child, effects of trauma and how it can heal that trauma are issues that also can be discussed in a training programme that touches adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). However in the context of the training the healing process shall be more emphasised. Experts overall should give parents hope, positive feelings and discuss how to deal with various situations. Positivity and giving support to parents is the key. Mental health and the stigma surrounding it shall also be considered when developing the programme.

When it comes to the third question and the programmes that deals with abuse, experts mentioned that this is a completely special issue and difficult to deal with. Only in the context of preventive training we can discuss of abuse. Otherwise, an expert mentioned that: *in the context of psychotherapy abuse is prohibited. It needs special treatment and for specialists it is important to know when and in what situations they will have to inform the authorities. The interface in that point would be really important.* Another participant pointed out that *there is a great concern in Greece with regard to mental health issues: In particular he mentioned that: “I am concerned about mental health. There may be a young child who is kept at home by parents. Parents don't talk and we get into criminal situations. So there needs to be de-victimization and we all need to understand that today we are fine, but tomorrow we may go through a depression. This should be accepted. Maybe my child will have a bipolar disorder or that the child didn't just have a temper tantrum that was something much bigger. In England they all went to a psychiatrist. In Greece we are way behind in terms of mental health. As a subject matter we should include the mental health part, and show that these issues are real. And there should be again an interface with the structures and specialists should be more accessible and there should have a positive attitude”.*

Focus Groups Findings in Spain

Context

GESEME held an online focus group on 29th of May 2023 with 10 specialists working in social services, psychology, child protection and therapy took part on the focus group.

The focus group lasted for 60 minutes.

Content of the focus group

With regard to the first question on the most effective intervention and skill-building approach that can lead to improving parental style and behaviour, experts pointed out and discussed the following set of theories which can be taken into consideration and can explain mechanisms of behavioural change.

1. The Social Cognitive Theory (SCT): Social Cognitive Theory emphasizes the interplay between personal factors, environmental influences, and behaviour. It posits that individuals learn through observation, imitation, and modelling. The theory highlights the importance of self-efficacy, which refers to an individual's belief in their ability to succeed in specific situations and tasks. Self-efficacy plays a crucial role in motivating behaviour change.

-Health Promotion Programs: SCT has been utilized in health promotion initiatives in Spain. For example, in the area of physical activity, interventions have been developed based on SCT principles to increase individuals' self-efficacy and motivation to engage in regular exercise. These programs provide information, modelling, and opportunities for skill-building to enhance self-efficacy beliefs and encourage physical activity adoption.

Smoking Cessation Interventions: SCT has been incorporated into smoking cessation programs in Spain. These interventions focus on increasing self-efficacy to quit smoking, providing strategies for coping with cravings and withdrawal symptoms, and addressing social influences on smoking behaviour. By targeting self-efficacy, social norms, and observational learning, these programs aim to support individuals in their efforts to quit smoking.

Occupational Training and Career Development: SCT has been applied in occupational training programs in Spain to enhance individuals' self-efficacy and motivation to acquire new skills and advance in their careers. These programs provide opportunities for skill-building, offer feedback and reinforcement, and promote self-regulation to improve individuals' confidence and effectiveness in the workplace.

Educational Interventions: SCT has been employed in educational settings to promote academic achievement and learning. In Spain, interventions have focused on enhancing students' self-efficacy beliefs, self-regulation skills, and motivation to succeed academically. These programs incorporate strategies such as goal-setting, self-reflection, modelling, and social support to enhance students' academic performance and engagement.

Behavioural Change Programs: SCT has been utilized in various behavioural change programs in Spain, targeting diverse areas such as nutrition, weight management, and medication adherence. These programs emphasize self-efficacy, modelling, and goal-setting to support individuals in adopting healthier behaviours and sustaining positive changes over time.

2. Transtheoretical Model- TTM (Stages of Change): The Transtheoretical Model proposes that individuals go through a series of stages when changing behaviour. These stages include precontemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, and maintenance. The model recognizes that behaviour change is a process, and individuals may progress back and forth through these stages before achieving lasting change.

The Transtheoretical Model (TTM) has also been implemented in Spain to support behaviour change and parenting interventions. Examples:

Parenting Programs: The TTM has been utilized in parenting programs in Spain to promote positive parenting practices and address challenging behaviours in children. These programs recognize that parents may be in different stages of readiness to change their parenting behaviours. Interventions are tailored to each stage, providing strategies, support, and resources that align with parents' readiness to adopt new parenting practices.

Child Behaviour Management: The TTM has been incorporated into interventions focusing on child behaviour management and discipline strategies. Parents may go through different stages of change in recognizing and modifying ineffective discipline techniques. The TTM

helps tailor interventions to parents' readiness to adopt new strategies, providing education, guidance, and support throughout the stages of change.

Parental Involvement in Education: The TTM has been applied in programs that aim to increase parental involvement in their children's education. These interventions recognize that parents may be in different stages of readiness to engage with their child's schooling and academic activities. Strategies are tailored to each stage, providing information, resources, and support to help parents become more actively involved in their children's education.

Parenting Support Groups: The TTM has been utilized in parenting support groups in Spain. These groups provide a supportive environment for parents to share experiences and learn from each other. The TTM helps identify the stages of change that parents may be in regarding their parenting behaviours, allowing the group facilitators to tailor the content, discussions, and interventions to the specific needs of the parents.

Positive Parenting Practices: The TTM has been incorporated into interventions promoting positive parenting practices such as effective communication, emotional support, and nurturing behaviours. Recognizing that parents may be at different stages of readiness to adopt these practices, interventions provide education, skill-building, and support to help parents progress through the stages of change and implement positive parenting strategies

Experts have also discussed and analysed eight (8) interventions that can lead to improving parental style and behaviour and/or strengthening the relationship between parent and child the Triple P (Positive Parenting Program) and the Parent – child Interaction Therapy. The eight (8) interventions are mentioned below:

1. **Parenting Programs:** Evidence based parenting programmes have shown positive outcomes in improving parental style and promoting positive parent-child relationships. These programs typically provide parents with practical skills, guidance, and strategies to enhance their parenting techniques.
2. **The Triple P program** incorporates various strategies, including positive reinforcement, setting clear expectations and limits, using effective discipline techniques, promoting open communication, and providing emotional support to children. It emphasizes a proactive approach to parenting, teaching parents to

prevent behavior problems before they occur and to respond positively to challenging situations.

The effectiveness of Triple P has been demonstrated in numerous research studies, showing improvements in parenting skills, reduced child behaviour problems, and improved parent-child relationships. The program has been implemented in different settings worldwide and has shown positive results across diverse cultural contexts.

The experts also mentioned the Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT) which is an evidence-based intervention that focuses on improving the parent-child relationship and addressing behavioural issues in young children. It is designed for children between the ages of 2 and 7 who display disruptive behaviours such as aggression, defiance, or tantrums.

PCIT consists of two main components: Child-Directed Interaction (CDI) and Parent-Directed Interaction (PDI). During CDI, parents engage in play sessions with their child, following the child's lead and providing positive attention and reinforcement for appropriate behaviours. The therapist coaches' parents through a one-way mirror or via a bug-in-the-ear device, offering real-time guidance and feedback to enhance positive interactions and redirect ineffective strategies.

Once parents have developed skills in CDI, the therapy progresses to PDI. In PDI, parents are taught specific behaviour management techniques to address problematic behaviours. They learn to use effective discipline strategies, set clear expectations, provide consistent consequences, and utilize time-outs when necessary. The therapist continues to provide in-the-moment coaching to help parents implement these techniques effectively.

PCIT aims to strengthen the parent-child relationship by promoting positive interactions, improving communication, and enhancing the child's social and emotional development. It focuses on increasing parental warmth, responsiveness, and consistency while reducing negative or harsh parenting practices. PCIT also helps parents develop skills in effectively managing challenging behaviours and improving the child's compliance and self-control.

The therapy typically involves 12 to 20 weekly sessions, with each session lasting around one hour. PCIT is highly structured and has a manualized format, ensuring consistency across therapists and settings. The active involvement of parents and the emphasis on skill-building make PCIT a collaborative and empowering intervention for families.

2. Parenting Education and Support: Providing parents with access to educational resources, workshops, and support groups can be beneficial. These resources offer information on child development, effective discipline techniques, communication skills, and stress management strategies. Additionally, connecting parents with other parents who share similar challenges can provide a supportive network and exchange of ideas.

3. Positive Discipline: Encouraging positive discipline techniques based on mutual respect, empathy, and consistency can help parents develop healthy and constructive relationships with their children. Positive discipline strategies focus on setting clear expectations, providing appropriate consequences, and emphasizing positive reinforcement rather than punitive measures.

4. Role Modelling: Parents who model positive behaviours and attitudes for their children can have a significant impact on their development. Displaying empathy, effective communication, problem-solving skills, and emotional regulation can help children learn and adopt these behaviours themselves.

5. Parent-Child Relationship Building: Investing time and effort into building a strong, nurturing, and secure parent-child relationship is crucial. This includes spending quality time together, actively listening to children, showing affection and support, and engaging in open and honest communication.

6. Self-Care for Parents: Encouraging parents to take care of their physical and mental well-being is essential. When parents are emotionally and physically healthy, they are better equipped to provide effective parenting. Self-care activities may include engaging in hobbies, seeking social support, practicing stress-reduction techniques, and maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

7. Individualized Approaches: Recognizing that each child and family is unique, it's important to tailor interventions to their specific needs. Assessing the family's strengths and challenges, considering cultural factors, and adopting a flexible approach can help create personalized strategies for improvement.

8. Emotion Coaching. The technique focuses on teaching parents how to respond empathetically and supportively to their child's emotions. This approach can foster a secure attachment, emotional intelligence, and a deeper connection between parent and child.

Emotion coaching involves the following key steps:

- Awareness of Emotions: Parents are encouraged to be mindful of their child's emotions and to recognize them as opportunities for connection and teaching.
- Validating and Labelling Emotions: Parents acknowledge and validate their child's feelings, helping them to identify and label their emotions accurately. This validation communicates understanding and acceptance to the child.
- Empathy and Understanding: Parents strive to empathize with their child's emotions by seeing the situation from their perspective. This helps the child feel understood and supported.
- Emotional Regulation: Parents assist their child in developing healthy strategies for managing and regulating their emotions. This may involve teaching calming techniques, problem-solving skills, or helping the child brainstorm alternative ways to cope with challenging emotions.
- Problem-Solving and Setting Limits: Parents work with their child to find appropriate solutions to problems or conflicts. They set limits when necessary, but in a way that still acknowledges and respects the child's emotions and needs.

By consistently applying emotion coaching principles, parents can create an environment of trust, emotional safety, and mutual understanding. This approach helps children feel validated, secure, and more capable of expressing their emotions in healthy ways.

Emotion coaching is associated with numerous positive outcomes. Children who experience emotion coaching from their parents tend to have better emotional regulation skills, higher self-esteem, more positive relationships with peers, and improved academic performance. Emotion-coached children are also less likely to engage in problem behaviours or develop mental health issues later in life.

Emotion coaching requires patience, practice, and a commitment to open communication. Parental consistency and modelling of emotional intelligence are essential for its effectiveness. By consistently using emotion coaching techniques, parents can create a nurturing and supportive environment that strengthens the parent-child relationship.

Concerning the second question of what the learning objective, outcomes and content of a parental training course that can ideally mitigate parental neglect should be; experts

concluded that a training course in that direction would ideally comprise the following learning objectives, outcomes and content :

Learning Objectives:

- Understand the concept of parental neglect and its impact on child development.
- Identify risk factors and signs of parental neglect.
- Develop awareness of personal parenting behaviours and their potential impact on children.
- Acquire effective parenting strategies to prevent and address neglectful behaviours.
- Enhance communication skills and build positive relationships with children.
- Cultivate empathy and understanding of children's needs and emotions.
- Strengthen problem-solving and conflict resolution skills within the family.
- Develop knowledge of available resources and support systems for parents.

Outcomes:

- Increased awareness and recognition of parental neglect and its consequences.
- Improved ability to identify and address risk factors and signs of neglect.
- Adoption of positive parenting behaviours that promote child well-being.
- Enhanced communication and connection between parents and children.
- Development of empathetic and nurturing parenting skills.
- Strengthened problem-solving and conflict resolution skills within the family.
- Increased utilization of support networks and available resources.
- Reduction in instances of parental neglect and improvement in child outcomes.

Course Content:

1.The emotional connection with children

- Paternity and attachment: the importance of the bond
- Crying in babies
- Physiology of the stress response
- Sources and symptoms of stress
- Control guidelines
- Stress release mechanisms: crying and tantrums

- The phenomenon of the broken cookie
- Anger, fear and sadness: welcoming the emotion
- Attachment game

2. Educate without punishment or reward

- Types of discipline
- Punishments and rewards
- The origin of anger in parents
- The non-authoritarian paradigm
- Rules and limits
- Types of conflicts and practices
- Techniques of influence
- Reasons for unacceptable behaviours
- Techniques for conflict resolution

3. Conflict and relationship from different paradigms

- The behavioural window
- Types of conflict
- First aid
- Understand the essence of conflicts
- Assemblies
- Mediation

4. MANAGE THE USE OF SCREENS

- How children and adults use screens, and what needs they satisfy.
- How to identify if the screens become a control pattern.
- Habits of adults with screens that shape the habits of our children
- Key ideas on when and how to use screens
- When and how to set limits.
- Accompany the before, during and after.
- The central role of the connection.

Concerning the third question of what the learning objective, outcomes and content of a parental training course that can ideally mitigate parental abuse should be; experts concluded that a training course in that direction would ideally comprise the following learning objectives, outcomes and content :

Learning Objectives:

- Provide people with the necessary knowledge about the mechanisms of abuse
- Offer interaction skills with children that help alleviate possible situations of abuse
- Design a framework of responsible and effective action in the family that, in an integrated way, contributes to empowering upbringing that prevents the child from suffering and allowing abuse
- Make known the essential actions that, within the family environment, must be implemented to provide children with the necessary skills to detect and prevent possible abusive interactions
- Reflect on the social mechanisms that sustain abuse
- Provide the participants with the complete training model to be able to give courses, talks, workshops on abuse prevention.

Outcomes:

- Increased awareness and recognition of parental abuse and its consequences.
- Improved ability to identify risk factors and warning signs of abuse.
- Adoption of positive parenting behaviours that promote non-violent and nurturing parenting.
- Enhanced communication and connection between parents and children.
- Development of empathy and understanding of children's needs and emotions.
- Improved anger management and stress coping skills.
- Increased utilization of support networks and available resources.
- Reduction in instances of parental abuse and improvement in child safety and well-being.

Course Content:

1. Understanding what is Parental Abuse. Abuse, guilt, shame and fear. Abuse as taboo. Need for acceptance and fear of rejection. Important definitions.

2. Domain action. Knowledge and control of one's own body. Free movement. Self-management of the body. Boundaries. It is not No. Social relations and aggressions between children. Reward and punishment as a risk practice. Blackmail and threats. Reference adults as a protective model. Detection of abuse and the importance of asking for help. Trust in the relationship as an essential protection mechanism
3. Sexual and social development. Development of sexuality in early childhood. Empowering communication, unconditionality and need for acceptance. Assertiveness. Concrete actions.
4. Aggressive social phenomena. Victim blaming. Silence. Defencelessness, social responsibility and management. Silence in the face of injustices. Non-inclusive models.
5. Norms and values. Changing adherence to restrictive and harmful social and gender norms. Community mobilization programs. Interventions aimed at passive spectators
6. Accessing Support and Resources. Identifying community resources and support networks. Seeking help and building a support system.

Concerning the fourth question of what the learning objective, outcomes and content of a parental training course that can ideally mitigate parental household challenges should be; experts concluded that a training course in that direction would ideally comprise the following learning objectives, outcomes and content :

Learning Objectives:

- Understand the impact of parental household challenges such as mental illness, divorce, and substance abuse on children's well-being.
- Recognize the specific challenges and stressors associated with each situation.
- Develop awareness of personal triggers and patterns that may affect parenting during these challenges.
- Acquire effective coping strategies to minimize the negative impact on children and promote their resilience.
- Enhance communication skills and build open and supportive relationships with children.
- Know what the most recent scientific evidence says about the development of a secure bond in early childhood.

- Acquire knowledge about which aspects are most relevant for the healthy development of children under six years of age in cases of parental separation and/or divorce.
- Tools for working with mothers and fathers in separation processes that facilitate well-being and prevent dynamics of violence, with an ecosystem and gender approach.
- Cultivate empathy and understanding of children's emotions and needs.
- Access available resources and support systems for both parents and children.

Course Content:

1. Introduction to Disruptive behaviours and family factors
 - Stable or temporary patterns
 - Non-compliance and conflict
 - Orders and rules
 - Authority or authoritative figures
 - Origin and maintenance of disruptive behaviours
 - Causes of disruptive behaviours
 - Family and disruptive behaviours
 - Integrated model of family influences
 - Understanding the impact of mental illness, divorce, and substance abuse on children's development.
 - Frequency of disruptive behaviours
 - Recognizing the unique challenges and stressors associated with each situation.
2. Effects on Children's Well-being:
 - Exploring the potential emotional, behavioural, and social consequences for children.
 - Understanding the importance of resilience and protective factors.
3. Understanding attachment and the developing mind in the face of early parental separation.
 - Marital (or partner) breakup and parental agreement. How to continue taking care of the children when the couple breaks up. Practical issues in case of separation.
 - The relocation of the father: ecosystem perspective.

- How to reconcile caring for children's emotional needs with parental rights

- 4. Self-Awareness and Parenting During Challenges:
 - Recognizing personal triggers, stressors, and limitations during household challenges.
 - Building self-care strategies and seeking support as a parent.

- 5. Effective Communication and Supportive Relationships:
 - Enhancing communication skills to create open and honest dialogue with children.
 - Promoting a safe and supportive environment for children to express their feelings and concerns.

- 6. Coping Strategies and Resilience Building:
 - Developing effective coping mechanisms for parents and children during household challenges.
 - Building resilience through adaptive strategies, problem-solving, and emotional regulation.

- 7. Accessing Support and Resources:
 - Understanding available community resources, such as counselling, support groups, or helplines.
 - Exploring strategies for navigating legal processes, co-parenting, or accessing treatment.

- 8. How to help to families with adopted children and in welcome to cope with trauma
 - Background
 - Dealing with Toxic Stress
 - How to identify trauma
 - How to act
 - The Medical Home

Focus Groups Findings in Slovenia

Context

In Slovenia the focus group with experts was held on May 31st, 2023 at the Family Centre of the organisation lu lendava. Nine (9) experts participated (5 of them were in person and 4 of them provided their answers digitally, as they were unable to attend the event due to other commitments). Of the 9 experts, 4 were social workers employed at the Centre for Social Work (but in different fields). The other participants were: a counsellor from a kindergarten, a counsellor from an elementary school, a pedagogue/director of an adult education institute and 2 family therapists. All participants were female and had 10+ years of experience in the field of working with parents.

The focus group lasted 60 minutes. For the purpose of the analysis, it was agreed that the conversation would be recorded with the participant's permission, and one of the group leaders took notes on the fly. To facilitate tracking, we also shared the questions on the screen in the form of a PPT presentation so that each participant could (re)read the question if necessary.

Content of the focus group

With regard to the first question on which method is most effective in improving parents' lifestyle and behaviour, as well as strengthening the parent-child relationship experts agreed that, despite the vast amount of information and resources, there are still many parents who are not sufficiently prepared for their new roles or who are confused by the overload of information. As a result, this leads to chaotic parenting that is either not harmonised between the partners or goes from one extreme to the other, with parents changing rules and parenting methods to extremes. In this respect one participants mentioned: *"In practice, I see that such parents often have a chaotic parenting style, parents who are passive, permissive and disinterested in one period and over-controlling and involved in the other"*

Experts also pointed out that while they believe awareness of domestic violence is high, many people misinterpret it, ridicule the rules or use their own experiences to justify inappropriate methods of punishment. The workers gave some examples of the excuses

parents sometimes have for hitting their child: "But it is very important that there is zero tolerance, we repeat this over and over again. We still have cases where they say, 'I just do it a little bit' and followed up with another one: 'I got hit too, and I'm fine' This perpetuates many unhealthy family and parenting patterns over the generations, which are difficult for professionals to influence. They also pointed to changes in societal values that affect attitudes and family patterns, for instance, greater individualism, less community cohesion and low motivation to participate in non-compulsory activities. One family therapist: "It just seems to me that in our setting, they come more individually, because to expose themselves in a group, to say, I'm scared (fictional example)... it's easier for them to say it on an individual basis than in a group".

Poor attendance at prevention and other programmes for parents is a serious problem for professionals. They feel that while there are more than enough prevention programmes and other sources of information for parents, they cannot be effective if they remain unattended. In addition, professionals are also faced with an increase in users' mistrust of the profession and of staff in general, a lack of prevention programmes in rural areas, and a poorly organised multidisciplinary approach in general. One of the professionals on mistrust: "They don't see the need to change their attitude towards life, towards themselves or the child, but they want to change us, who are somehow experts or have information and know exactly how someone functions, with all the guns they have" . They also said that each organisation tries to deal with the problems of each family individually, which is why they often see the work in social work centres as "fire-fighting" because, by the time they get involved, the problems are so severe that it is too late for preventive programmes and more serious measures have to be taken. This is how one social worker described it: "... We only get the information when everything is "on fire" when we should already have reacted, but we just don't get the right information, the right information at the beginning, when we see that something is happening in the family, that we could have some way, some preventive programme, that could strengthen the parents, to raise their children differently".

They also blamed the lack of legislation, which neither foresees attendance at prevention programmes, nor greater cohesion between organisations working in the field of families. These problems often lead to a feeling of helplessness among professionals when it comes to working with families, especially since they rarely have the experience to see visible changes towards solutions. "But once the consequences are there, it is also harder to motivate the child, the child is frustrated, he doesn't know why he should do it, and the

parents then put pressure on us. So there is a vicious circle. So if there is a formula for how to reach out to the family, or how to strengthen them in some way through a programme, that would be great."

However, rather than focusing only on the negative, the experts also highlighted some examples where they had positive experiences working with families. Among them, two programmes of the Social Work Centre implemented in the 1980s were highlighted, namely a course for couples and workshops for young people or high school students. Both programmes covered topics such as partner relationships, parenting and the family. In particular, the couples' course was considered very useful by an expert who had worked at the time, because it was mainly about working with couples or in a small group so that the actual needs of the people could be addressed if they were interested in participating. Of the current programmes being implemented today, the experts praised in particular the School for Parents, which they also considered to be the most visited prevention programme. They also find that informal programmes for parents-to-be or young parents that are not directly linked to the upbringing and care of the child, but rather involve spontaneous exchanges of experiences and opinions between parents, such as sporting activities, are sometimes more efficient. According to them, parents feel less "bombarded" by instructions and therefore more able to share their fears, doubts, negative experiences, etc., and to help and support each other: "For me, for example, when I was pregnant, I liked to go to gymnastics classes for pregnant women. Something like that, when you're there, you manage to do that (open up a conversation about parenthood)." Similarly, the lay family support programme run by the local Social Work Centre is seen as a success, but the workers stressed that they mostly interact with children while their parents are less likely to be involved. As a positive practice in recent years, the experts also highlighted the legal regulation of violence, which describes in detail all forms of violent behaviour that are criminally prohibited in Slovenia, with the protection of children's rights being particularly regulated. As an example of a positive experience in working with parents individually: "It happens to me that the more people come for individual counselling and therapy, the more they say, okay, I came here for this purpose, I want to be a mother and I want to see what I have inside me. How all these experiences of mine, everything I've been through, how it's going to affect the child because I want to come to terms with it, process it so that I don't take it further, pass on the trauma to the child so that there's no intergenerational transmission of the trauma,..." The problem with this is that all the organisations that do individual work have a shortage of staff and lack of time to do it.

The experts' suggestions on how to find solutions in the area of families and parenting were quite broad and mainly emphasised the need to find a way to motivate parents-to-be and parents, in general, to start participating in various programmes and other activities: "The most effective approach is a preventive one,..." They believe that activities on interpersonal relationships and family should start in kindergartens and continue throughout school, because only then could people get used to the idea that such workshops are not bad and then it would maybe be easier for adults to participate in them: "If we started with one generation of really small, little ones, maybe they would learn this emotional regulation, and it would be easier to be a parent too" They also believe that the profession needs to do better in this area, in terms of paying more attention to solving challenges, increasing supervision of families who are having problems, especially when it comes to violence, and also strengthening the multidisciplinary approach: "Parents who do not have sufficiently developed parenting skills need more monitoring, more encouragement, more supervision." Here it was stressed that without the involvement of various institutions, it is impossible to detect problems in the family in time, and therefore the intervention of social work centres or even the police only occurs when the problems are already very serious. As part of the cooperation, the experts also see an opportunity to include psychosocial content and preparation for parenthood in the programme of the School for Parents, because in their opinion the programme focuses too much on the physical and medical aspects of childbirth and not enough on the changes that a child brings to the family, the partner relationship, etc.: "Maybe if they invited other experts, because right now they are the only ones doing the lectures, the health professionals. But if they had included a little bit more of the social and psychological aspect, it would have been different." As a final suggestion, they also mentioned a change in the legislation that would regulate the preparation for parenthood in more detail, or at least allow for better cooperation between institutions, especially when it comes to protecting the child and his/her rights: "But it is a fact that even from the schools, from the institutions, we also find out too late, because, of course, they also want to do everything, but in the end, they don't succeed".

The first question also raised the issue of what a successful prevention programme for parents should look like. In particular, they consider it important to work on family relationships: "to teach how, in what way the relationship between parents and children develops, builds, and how important good family relationships are good parent-child relationships,..." Here again, the experts stressed the importance of a multi-generational approach, i.e. that workshops on emotions, relationships, family, communication, etc., and a

focus on the development and strengthening of soft skills could already start in formal education. They also consider it essential that such programmes are not organised as lectures, but that the emphasis is on interaction, the exchange of experiences between parents and, above all, taking into account the actual needs and interests of the target group. Experiential learning is also considered to be more successful than just passively receiving information. They see an opportunity here in non-formal programmes, to which educational content on parenting and family relationships can be added on a more casual basis. They also see it as crucial that providers of prevention programmes place a strong emphasis on empowering parents, who often feel lost and do not need to be further blamed or attacked: "First tell the parent that they can do it and then they will be able to do it. Just empower them in a way that they can believe in themselves because then they will be able to do it..." They see an opportunity in empowering the individual's areas of strength and developing different approaches that will be effective for both parents and children.

For the prevention programme, the experts suggested 5 key topics that they believe should be processed before people become parents: emotions, parenting, relationships, the dangers of parenting and the parent's work on themselves. They consider it important for parents to learn how to express and manage emotions, especially negative ones, and to acquire the necessary skills so that they can teach emotion regulation to their children: "But even with young children, you have to start already with how to express emotions, because that's the problem then if you accumulate and you don't know how to express emotions safely, and of course you carry that into adulthood" In the context of education, the most important topics for professionals are learning about different parenting practices and models, and they find it important that these are not imposed. They also consider it important to emphasise the influence on the child, in particular, the influence of negative family patterns: "The content of the course should be about parent-child relationships, the relationship between the parents, the consequences of disordered parent-child relationships on the child..." They also consider it useful to learn about the developmental stages and the role of the parent in each of them. One of the experts, based on her personal experience, also highlighted Glasser's theory of choice, which she finds useful in education. In the area of relationships, experts consider it essential to prepare parents for the changes that a newborn baby brings to the family and, above all, to the partnership. Here they have left a wide range of topics, from strengthening relationships to caring for the partner relationship after the birth of the child, etc. They also consider it important to strengthen the parents' communication skills and how to have a conversation with their child. In this context, it is also important for them to develop the skills

of creating a safe space in the family and fostering a sense of security: "Security, to feel safe in the family, to know that it is a safe place for them" (E4-Q2a). Related to this are the dangers in parenting, and experts consider it important to inform parents-to-be and parents about the types of violence, abuse, addiction and trauma that can negatively impact the family. Parents should also be made aware of ways to prevent dangerous behaviours and of the consequences of dangerous family patterns or actions, both for the parents and for the child: "The aim would be for the parent to learn about the consequences of child neglect", to learn about techniques to prevent it" (E6-Q2b-c). Here, they pointed out that a parent's passivity and ignoring the child should be seen as a separate form of neglect and traumatising of the child, which, in their view, parents are not sufficiently aware of. A final important topic for the experts is teaching parents how to take care of themselves despite their new role. They believe that parents often forget about themselves and their other relationships and focus too much on the child, which leads to frustration and relationship problems. They see taking care of their well-being and working on themselves as of paramount importance during parenthood, or as one of the experts put it, "a good mother is a mother who is good. I mean, I have to be okay first, and then I have to find help for myself, or at least tell someone that I am in need, and then talk to someone about it, and it's easier".

Experts would like to see parents or parents-to-be improve their skills and acquire knowledge in the areas of communication, relationships, avoiding unhealthy family patterns and caring for the child itself. In terms of communication, they consider it important to know how to talk to children, to help them express their feelings and opinions and to be able to do so respectfully themselves: "Definitely to teach parents how to have a conversation. To be able to share with the children any problems that arise; they don't even have to be problems, they can be happy moments" (E5-Q2a-b) Above all, they feel it is important that parents are able to make time for this, or that they prioritise quality family time over technology and other commitments. They consider trust to be of utmost importance in relationships, but also point to the importance of knowledge about healthy relationships: "(parents should know) the difference between loving a child and spoiling them". They also want parents to be better prepared for the changes in relationships that a newborn baby brings, to be able to maintain the partnership relationship as well as to reorganise the family to welcome the new member. They also find it useful to strengthen their skills and knowledge on the prevention of abusive and violent behaviour towards children, which includes everything from recognising dangerous behaviours to prevention, consequences, etc. In this context, they consider it important to teach parents how to cope with stressful situations, negative

emotions and problems: "In my opinion, the main goal should be to teach them how to solve problems calmly... and: "So yes, to teach parents how to cope with that anger." A final important set of skills would be care and parenting, which is still considered the basis for any prevention programmes for parents-to-be and parents.

When it comes to the objectives of a prevention programme to prevent child neglect, they consider it important to first teach parents what neglect is, what its forms and consequences are, and how to prevent it. They hope that the result of such a programme could be empowered parents who, despite their own experiences, would be able to act differently and better in raising their children: "The goal should be to empower parents, to give them enough knowledge to equip them to raise their children well".

Similarly, there were suggestions for a programme to address child abuse, where experts would first rework the basics of violence and abuse (forms, consequences, prevention, trauma work). They consider it important for parents to be aware of their own negative experiences and to recognise the impact of these on their behaviour in adulthood and the possible consequences for their parenting. Particularly when it comes to violence in the sense of physical punishment, some parents still see it as unproblematic: "So yes, they still have this mindset that should have been overcome a long time ago". It is therefore essential that at the end of such a programme, parents are made aware of the importance of zero tolerance of violence, because only then can there be concrete changes in their parenting: "I will say this, I think they are quite aware, but we have not yet moved on from what was done before... So they need to be made aware of zero tolerance. " and further: "It's even more important to teach these parents how to do things differently". .As with abuse prevention, they feel it is important to emphasize empowering parents to be able to make changes.

In general, experts would therefore like to see such programmes implemented as early as possible, i.e. in kindergartens and schools. In this way, they believe, all family members can be equipped with certain skills and knowledge that would contribute to positive family dynamics and the identification of unhealthy family patterns. In family relationships, it is important for parents to be aware of the impact of their actions on the child, especially in times of family crises and divorce, where the child's needs and feelings are often overlooked: "In difficult divorce proceedings, it is important to separate the performance of parental tasks from the resolution of problems arising from the partnership relationship" , so they suggest that the aim here should be to teach some "healthy divorce" tips. In this context, they consider it important to strengthen parents' responsibility for their roles and to support them

in this: "Parents need to be guided to take responsibility for solving problems and crises, while at the same time being supported in their difficulties. " In this context, they also consider it important to strengthen the role of fathers, which is often still taboo or underemphasised, while women are often too wrapped up in the role of mothers, and thus forget themselves: "I feel like these young mothers, I don't want to judge anyone, but (they say) 'I just want to be a great mother', but yeah, you're a woman too, and you're a wife to someone, you're not just a mother." So they believe that emphasis should also be placed on separating the different roles of the individual who has become a parent. Finally, they consider it extremely important that, in addition to motivating participation in these programmes, active work should also be done on destigmatising the search for professional help.

When discussing the learning objectives, the topics, knowledge and skills already mentioned in the previous questions were reiterated, i.e. managing emotions, communication and active listening, establishing and maintaining good family and partner relationships, knowing and avoiding dangerous family patterns, understanding the importance of working on oneself, sharing parenting tasks equally between partners, coping with difficult situations, etc. They also highlighted the problem of too much information that parents of a first-born child receive in preparation for parenthood and then often feel lost: "There is also too much information and everything. We are bombarded with so much from all sides, violence this and violence that, and you don't know what to do anymore. And on top of that there is a lot of untrue information, now find your way around" . In this context, they feel that an important learning objective is that parents learn to listen to their parental instincts when caring for their child and follow their intuition and the actual needs of the child instead of the instructions of others: "... I wasn't even bothered about that, I just had the child, I looked at the child and I did what the child needed.". I mean, it's easier to do it with your second child, but I would still say there's enough information". In this context, we would also like to see stereotypes about the roles of mothers and fathers be broken down, and instead for partners to learn to communicate about this and to share parental responsibilities equally: "But it's also true that I still see these beliefs that if a woman has given birth, she shouldn't go anywhere, she shouldn't even leave the baby for 1 hour, or an hour and a half, to go to the gym."

In terms of partner relationships and possible problems, the experts believe that additional counselling could also be useful: "There are some couples who may have broken up, but just need some motivation to find that common ground again. "It was reiterated that a lot of time

needs to be spent on supporting and empowering parents, as each of them is going through some difficult family situations, and none of us knows the formula for a one-size-fits-all solution: "A family in crisis needs, above all, the support and relief of all family members,..."", so such programmes need to be a safe space where it is allowed to talk about problems and mistakes while accepting and understanding them: "Yes, to tell parents that it is okay, to allow yourself to make mistakes, let's say, but then also to know how to find another way, or if you can't do it on your own, then to seek help. "

Focus Groups Findings in Cyprus

Context

The Association for the Prevention and Handling of Violence in the Family held the focus group with experts on July 18th, 2023 at the Associations' Headquarters, in Nicosia. The participant's group consisted of 8 experts and it was conducted face-to-face. One kindergarten teacher, currently doing PhD in a relevant subject, six teachers, all of them with 15+ years of experience, and one participant with a degree in sociology and Social work. All participants were female.

The focus group lasted approximately 80 minutes. For the purpose of the analysis, it was agreed that the conversation would be recorded with the participant's permission. Two facilitators participated in the focus group, one was the leader who facilitated the discussion and the other was the researcher who made notes during the discussion.

Content of the focus group

Through the first question the Association wanted participant's perspective on what they consider, as experts, as the most effective intervention and skill-building approach that can lead to an improved parental style and behaviour, and strengthening the relationship between parent and child. An interesting finding is that all of the experts mentioned or agreed that the most effective intervention would be experiential workshop. The main point of their suggestion is that this learning process is structured in a continuous mode, and has a specific structure, divided in learning phases. For instance one participant stated, "It should be targeted and experimental, and not just one meeting, because this is how you get them involved, they can express themselves and feel comfortable to say what is on their mind. Therefore, it was suggested that is crucial that these parenting programmes should be

interactive and with continuity. During experiential learning the content is grasped by performing it, and thus is really helpful for parents to start carrying out simple tasks in their everyday family life. Respondents also highlighted that feedback through the workshops is crucial to create a positive change. Moreover, it was suggested that, at the beginning of the workshops, participants should complete a questionnaire that gives insights on what topics parents want to look into, and thus material can be added or modified.

Professionals also considered important for the relationship between parents and children to work on emotional intelligence. For instance, one participant added, “the workshop should enable parents to evolve their empathy, understand their actions...this is the most effective way, to train parents so they can handle various situations” . Empathy is also highlighted by other respondents (R1) on how this “is the most important... understanding the impact of their actions”. Therefore, experts highlighted the importance of developing empathy as a mean to enhance the emotional connection between parent and child, but also as a way of understanding the consequences that parents’ actions have upon their children.

Participants also mentioned that the workshops and the content should be adjusted to reflect the needs of the target group. For instance, if we know that a parent is violent then: “The programme, should be about understanding their actions and learn to handle their behaviour, so they can control their violent behaviour”. Therefore, participants pointed out that the learning objectives should be adjusted according to the target group in order to maximize the positive results.

It was also mentioned that targeted therapy should exist for those families that already face problems, such as: “If we are talking for a group of people that come from an abusive environment, and thus a pattern is created, then those people will need therapeutic approach”, suggesting a more intense approach. Another teacher points out that: “the state should find the vulnerable groups and closely monitor them”, arguing that in certain cases monitoring is essential and can help recognise the issues at an earlier stage.

Additionally, this question gave the opportunity to teachers to point out the gaps they see regarding parent-children relation, through their experience in schools and make recommendations accordingly. “The problem is that they don’t know how to be parents, and this is because the system (education) only teaches us other things. So, yes we need to go a step back and teach parents, how to be parents”. Overall, it was agreed, that in order to get the best outcome is better to work preventive, and thus a course for the parents of tomorrow should be included in schools. One participant mentioned: “And include this from an early

age, in kindergarten, introduce well-organized and structured courses in interpersonal relations, empathy and emotional intelligence”. Another participant mentioned that schools should have a module on how to be a parent. This could be helpful for both groups, parents and children. It was argued that: “the education system needs to reinforce this (parents training)”. The same participant goes on to add that this is crucial “because kids will be the parents of tomorrow”.

Therefore, it was highlighted that an ideal parenting programme should definitely include a course dedicated on parenting skills, and this can contain a course that can be viewed simultaneously by both, kids and parents.

In a similar manner, it was pointed out through the responds provided, that most parents do not acknowledge what it is considered a wrong behaviour. For example, one participant mentioned “when you are doing something wrong you cannot understand if it is abusive, while when you are observing someone else it is easier to spot that this is abusive”. Therefore, they suggest that it is basic for both children and parents to be taught what an abusive behaviour is. For example “When you come from an abusive environment then you think is normal to slap your kid”. Another teacher adds “do you know how many kids have committed suicide; it awful what can happen to a kid from the negligence of the state, because an abusive parent thinks that she/he is allowed to do so (abuse)”.

Likewise, participants mentioned that not many people know that neglect is a type of abusive behaviour. It was mentioned that most parents may know and recognise physical abuse but not emotional/psychological abuse. One teacher mentions, “I have seen several parents exercising emotional violence to their children”. This is also related to empathy and the skills that parents should be taught and should develop, but also linked to what children should be taught: “from an early age, kindergarten children should be taught empathy, caring, and emotional intelligence and not only “sterile” knowledge like we do in schools nowadays”. Therefore, experts concluded that it is crucial for a parental training to include a part devoted on what constitutes an abusive behaviour, one that will be detailed enough to describe all kind of abusive behaviours (physical, emotional, financial, sexual and digital). Additionally, professionals discussed the impact of social cognitive theory and focused on the positive impact of education. For instance one teacher mentioned: “If we agree that an abusive behaviour is learnt then we can argue that a kids and an adult can learn a new (positive) behaviour”, pointing towards the fact that change in behaviour is possible.

Participants also mentioned some of the obstacles they detected, that disturb the overall effort to improve some of the issues. For example the portrayal of the education system and the government in macro-level, according to experts, is that policies adapted are curative rather than preventative. Thus, teachers feel that they don't have the support of the state, and that the schools has a more firefighting role. For example, one teacher mentioned that "The (schooling) system will not help, the system will find an obstacle to the solution of the problem". Teachers also mentioned that the state does not provide sufficient training even for them. They also described instances where they didn't know how to handle a problematic situation and didn't know where to refer either the kid or the parents. "The first time I had a kid that confined me that his mother was abusive, I didn't know what to do, where should I report it? To the principle, to the police? Am I allowed to do so? Do I have a legal responsibility?".

However, through other instances professionals reached the conclusion that even when the school makes everything perfect if the situations at home does not change then the problems become more dangerous and thus parenting programmes seem necessary to bring the change needed. Experts concluded, that the schools currently don't have the infrastructure in order for the parenting skills programme to have an actual impact to children-parents relationship.

Another issue of major importance discussed during the focus group is participation at the workshops. Professionals noticed that when parenting workshops are planned, usually parents that participate are those that have less problems, and likewise those that have problems or problematic behaviours do not attend the parenting programmes. "It is the parents that care that attend, abusive parents will never step foot in this kind of programmes, unless they are forced". Thus, maybe the major issue raised is to convince and motivate parents who face difficulties to participate and understand how they will benefit from this.

Thus, participants discussed ways to motivate abusive parents to participate. They reached the conclusion that most of the times parents are not aware that their actions consist abuse, and that is precisely why it will be difficult to motivate them to change. Therefore, in order to eliminate the concern raised experts suggested that, the state, the school and the legislation system have to create a system of referrals.

For example it was suggested that in order to achieve best results it is necessary for schools, to cooperate with the local communities and the welfare, who will perform evaluations and refer parents and families to parenting programs. Another way to overcome this problem

was by a referral system through schooling: “placing a social worker in schools could help form the prevention, intervention and therapy”. Another teacher agreed that social workers or psychologists should be placed in schools. Through this system, professionals will observe and monitor kids and identify those that are facing problems and refer them, and their parents, to specific workshops. They also mentioned that maybe, it would be more sufficient to firstly (R5) “target” problematic areas and schools, and find them through the states’ statistics regarding high delinquent behaviour rates on neighbourhoods.

Experts also highlight that there is a lack of legislation on the subject. Thus, professionals agreed that parents with certain behaviours should be legally obliged to attend parenting programmes. Several participants mentioned that the state and the educational system should find positive ways to monitor families that are known to face difficulties of any kind. “The state should “target” people (vulnerable) who are dangerous, and as soon as they become parents send them directly to parenting school”) Another participant mentions: “I have seen the pattern, which is repeated, when you come from an abusive family, so definitely those people need therapeutic approach”.

Therefore, experts suggested that without the cooperation and involvement of other governmental institutions, parenting schools have limited power. A system of referrals to counselling is crucial in order to detect families that need immediate attention at an early stage and act as a “supervision” throughout the process, giving the possibility to provide help that can be targeted to each case.

Parental neglect

When discussing how to ideally mitigate parental neglect through parental training, participants focused on its content and the significance of adapting learning objectives according to the particular circumstances, and the importance of incentivizing parents.

Participants mentioned that it should be a priority in a parental training course to teach parents their responsibilities and duties. For instance, one participant argued that. “First of all, what are their obligations (towards their children’s) as parents”? Parental responsibilities are both a social and a legal matter and every parent should be made familiar with its meaning.

They also pointed out that it is important for parents to become acquaint with what is considered as an abusive behaviour, and what constitutes neglect. This was mentioned again

during the first question and thus definitions were considered as an essential part of the suggested context for the training courses. For example; “What we are missing, and I include myself, is the definition of abuse, what does it includes; what it is exactly”. It was a common belief that the majority of parents know about physical abuse and thus avoid being physically abusive, while other types of abuse, less recognised, seems to affect families. One respondent mention: “If it is something simpler than abuse, it might be something that they never thought about it (that it is bad) and when they hear about it they can reflect on it and change, but when it comes to more severe cases I think they know they are doing something wrong but they want to do it”. Another example mentioned was, “neglect is also about kids playing with electronics for 8 hours, straight after school until sleep time, with terrible consequences, but parents don’t seem to understand this.” The participant mentioned that sometimes this is because parents don’t know how to provide healthy and clear boundaries to their kids. Thus, it is essential to include a part that will be dedicated to the development of all necessary skills, such as establishing boundaries, reducing conflict, establishing effective communication and others.

Concluding, the content should include clear definitions of what constitutes abuse, in any form, parental obligations, legal and social but also material for the development of parental skills and how to provide healthy boundaries and clear rules.

Another point highlighted is how the thematic of neglect will have to embrace the particularities of each case. For example, the social worker mentioned that we have to check the background of the family: “what is the status of the persons that are neglecting their kids; do they work; what can they do; what mental capacities do they have;” While another participant adds: “I agree, but maybe they are neglecting their kids because they are too busy and don’t have time for their kids”.

Therefore, it was considered vital to examine the needs of each family in order to provide specialized support as a mean to maximize the possibilities for a positive change. Thus, participants suggested that the context of the training should be adapted to fulfil the needs of each group; if parents neglect their children because they prioritize work, or if the child apparel is not appropriate but because of parent’s low socioeconomic status, or if it’s because of low mental capacities, then the issues should be addressed differently.

The conversation revolved around the issue of motivation, and thus participants discussed how to incentivize parents who neglect their children to participate to skills building

workshop. The difficulty of incentivizing parents was summarized by one teacher, "What motives do you give to abusive parents; while it is obvious through their actions that they have some limitations (as parents)." Another expert argued that *"I think when it comes to intervention, only the parents who cares they will and attend"*. Some participants suggested that the solution was to make those workshops mandatory, or that we need to make a legal framework and create a counselling referral process for the parenting training, while other remarked that you might force someone to participate, but this cannot guarantee that they will implement any of the lessons learnt. The conversation around motivation basically concluded that the creation of different motives and incentives according to the background of each family is the best approach. For instance, one expert mentioned that (R5): "If it is regarding the experimental (workshop) their success will not depend on being mandatory, this will not be for the best. And yet I think it is ok for the abusive parent to be obliged."

Therefore, participants reached the conclusion that being obliged to take part will not create the necessary impact for all, and thus monitoring of the situations was suggested. One participant mentioned that monitoring is crucial because "a perpetrator will not listen, will not do so, there is no way they will change, it takes years to do so". For those reasons, the counselling referral system was agreed as the most appropriate way to handle the lack of motivation.

Experts concluded that the ideal solution is prevention through the schooling system from an early age. They mentioned that there needs to be a cooperation at schools between experts in the field, such as social workers and psychologists, and teachers, in this way we could have personalised, as well as group guidance. The teacher can do a debriefing for the experts: "In this way the teacher, schools' system and the experts will work as a team, and thus they will spot problems sooner and better, give motives to parents, either through intimidation, obligatoriness, or positive incentives, depending on each case". Another participant added that also through this "there should be a classification on the severity of each problem/case".

Parental Abuse

With reference to the learning objectives, outcomes and content of a parental training course to mitigate parental abuse experts discussed that it is very important for parents to learn the definition of parental abuse and what constitutes violence in all forms. Participants mentioned that usually the majority of people when thinking or trying to spot violent

behaviour they can recognise: (R4) “the obvious violent behaviour”, pointing towards physical abuse. Many people may know that there is a broad spectrum of abuse, but don't have a clear idea about it and what it can include.

During the discussion it was pointed out that some parents believe that they are setting boundaries through violence. An experts stated that: “many times parents think that hitting someone it's a way to set boundaries, thus the learning objectives should be how to set healthy boundaries.” Another teacher mentioned that the learning objective should be : “In what other ways can parents set boundaries, and clarify who is in charge”. Therefore, it was suggested that there should be guidance on what parents should do when they are out of control and when they think they don't know better and more efficient alternatives to violence. For example one participant mentioned that the material could include this; “it might be what to do if you think you are losing your patience”. This lead the conversation into another important parameter, the communication skills. It was suggested that as a form of behavioural therapy, parenting support programmes should emphasize on the development of healthy communication skills.

An important learning objective mentioned repeatedly during the focus group is to understand the consequences their actions have upon their children, short-term and long-term, whether is physical or verbal. It is important to learn the exact consequences of those actions in the long term: “I will cause this and that on my child in few years if I continue doing this”. Parents should also be taught that this is a learnt behaviour and by acting violently, in any way, you are teaching your children to do the same when they will become parents. One teacher adds to this “because we know that we are the biggest example for our kids” (R8). Apart from the consequences of their actions in their child's emotional and psychological health, participants mention that in some cases it would be useful if parents were told about the legal consequences of their actions: “legal consequences (are important) because for some people this might be it”.

An expert also highlighted that “even the parent that might seem perfect, has something to gain from this”. Through this discussion the participants suggested that there could be everyday-simple and small tasks included, where parents could learn to perform daily. One expert mentioned “This could be done through small daily tasks, on what to do or even what not to do....it may start from neglect, then this could be like every day I take care of my children's teeth, I make sure my kids are clean”. This is an important point because it suggests

that we should not emphasize only in severe form of violence but also on the small and daily details which can help improve their parental skills and maybe serve as prevention.

Experts also made another interesting suggestion regarding the type of the training material. They pointed out that sometimes during workshops and trainings, participants experience information overload, and that listeners lose interest because of this and the overly formal language used. Thus, they suggested the use of short videos as much more beneficial, especially in these cases. For example, one participant mentioned that through a short video you can illustrate how violent behaviour is imitated from children: “you can show a kid being violent and then see the story of his/her parents being violent” . Another expert added to this that “ with a video, in just five seconds you can be shocked and come to realize something important” (R1). Participants mentioned that the benefits of short videos are that they could engage the learner easier, grab their attention, and make it easier to realize the consequences of violence without any personal judgement. Therefore, participants supported that this “micro-learning” approach, which features short and focused lessons that can be designed to meet a specific learning objective is more effective.

Mental illness, divorce, substance abuse

With reference to the last question regarding the learning objective and the content of a parental training course that can ideally mitigate parental household challenges such as mental illness, divorce, substance abuse it is important to mention that the majority of the participants were teachers, not psychologists, and thus there were not aware on how to handle mental illness and substance abuse. They maintained that all three mentioned categories are different and need completely different approach. One participant explained this: “Those are three very different cases, mental illness and substance abuse definitely needs help from a specialist, whereas divorce is very common nowadays”. The expert also suggested that this is precisely why counselling after divorce, which can be resolved easier with guidance and “it is much more manageable”. The difficult part with the other two categories is that someone has to come in terms with the awareness of having a mental health problem or substance abuse, “the big issue is that they don’t realize it, even if you explain it to them” and another participant adds “Yes, its admitting/acknowledging it” that makes it difficult .

Regarding the issue of mental illness, experts seemed to be solely focused in depression because it is considered to be the most common mental disorder nowadays. It was

highlighted that the most important is for someone to acknowledge that they have a problem. For instance one expert adds “to begin with, a person must admit that he/she a mental disorder”. Therefore, to begin with, it is crucial for a parent to seek for help. “Even with depression, which is the number one mental illness of our times, not many people can recognize it” . For example one experts was describing a scenario where the woman with depression becomes isolated from everyone and her husband, and this led to divorce, which makes things more difficult while she is taking care of the children and thus her mental state becomes worse and it affects the rearing and the parenting, which might lead to an abusive behaviour (R5). Thus, it was argued that depression (R5) can affect the caregiving abilities of a parent and creates a feeling of disconnection from the children, where this may lead to a change of roles where the children is given the parental role, which is again an abusive behaviour.

Therefore, experts highlighted once more the important of structuring referral system in order to identify in an earlier stage the signs of depression before they can worsen the situation. “So again, we must go back to diagnosis and detection” (R5). They also pointed out that “it is crucial for the parent to acknowledge also that there is help available for them”.

With reference to divorces, participants and especially teachers mentioned how the rates of children of divorce are nowadays more than 50% in the classroom. They mentioned some examples of how the lack of communication between parents, after divorce, is affecting kid's performance in school. This led the conversation to the conclusion that those subjects can be easily handled through counselling and intervention. There are a lot to be done to minimize the negative effects of the divorce, and the work is much easier for divorce when compared to the other two household challenges .

For example, the training for parents after divorce could include a section dedicated to the development of co-parenting skills. Co-parenting is a new relation for the involved parties and thus there are a lot of new things to consider.

Experts expressed their deep concern regarding substance abuse, mainly because when a person is already addicted to drugs it is rather unlikely to seek for help, and thus will not participate in any training. One participant mentioned “They must seek for help, but first they must acknowledge and then ask for help”. Thus, when a person is in denial, it is impossible to seek help, even when offered. Participants also mentioned that substance abuse is different from the other two examples because it will take several counselling sessions for rehab and therapy.

Apart from denial, participants also pointed out that people with problems on substance abuse might be experiencing fear. For example one participants argued that addicts don't seek for help also because “they are afraid of losing their children” .Therefore, participants pointed out that even if they are in a place ready to seek help, sometimes they are afraid of losing their children from social services.

Common themes and concerns across the five countries

Across the five countries, 42 participants contributed to focus group discussions about a range of topics related to parenting programmes . A comparison of their findings indicates that all of the countries involved, emphasised the strong need to develop and largely promote preventive parenting programmes that can support parents to strengthen their relationships with their children and facilitate positive development. In Slovenia, it was acknowledged that professionals only meet families when their challenges or problems are already very significant. By then, it is already too late for prevention and these are only interventions often met with negative responses of the family. it was also pointed out – in most of the countries- that in order to get the best outcome from a parent-child relationship is would be better to work preventive: In this respect in France experts indicated that courses should focus on the challenges parents might face from the very beginning of parenthood and in Slovenia they reported that parenting programmes shall start from early stages, even before parenthood (training addressed also for parents to be)

In this direction experts from Greece also mentioned that it could be a good idea for parenting programmes to be mandatory as there are still many parents who are not sufficiently prepared for their new roles or who are confused by the overload of information. It is also true as mentioned in Cyprus that in most situations parents that participate are those that have less problems, and likewise those that have problems or problematic behaviours do not attend the parenting programmes. In this direction experts from Slovenia and Cyprus pointed out the lack of legislation on the subject and that it would be really beneficial that the state finds ways to better monitor families in need and “oblige’ them to follow parenting schools.

The role of schools in reinforcing the parent- child relationship was also emphasized in the Greek and Cypriot report. In the Greek report it was pointed out that a strong parent – school relationship and good cooperation between the two, can facilitate parents learn more about

the child behaviour with positive outcomes for the child. In Cyprus experts mentioned that schools should have a module on how to be a parent and that the education system needs to reinforce this (parents training) as kids will be the parents of tomorrow.

When discussing the ways of improving parents' lifestyle and behaviour with a view to strength the parent-child relationship there was also an acknowledgement that focus should be put on parental wellbeing which equals to child well-being. In this line encouraging parents to take care of their physical and mental well-being is also essential and was described as a need in the Spanish, Slovenian and Greek report. When parents are emotionally and physically healthy, they are better equipped to provide effective parenting. In this line, Slovenian experts mentioned that parents often forget about themselves and their other relationships and focus too much on the child, which leads to frustration and relationship problems

Further, teaching parents' good communication was also emphasized. In all five countries the importance of Parenting Communication Skills, including active listening and accepting and understanding what the child has to say, and giving full attention to children has been indicated as a key to improvement of parent- child relationship. In the Spanish case it was indicated that time and effort into building a strong, nurturing, and secure parent-child relationship is crucial. This includes spending quality time together, actively listening to children, showing affection and support, and engaging in open and honest communication. *Experts from Greece also pointed out that it would be a really good idea to mention specific practical examples of what exactly the words of good communication and acceptance mean.*

Professionals from Cyprus emphasized the importance of working on the notion of emotional intelligence with a view to enable parents to evolve their empathy and understand their actions. Teaching parents how to respond empathetically and supportively to their child's emotions is key. In France it was also stressed that understanding the emotional and intellectual development of children to facilitate better parent-child relationships is crucial. Emotion coaching was also mentioned by the Spanish professionals as an effective intervention and skill-building approach that can lead to improving parental style and behaviour. The technique focuses on teaching parents how to respond empathetically and supportively to their child's emotions. This approach can foster a secure attachment, emotional intelligence, and a deeper connection between parent and child.

Further in the Greek, Slovenian and Spanish report, healthy partner relationships, parenting and the family were issues that were also highlighted as issues that if regulated they could improve parental behaviour towards children. It is true that when parental conflict is frequent, intense and poorly resolved, it can have a significant negative impact on children's emotions. Therefore a programme that would enable parents to develop healthy and respectful working parent relationship so that they can continue to have positive relationships with their child/ren is really important.

Findings from Spain highlighted two theories that of used by experts could also lead to behavioural change and positive results in parent-child relationship. The Social Cognitive Theory emphasizes the learning that occurs within a social context and highlights the importance of self-efficacy, which refers to an individual's belief in their ability to succeed in specific situations and tasks. Self-efficacy plays a crucial role in motivating behaviour change. The second theory - Transtheoretical Model- TTM- has also been implemented in Spain to support behaviour change and parenting interventions. This model proposes that individuals go through a series of stages when changing behaviour. These stages include precontemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, and maintenance.

Referring and connecting parents with various counselling organisations, educational, institutional and other resources like playgroups and cultural or sports activities was also an issue recommended for an effective intervention and skill building in parental programmes

When it comes to the Identification of the needs for the creation of a course on Adverse Childhood experiences that incorporate the notions of neglect, abuse and household disfunctions (divorce, mental illness, addiction) most countries underlined the importance of developing a parent education programme which is mainly interactive and preventive in its conception. The overarching objective will be to prevent ACEs by providing parents with the knowledge, skills, and resources necessary to ensure the well-being of their children. Experts also pointed out that it is important for parents to become acquaint with what is considered neglect, abusive behaviour, and disfunction in the family. Helping parents understand the concept of neglect, abuse and family disfunction, where they begin, what they can produce and how to prevent them, is an important part of the education process. Definitions of these notions were considered as an essential part of the suggested context for the training courses. They also consider it important for parents to understand the

consequences of their actions on their children's' emotional and psychological health. Therefore, developing those skills will enhance the emotional connection between parents and their kids.

An interesting point was raised by the Greek experts who pointed out that when developing a programme for ACE it will be of utmost importance to first start by analysing what a healthy family environment is and what is a 'normal' family and discuss the family protective factors i.e. the characteristics or strengths of families, that act to mitigate risks and promote positive well-being and healthy development. Then continue with the definitions of ACE. Positivity, healing process and giving support to parents shall be the key objective. Another important issue raised by Cypriot experts is that parents should also be taught of their roles and responsibilities. Parental responsibilities are both a social and a legal matter and every parent should be made familiar with its meaning.

When discussing how to ideally mitigate parental adverse childhood experiences through parental training, the most common topics mentioned by all countries included: a) child developmental stages b) understanding of ACE (neglect, abuse, family dysfunction) definition, effects and prevention actions (with real-life examples) c) active listening, d); emotional intelligence and empathy e) self-care for parents, f) Education without punishment or reward and g) establishing and maintaining good partner relationships