



R.2.2 : Overview of gaps and inefficiencies in national parental programmes

Smart Parenting Erasmus+ Project/ Grant Agreement: n°2022-1-FR01-KA220-ADU-000087853



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Introduction

This report has been prepared 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, within the activity: A.2.1: Desk-based analysis at EU and national level and under the result no R.2.2 Overview of gaps and inefficiencies in national parenting programmes.

Parenting support programmes are typically 'directed at helping parents to develop more appropriate expectations of their children, to learn how to treat them with empathy and nurturance, and to use positive discipline instead of corporal punishment' (Barth 2009 p 99). They refer to a range of information, support, education, training, counselling and other measures or services that focus on influencing how parents understand and carry out their parenting role. The desired outcome is improvement in a range of child outcomes for example, internalising and externalising behaviour, cognitive or educational skills, social skills or pro-social skills, and health) through improving parenting.

Overall parental programmes are usually short in duration, referring to parents of children from infancy to adolescence and they support parents so that they:

- Get in touch with the psychosocial needs of their children at each stage of their development and their own within the family system.
- Develop the skills and tools they need as parents so that they can support them emotionally, effectively regulate relationships and behaviours between all family members and improve the parent-child relationship.
- Improve communication between all family members and also improve communication between parents and the school. It is one of the many ways in which parents are helped to carry out their parental role effectively.
- Inform and prepare them for more specific issues such as learning difficulties, developmental disorders, addictions, adolescence, sex education, divorce, etc.

However research data suggests that there is a gap in our knowledge on programmatic evidence on effective parenting programmes. There is tremendous variation in parenting programmes characterised by diverse program designs, focus, content and service delivery mechanisms thereby creating a challenge in delineation of effectiveness factors. It is also true that there is little systematic information on the scaling up of parenting programmes, their sustainability and integration into existing

systems of service delivery to reach the most marginalised and disadvantaged populations.

Within this spirit, it's important to review and analyse the gaps and deficiencies in the broad national processes of providing parents with parental support and with the specific knowledge and child rearing skills, and develop an inventory of parental programs that are currently available in the participating countries with a view to build on existing needs within the parental sector.

To this end partners proceeded with an extensive analysis of the gaps inefficiencies and needs in their national parenting support system explored diverse national parenting support programmes with a focus on educational parenting programmes and summarised each of the programme's content, target group, assessment methodology, including gaps, limitations and inefficiencies.

Main deficiencies identified through the desk-based research in the five participating countries – France, Slovenia, Spain Greece, Cyprus include:

- Insufficient post-program evaluation and support to sustain behaviour changes over the long term and assess effectiveness
- Parents are unaware of the existence of parent support programmes or there is lack of information about them.
- The content is too generalised and not tailored to the actual needs of users. The emergence of new challenges, such as the influence of technology in young people's lives, further complicates parenting and curricula should be adapted to the new era.
- Some schools provide parents-to-be with knowledge about the course of pregnancy, preparation for childbirth and the basics of caring for a newborn, but it focuses mainly on the physical and medical aspects and not the psychological changes that a new family member brings to the family and its relations.
- Low participation due to lack of dissemination and networking between relevant organisations
- Limited accessibility in rural areas and disadvantaged communities including marginalised populations. Ensuring that these programs are accessible and available to all parents, regardless of their socio-economic status, cultural background, or geographical location, is crucial
- Language and cultural barriers in reaching diverse populations
- Challenges in engaging hard-to-reach parents, especially those facing socio-economic difficulties
- There is no system that could facilitate organisations sharing the results, impact and overall experiences with the programme.
- The majority of participants in the parental training programmes are women. Encouraging the active involvement of fathers and co-parents in the parenting program is crucial for promoting gender equality and shared responsibilities
- Short programme duration and limited finances to support trainers

FRANCE

Gaps, inefficiencies and needs in French parental programmes.

According to a 2016 report of the Haut Comité de la Famille (HCF), a strong commitment to parenting support has been expressed in recent conventions between the state and the National Family Allowance Fund (CNAF) with the aim of promoting the well-being of children and parents. However, challenges in funding, including a decrease in state funding, have impeded the achievement of set objectives. Many associations and local authorities, which play a vital role in promoting parenting support, have reported difficulties in securing adequate funding. Efforts have been made to structure and define national standards for parenting support programs, but there are still gaps in knowledge and evaluation that need to be addressed for better decision-making. The development of support tools has been viewed positively, as they provide valuable assistance to families facing challenges in fulfilling their parental roles. The report emphasises the importance of continuing this momentum in future conventions, focusing on consolidating funding and improving information dissemination to potential beneficiaries. Parenting support initiatives are predominantly driven by associations and local authorities, as direct management by the state or the Family Allowance Fund is uncommon. To support and sustain these initiatives, it is necessary to establish sufficient and stable public funding that aligns with actual costs and is guaranteed over a reasonable period.

Further, the report suggests considering the creation of a "national public service" for family mediation and meeting spaces, particularly for activities dictated by judicial orders, to ensure coherence and stability in funding. Reducing territorial disparities in parenting support services is a priority, and the implementation of departmental family service schemes is seen as a means to achieve this. Effective coordination among various stakeholders at the national and local levels is essential to address these disparities and provide comprehensive support to families. The text also emphasises the importance of adequate funding, standardised approaches, and coordinated efforts to improve parenting support services in France and reduce disparities across different regions.

In addition, according to the National parenting support strategy 2018-2022 and the *Ministre des Solidarités et de la Santé*, family structures have undergone significant transformations in recent decades, with one in five children now living in single-parent families, primarily headed by mothers and often facing greater economic vulnerability. Moreover, one in nine children resides in blended families.

The emergence of new challenges, such as the influence of technology in young people's lives, further complicates parenting. While other individuals and institutions play a role in a child's upbringing, parents remain the primary educators and caregivers. Public support for parents, commonly known as "parental support," aims to

assist parents in fulfilling their crucial role by addressing their needs and preventing risks that may impact families.

By investing in early and universal prevention, parental support endeavours to tackle various risks, including educational disengagement, the negative consequences of family disruptions on children and parents, extremist ideologies, specific health issues in childhood and adolescence, delinquency, and domestic violence. A national strategy for parental support has been developed to guide coherent and effective actions by coordinating efforts between public entities and private initiatives. This strategy emphasises concrete objectives and addresses overarching issues such as gender equality, poverty prevention, and the specific challenges faced by vulnerable families.

However, the successful implementation of this strategy relies on coordinated efforts at both the local and national levels, bringing together departments, municipalities, family welfare agencies, and associations to adapt services to the unique needs of each region.

By supporting parents throughout their journey, from childbirth to their child's autonomy, parental support seeks to enhance parental capacities and promote positive outcomes for families.

French Parental programme

1st Parental Programme

Title: "Parenting for Positive Development" Program"

Source: Ministry of Education, local education authorities, and accredited organisations

Programme Description: Parenting for Positive Development is offered by Education institutions, community centres, non-profit organisations

Target group: Parents of children aged 0-12 years

Programme Content

- Understanding child development and age-appropriate expectations
- Effective communication and active listening skills
- Positive discipline strategies and behaviour management techniques
- Promoting emotional intelligence and resilience in children
- Building strong parent-child relationships and fostering attachment
- Promoting healthy eating habits and physical well-being

Programme evaluation methodology

- Pre- and post-program assessments to measure changes in parental knowledge, skills, and attitudes
- Participant feedback and satisfaction surveys

- Observational assessments of parent-child interactions
- Follow-up assessments to determine the sustainability of positive changes in parenting practices

Detected gaps, inefficiencies

- Limited accessibility in rural areas and disadvantaged communities
- Language and cultural barriers in reaching diverse populations
- Challenges in engaging hard-to-reach parents, especially those facing socio-economic difficulties
- Insufficient post-program support to sustain behaviour changes over the long term

Conclusions and recommendations:

- Expand the reach of parenting programmes to underserved areas through mobile units or online resources
- Provide multilingual and culturally sensitive materials to address the needs of diverse communities
- Strengthen partnerships with community organisations and social services to reach vulnerable families
- Enhance post-program support, such as support groups and online forums, to ensure long-term behaviour change and ongoing parental support
- Continuously evaluate and update the content and delivery methods of parenting programmes to meet evolving needs and address emerging challenges.

SLOVENIA

Gaps, inefficiencies and needs in Slovenian parental programmes.

With family support programs, we reduce inequalities in society, strengthen the position of vulnerable families and contribute to greater social inclusion of families and individuals. Above all, these programs are aimed at children, young people and their families, because taking care of the healthy development of our young generation is taking care of the whole society. The programs are long-term, free and widely accessible and are based on modern concepts of support and (self) help.

All mentioned Slovenian evaluated programmes are very important and offer quality content. Further Slovenia has a variety of programmes for parents, especially for different aspects of childcare - from parenting techniques, physical childcare, building and maintaining family relationships and so on.

However, there are some gaps detected in the programmes that are offered to soon-to-be and/or new parents. The first inefficiency identified is the lack of preparation from a psychosocial point of view. The School for Parents provides parents-to-be with

knowledge about the course of pregnancy, preparation for childbirth and the basics of caring for a newborn, but it focuses mainly on the physical and medical aspects and not the emotional ones. However, it is often stated in the literature that parents-to-be also need to prepare themselves for the relationship and psychological changes that a new family member brings to the family and its relations. Thus, it is strongly recommended to include psychosocial lectures as part of the school for parents and focus on the changes that the baby will bring to the couple and the family, how to build a relationship with the newborn, the emotional aspect of giving birth, etc. In addition, these programmes are centralised to major cities, which often puts them out of reach of people in rural areas. Thus, parents from the periphery of the country can only regularly afford to attend the antenatal school, which is the only programme that runs throughout the country, regardless of the number of participants.

Another problem with these programmes is that they are too generalised and not tailored to the actual needs of users. Although programmes should be designed to suit as many people as possible, the content is often too general and impersonal for the participants. Programmes are also often organised in a lecture format, which does not give participants enough opportunity to actively engage and interact with each other to express their real needs and interests.

A common issue for all programmes is the poor attendance. Especially programmes or activities that are free and voluntary often seem redundant to people. As a result, many quality programmes are not well attended or not visited at all. Linked to poor attendance, then, there is the gap between parenting preparation activities and programmes that are already emergency interventions. On another note, programmes such as the school for parents are relatively well attended, but then most parents stop attending other preventive parenting programmes until they are practically forced to attend one due to unhealthy family patterns. As a consequence, these interventions are then often quite unsuccessful, as the participants are forced to participate, while at the same time, they already have firmly established patterns and beliefs on parenting that are hard to change.

The final conclusion is that parenting programme providers need new methods to attract people and work on prevention before serious problems arise in families.

Slovenian Parental programmes

1st Parental Programme

Title: Family Centers: <https://www.gov.si/teme/centri-za-druzine/>

Training Programme Description. At the moment, there are 12 operating family centres in Slovenia. The organisations that implement the Family Centers program are different; it mainly concerns various associations, institutes or other institutions. The organisation must first apply to the public tender of the competent ministry. Based on the application form, it is then assessed whether it meets the various requirements (e.g. personnel, space, professional education, etc.). Only then does the organisation receive funds and permission to implement the content for a specific period of time. Family centres provide opportunities for social contact between different generations, help

strengthen the social roles of individuals, contribute to facilitating the reconciliation of family and professional life and provide opportunities for the exchange of good practices and positive experiences. In addition, family centres provide educational and practical workshops on developing skills in positive parenting, carry out holiday activities for children, and organise occasional childcare.

The activities are divided into 4 categories:

- school for parents (educational and practical workshops on the topic of developing positive parenting,),
- activities for children and young people (holiday activities for children and organised workshops, teaching aid, sports activities, etc.),
- individual or group counselling (with the aim of improving the ability to manage emotions, building a positive self-image, learning to solve various problems, etc.),
- informal socialising.

Family Centers provide all of their services free of charge to users.

Target group: The three main target groups are:

- children,
- adolescents or young people,
- parents (both young parents and parents of teenagers).

However, the Family Centers are open to anyone, who is willing to obey the rules of the informal socialising area and want to take part in the activities.

Programme Content

The implementation of the programme aims to offer children and young people a variety of learning opportunities for their holistic development and the acquisition of appropriate social skills and competencies for controlling emotions, positive self-image and constructive solving of various problems. At the same time, the aim is also to empower their parents for positive parenting, with the help of which they will have a significant impact on the quality of family life and the constructive resolution of interpersonal conflicts.

Programme evaluation methodology

In principle, the effects of the program are visible only in the long term, which makes an in-depth evaluation of the program's impact quite limited. However, at the end of the activity or the whole programme, the group leaders evaluate the activities performed to ensure quality cooperation with the participants and eliminate any problems.

As this is a national project financed by the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, we also supervise the performing organisations regularly. Each organisation must prepare 2 financial reports and one substantive report on an annual basis. Likewise, activity providers must have 4 supervisions per year, which are documented in the aforementioned reports. Reports are written according to a uniform template prepared by the ministry. The Ministry also carries out supervision in the form of unannounced inspections and offers remote assistance and support throughout the duration of the activity. Since the family centres project is only

approved for a certain period (mostly for 5 years), the final evaluation has a great impact on the re-approval of the project at the organisation's level.

Detected gaps, inefficiencies

The biggest perceived problem is the inadequacy of the indicators to the area in which each family centre is located. This means that there is a predetermined number of hours for activities. Thus, it is sometimes difficult in practice to coordinate the activities that are required and at the same time satisfy the needs of the users. In our case, the biggest demand is for individual counselling, but because of the limitations, there is no way to fit everyone into the schedule. On the other hand, some other activities are not as visited, and we need to put a lot more effort into promoting them because of it. Another big issue is the lack of information sharing among the 12 operating Family Centers. The project does not envisage any networking and exchange of experience between centres in Slovenia. Regarding this, the contractors have already contacted the competent authorities, but so far there have been no changes. Because of this, each centre has worked for itself until now, but from 2022 the contractors try to connect in self-organisation and exchange relevant information in annual meetings or via email. The time limitation of the project at the local level is also a problem. Since the activity is not systematised, it may happen that the project ends after a certain period and is no longer continued. This can have a negative impact on users who are just getting used to visiting the centers, and then their activities are suddenly disabled.

Conclusion

Our conclusion is that the project is still one of the better and more important ones at the national level, as it enables free soft content that is otherwise inaccessible to many. This is also helped by regular checking and reporting on the progress of our work, which ensures higher quality and efficiency of activities.

2nd Parental Programme

Title: The Strengthening Families Program« – SFP (prevention program)

<https://strengtheningfamiliesprogram.org/>

<https://www.zveza-kza-slovenije.si/program-zmorem-in-zelim-se-imeti-rad/program-krepitev-druzin/>

Programme Description: The program was developed by Dr Karol L. Kumpfer in 1982 in the USA. It has since been adapted and is being implemented in various organisations around the world. In Slovenia, it is mainly carried out by social welfare institutions, for example, centres for social work, NGOs etc. The group leaders need to complete training before starting the program and obtain the appropriate certificate. The Strengthening Families Program (SFP) is an evidence-based family skills training program for high-risk and general-population families that is recognized both nationally and internationally. The program includes lectures, presentations, discussions, role-playing, audio-visual materials, homework, games, children's play, parent's play, supervised exercises, etc.

Implementing the Strengthening Families Program involves the following activities:

- Hiring and training at least four effective group leaders, two to run the children's groups and two for the parent's groups, and a program or site coordinator.
- Recruiting families by stressing improvements in family relationships, parenting skills, and youth's behaviours and grades
- Using creative recruitment and retention strategies matched to the needs of participating families, such as special incentives, family meals, transportation, and child care.
- Implementing the full Strengthening Families Program once per week for 14 weeks or in alternative formats, such as twice per week or at retreat weekends.
- Eating meals together as a family, attending separate parent training classes and children's skills training classes and then in the second hour participating in structured family activities including practice sessions in therapeutic child play, family meetings, communication skills, effective discipline, reinforcing positive behaviour and planning fun family activities together.
- Conducting a needs assessment and evaluating the program using standardised family, parent, and child outcome measures and using the outcome and process measures for continuous quality improvement¹.

Most meetings follow the same schedule:

- Beginning with a meal (all together),
- Doing separate activities with parents and children (following the written programme),
- Joint conclusion of the meeting.

Target group

The original SFP was developed to improve behavioural problems in 6 to 12-year-old children of alcohol or drug abusers. It has been culturally adapted and tested with urban and rural families with elementary school-aged children. SFP has proven successful with high-risk children whose parents are not drug or alcohol abusers and with families of diverse backgrounds. Separate training manuals have been developed for African American families, which contain the same basic content as the original SFP but have culturally appropriate pictures and language with some specific information regarding African American families and communities. SFP has also been modified for Asian/Pacific Islanders in Utah and Hawaii, rural families, early teens in the Midwest, and Hispanic families. Currently offered to court-ordered parents, homeless families, and parents with children in protective services. Participation in the program is voluntary. In Slovenia, the program is intended for families with younger and elementary school children who have found themselves in difficulties and do not know how to move on and for families who would like to strengthen their relationships even more and empower themselves to continue living with their growing children more easily. The program, therefore, has 2 specific target groups:

- parents,
- children, younger than 6 years,
- children, aged 6 to 12.

¹ However, it is advised, that each group of families is different and that the group leaders must adapt to the specific needs and interests

- adolescents, between 12 and 18 years.

The activities from the manual for the children are adapted to their age group and their needs.

Programme Content

The goal of the program is to listen to the children, play with them, and know how to set healthy limits and rules in the family.

The Strengthening Families Program is designed to achieve the following goals and objectives:

- Decreased use and intention to use tobacco, alcohol and illicit drugs.
- Decreased children's behaviour problems.
- Increased children's social and life skills.
- Increased family cohesion, communication and organisation.
- Increased family cohesion, communication and organisation.
- Lowering of risk factors and increases in resilience, assets, and protective factors

The main topics of the activities are positive family relations, family rules,

- mutual respect,
- active listening,
- expressing emotions and thoughts,
- communication,
- spending quality time together

Programme evaluation methodology

The Strengthening Families Program has been evaluated in as many as 15 different research studies by independent evaluators and has had many positive results (more on that on their website). The Strengthening Families Program staff also offer grant writing and program evaluation consultation services including proposal and grant writing, community and family needs assessments surveys and focus groups to determine needs. Process evaluation materials and data analysis are available with optional site visits, fidelity checklists, or reviews of session videotapes to critique fidelity and implementation quality. Outcome evaluation testing batteries can be custom tailored to the needs of the agency and include a pre-test, post-test, and booster session follow-up test. Outcome data analysis with written reports is also available. On the individual level, organisations normally do an oral evaluation with the participants at the final meeting and encourage them to speak up about the positive and negative aspects of the program.

Detected gaps, inefficiencies

The gaps or issues the LU Lendava encountered during the time of programme implementation:

- The programme needs to be adapted for the cultural, gender, local, age and other specifics of a group. This is why the group leaders must be very adaptive and creative, especially in the children group.
- Organisations might face situations where parents and/or children had some psychological diagnosis, and therefore were not able to follow all the activities and take part in them.
- On the national level, there is no system that would keep track of all the organisations who enrol on this programme. Neither is there an established connection between group leaders, where they could share the results, impact and overall experiences with the programme.

Conclusion

From the experience of the LU Lendava organisation and the surveys done so far about the SFP on the national and international levels, it can be seen that the programme is very useful and beneficial. The whole organisation of the programme activities (starting with a meal, being in a non-formal environment etc.), gives the group leaders and the participants a chance to connect in a safe, different environment, that they are mostly used to (for example, the social work centres, school or other offices, clinics etc.). This way, the workflow is a lot more relaxed and allows everyone to open up about personal topics. It is also a great way for people, who are labelled as problematic or dysfunctional by the general society, to see that there are a lot of families who face similar or completely different challenges and yet find ways to overcome them. This helps them feel more confident and empowers them. However, on a national level, we would definitely recommend the group leaders form a national group of implementers of the SFP, where they could exchange experiences, recommendations and advice. They would also be able to keep track of all the implementers of the program on a national level and therefore be able to compare the results.

3rd Parental Programme

Title: School for parents

https://www.zd-lj.si/zdli/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=103&Itemid=1142&lang=sl

Programme Description:

This is the most widespread activity in the field of preparation for parenthood in Slovenia. It is carried out by public and private healthcare institutions. The lectures are taught by a gynaecologist, a paediatrician, an anaesthetist, a midwife and a physiotherapist.

In Slovenia, young parents are encouraged to attend a Parent School during pregnancy, which is part of the national healthcare services. Attending is voluntary. Once the baby is born, families are offered the help of a visiting nurse who teaches young parents the basics of caring for a newborn at home. This is also part of the national healthcare services.

The focus of these programs is primarily on physical preparations for parenthood; i.e. first preparation for childbirth and later caring for the child. The program is implemented mainly in the form of lectures and workshops.

Target group

School for parents or maternity school is intended for pregnant women and their partners in preparation for childbirth, the postpartum period, and the care and nutrition of the newborn. Participation is voluntary; however, it is advised for both partners to attend, especially if the partner wants to be present at childbirth.

Programme Content

The topics of the program are:

- anatomy and physiology of the female genital organs,
- the role and importance of the pelvic floor muscles during pregnancy,
- breastfeeding,
- giving birth,
- pain relief from childbirth,
- newborn and baby care,
- psychological preparations for childbirth and the postpartum period.

In some institutions, pregnant women also have organised regular exercise to maintain fitness, mobility and maximum aerobic capacity, while also adopting techniques of relaxation, breathing, Kegel exercises and correct body posture. Also, some institutions have the possibility for individual counselling as part of the Parent School. But at the same time, every pregnant woman is encouraged to have monthly check-ups with her personal gynaecologist, where she can also have personal counselling with them

Programme evaluation methodology

The purpose of the school is to increase the health education and enlightenment of pregnant women and their partners. But we found nothing about an evaluation methodology that they use.

Detected gaps, inefficiencies

We believe that the most significant gap of this programme is that the main focus is on the physical preparation for birth and childcare. However, less attention is paid to the psychological aspect of parenting. For that kind of program, parents usually need to seek private and usually expensive programmes for that kind of program

Conclusion

We believe that this type of program is necessary and very useful during preparation, especially when it comes to the first pregnancy. The big advantage is that it is a free program or a service available to future parents as part of basic health insurance. In the future, we would like to see them place more emphasis on the psychosocial aspect of preparing for childbirth and then on parenthood itself because, in our opinion, these topics are not covered sufficiently.

SPAIN

Gaps, inefficiencies and needs in Spanish parental programmes.

In Spain, one of the key challenges is ensuring that parenting support programs are accessible to all segments of the population, including those in rural areas or with limited resources.

Insufficient funding for these programs also lead to a lack of resources, inadequate training for facilitators, and reduced outreach efforts. To address this challenge, it is essential for policymakers and stakeholders to recognize the importance of parenting support programs and allocate sufficient funds to support their effective implementation. Adequate funding enables these programs to reach more parents, improve the quality of training, and ensure their long-term viability. Additionally, public-private partnerships and collaborations with NGOs can also be explored as potential avenues to secure additional funding and support for the programs

Parenting support programs may sometimes use outdated or ineffective training materials that don't align with the evolving needs of modern parents. To address the issue of outdated curriculum, it is essential for the program administrators to regularly review and update the training materials. This can be achieved through collaboration with experts in child development, psychology, and family studies, as well as feedback from parents who have participated in the program.

Additionally, incorporating interactive and technology-enhanced learning methods can make the training more engaging and relevant to modern parents. Regular evaluations of the program's impact and effectiveness will also help identify areas that need improvement and ensure that the curriculum remains up-to-date and aligned with the needs of parents and children in contemporary society.

Inefficiencies can arise also if there is a lack of coordination and integration between various support programs, leading to duplicated efforts or gaps in coverage.

The effectiveness of parenting support programs depends on parents' awareness and willingness to participate. Insufficient outreach and promotion can hinder their success. To address limited outreach and awareness, program administrators can develop a comprehensive marketing and communication plan to promote the programs through various channels, including social media, websites, and community centres; can collaborate with schools, healthcare providers, and community organisations to reach out to parents who may benefit from the programs; can provide informational materials in multiple languages and ensure cultural sensitivity in the program's content and approach; can conduct workshops or awareness campaigns in local communities to educate parents about the importance of parenting support and the specific benefits of the programs.

Some programs may not adequately address the needs of diverse family structures, cultural backgrounds, or parenting styles. The programs should be designed with cultural sensitivity in mind, recognizing and respecting the diverse cultural backgrounds of the participants, gender equality, parenting children with special

needs, engaging marginalised community and emphasis on empathy and non-judgment.

Spanish Parental programmes

1st Parental Programme

Title: Educar en Familia- Parenting Education Program

<https://www3.gobiernodecanarias.org/medusa/edublog/ceipeltablerogc/2022/04/29/educar-en-familia-2022-programa-formativo-para-familias/>

Programme Contents: It offers workshops and training sessions for parents, focusing on various topics such as effective communication, positive discipline, emotional intelligence, and fostering children's self-esteem.

Programme evaluation methodology: The evaluation of the seminars/training courses/workshops is carried out online/offline, after the end of the training course and aims to assess the satisfaction of the participants in terms of finding the subject useful or meeting their expectations in everyday life. The evaluation uses an anonymous self-administered evaluation questionnaire

Detected gaps, inefficiencies: Engaging fathers and co-parents: Encouraging the active involvement of fathers and co-parents in the parenting program is crucial for promoting gender equality and shared responsibilities. Efforts should be made to design programs that engage and support the participation of fathers and co-parents.

Multicultural approach: As Spain is a diverse country with various cultural backgrounds and languages. It is important for the parenting program to consider this diversity and adopt a multicultural approach, taking into account the unique needs and cultural perspectives of different communities

Conclusions and recommendations: It is free of charge, and each National Autonomic Region from Spain has their own freedom to establish the content, duration and modality for the training courses/ workshops/seminars.

2nd Parental Programme

Title: Aprender juntos, crecer en familia”- “Learning together, growing as a family”

https://fundacionlacaixa.org/documents/10280/198839/5.caracteriticas_del_programa_es.pdf/75aadf0e-174a-4c4c-a525-8000122dc44b

Programme Content: This program focuses on promoting the development of parents' abilities to the care and education of their children, accompany them in this task and

offer them collaboration and advice. In short, its purpose is to contribute to family well-being through affection, understanding and communication. The program is also aimed at children. The program wants to invite them to reflect on their needs and behaviours, and contribute to its development from the starting point of the family: the basic nucleus that will allow them to consolidate their own growth process and access new forms of relationship with others.

Programme evaluation methodology: The evaluation of the seminars/training courses/workshops is carried out online/offline, after the end of the training course and aims to assess the satisfaction of the participants in terms of finding the subject useful or meeting their expectations in everyday life. The evaluation uses an anonymous self-administered evaluation questionnaire.

Detected gaps, inefficiencies: The limited accessibility and outreach of parenting programs, particularly in reaching diverse and marginalised populations. Ensuring that these programs are accessible and available to all parents, regardless of their socio-economic status, cultural background, or geographical location, is crucial. Long-term support: Parenting is an ongoing process, and parents may benefit from long-term support beyond the duration of a program. Establishing mechanisms to provide ongoing support, such as follow-up sessions, online resources, or peer support networks, can help parents maintain their skills and continue to receive guidance as their children grow.

Conclusions and recommendations: Learning together, growing as a family" is considered as an experience didactics, in three differentiated phases: sessions dedicated to parents, sessions for children, and joint sessions aimed at sharing experiences, putting into common points of view, to communicate and to work together to improve dialogue and coexistence. It is free of charge for the participants.

3rd Parental Programme

Title: Escuela de Padres – Parents School

<https://www3.gobiernodecanarias.org/medusa/proyecto/38003185-0001/2023/01/16/escuela-de-padres-online/>

Programme Contents: Escuela de Padres is often organized by schools, educational authorities, and community organizations and is a series of educational sessions and workshops aimed at providing parents with knowledge and strategies to support their children's development.

The program covers topics such as

- child behaviour management,
- improving parent-child communication,
- promoting healthy habits, and
- fostering positive relationships within the family.

Programme evaluation methodology: The evaluation of the seminars/training courses/workshops is carried out online/offline, after the end of the training course and aims to assess the satisfaction of the participants in terms of finding the subject useful

or meeting their expectations in everyday life. The evaluation uses an anonymous self-administered evaluation questionnaire

Detected gaps, inefficiencies. The parenting program should be upgraded periodically in order to be adaptable to meet the diverse needs of parents. Some parents may require specialised support, such as those with children with disabilities or developmental challenges. It is important to have programs that cater to these specific needs and provide relevant strategies and resources.

Integration of evidence-based practices: The program must be based on the latest research and evidence-based practices is essential. Programs should be regularly updated to incorporate new findings in child development and parenting techniques to provide parents with the most effective strategies.

Conclusions and recommendations: It is free of charge, and each National Autonomic Region from Spain has their own freedom to establish the content, duration and modality for the training courses/ workshops/seminars.

GREECE

Gaps, inefficiencies and needs in Hellenic parental programmes.

In Greece the systematic training of parents began with the operation of the first parents' school in Athens, in January 1962, by a private initiative. Thus, around 1962, the first parenting school was founded for the first time in Athens according to the French standards on the initiative of psychologist Maria Chourdakis. This was followed by the establishment and operation of other parental programmes. Today, parent education programmes are primary prevention programmes and concern the information of parents and the formation of their attitude and behaviour. These two directions are the directions defined by the International Federation for Parent Education (FIEP). According to them, the parenting schools come to help with the problematic psychology of parents and children in two directions a) the education of parents or prospective parents about the stages of child development and the needs of each age and b) the improvement of the psychology of parents and the relations between spouses. The format used by most programmes is that of group work.

Most parent support programs are implemented in many regions of Greece by a wide variety of public and private institutions such as local authorities (Municipalities, Prefectures), the Prevention Centers of the Organization Against Drugs (OKANA), the

National Centre for Social Solidarity, the Panhellenic Association of Parenting Schools, the Christian Youth Union (CHEN), etc.

The General Secretariat for Vocational Training and Life Long Learning, IDEKE and INEDIVIM used to design and provide a series of relevant national programmes: parenting schools, intergenerational programmes and actions, as well as school-family cooperation programmes. Parenting Schools were free training programmes supported by the state that took place in all counties/municipalities of the country and aimed to educate and support every mother and father in the complex role of a parent, as shaped by modern socio-economic conditions. These programmes were the most known and recognized institutional provision of parent education in Greece but they are not offered anymore. However, we will analyse them as they have been running for many years 2003-2013 and have a lot of data and information to provide regarding their objectives, content and gaps.

The Prevention Centres of the organisation against drugs (OKANA) in the framework of their preventive role, also offer support to families in order to strengthen the parental role and improve communication². OKANA also provides free psychosocial services to addicted parents and their children, regarding their parental role, the challenges and difficulties that arise from it, while the staff ensures the strengthening of their mental resilience³.

In addition, The National Centre for Social Solidarity (NCSS) which is supervised by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, offers free training programmes for prospective foster and/or adoptive parents⁴

Private organisations, mainly non - governmental organisations and associations for example, the Panhellenic Association of Parents' Schools which is a branch of the "International Association of Parents' Schools". International Federation for Parents' Education (Federation Internationale pour l' Education des Parents) also offers parental education under payment.

Ad- hoc seminars are also organised by the Municipalities which also offer free psychological support for parents in need.

In Greece the data available on the effectiveness of all these programmes is very limited. Most of the research results that remain unpublished relate to the evaluation of the programmes by parents through the completion of feedback questionnaires for each programme.

Studies that have used weighted scales and questionnaires have shown that:

² <https://www.okana.gr/el/services/prolipsi/kentra-prolipsis>

³ <https://www.okana.gr/el/services/therapeia/programma-goneikis-stirixis-kai-prostasias-exartimenon>

⁴ <https://www.anynet.gr/pubnr/Training>

- Although parenting programmes have been operating in Greece since 1962 and are implemented in several municipalities, clinics, and prevention centres only 4% of parents report having attended one either for preventive or therapeutic purposes. (Konstantinidis, 2011). Thus we can see a really low attendance rate mainly deriving from the fact that many parents are either unaware of the existence of parent education programmes or there is lack of information about them. It may also be that even if some parents have heard of them do not consider it necessary to attend them, as it is not something their own parents did, or because they consider parenting as a part of family life that does not need "instruction manuals".

- In parent programmes, the vast majority are mothers, with over 90% attending. (Konstantinidis, 2011) Tsirogiannidou, E. & Platsidou, M. 2011). In this direction the state is called upon to develop more targeted and strategic intervention and prevention programmes accessible to both parents according to their needs

- According to Konstantinidis, the study program he developed contributed to the mental health of parents by significantly improving their personality traits related to emotional instability and manifestation of physical symptoms especially in stressful situations. It significantly reduced symptoms and behaviours that prevent children from living harmoniously with themselves and others. (Konstantinidis, 2011)

- Even when a parent is positive, they will encounter difficulties such as financial costs, access to the venue where the programmes are held or difficulty in finding the time to attend the programme regularly. Finally, they will need to spend considerable time finding a reliable program that has been evaluated and is able to help them develop their parenting role and be a meaningful help to their children.

Hellenic Parental programmes

1st Parental Programme

Title: School of parents

<https://www.inedivim.gr>

Target Group: Parents

Programme scope: The project scope was to:

- Improve communication within the family
- Improve parents' knowledge of the psychological, social, spiritual and other needs of children at each stage of their development
- Develop skills for the early diagnosis and management of their children's difficult behaviours
- Improve communication between parents at school

- Encourage parents to participate in school activities and to cooperate with school teachers in order to help their children more effectively
- Acquire specific skills so that they can cope with the demands of nursery, primary, secondary and high school
- Support cooperation between teachers and parents
- Provide counselling and health education to the families of gypsy, Muslim, migrant and immigrant families
- Inform parents about health issues for themselves and their children
- inform parents about the ways of sex education according to the age of their children
- Understanding the place of older people in society, the family and the community
- to inform parents about ways of protecting their children from the use of information and communication technologies and to suggest ways of using them in a pedagogical and rational way
- Improve the management of family spaces
- Provide counselling and health education to families of vulnerable social groups
- providing information and psychological support for parents of people with special needs

Programme Content:

- The family in modern times, 50 hours in duration
- Health and the family, 50 hours
- Interpersonal relationships, 25 hours
- Development in old age, 25 hours
- Child and new technologies, 25 hours
- Household economy in the modern Greek family, 25 hrs.
- Teacher-family cooperation, 25 hours
- Psychological support and health education of vulnerable social groups 25 hours
- Counselling of parents of children with special needs, 50 hours
- 25 hours on stereotypes and discrimination in the family

Detected gaps, inefficiencies. The main problems trainers (psychologists) identified include the following elements:

- low payment for trainers and managers
- large number of participants per section
- absence of logistical infrastructure
- lack of secretarial support
- short duration of programmes.

-Inappropriate venues for the programmes (insufficient or no venues), (Insufficient or no heating). This problem arises as the programmes were often hosted in school buildings. As the eligible costs do not include heating is not provided for in the eligible costs, it does not work during the programmes.

2nd Parental Programme

Title: Training for prospective foster parents (national programme offered by EKKA)

<https://www.anynet.gr/pubnr/Training>

Target Group: Prospective foster parents

Programme scope: The aim of the educational and training programme for prospective foster parents is to prepare parents to be able to cope with the care of infants, children and adolescents, contributing to their physical, cognitive, emotional and social development, as well as to prepare them to deal with any problems that may arise in the course of fostering. The maximum number of trainees per training programme does not exceed 20 and is not less than 4. Each programme is 30 hours long and covers 6 thematic modules that will help future foster parents to meet the challenges of parenting children and adolescents in modern times.

Introduction: The institutional framework for the protection of minors in Greece and the EU. The Charter of Rights of Children.

Thematic Section B: Expectations of foster parents. The basic needs of children for their development. Physical and mental development of infants, toddlers, children and adolescents.

Topic C: Adversities in family life and their effects. Issues of neglect, abandonment and separation. Imprints of painful experiences and post-traumatic stress on the behaviour of children in foster care. Mechanisms of protection, psychological resilience and recovery.

Thematic Unit D: Care of children with special needs, in particular health, disability, experience of abuse, delinquency, etc. Intercultural issues.

Module E: Importance of communication and cooperation between child and foster parents and their family of origin. Rights and obligations of the foster family.

Module F: Understanding the parental role and strengthening the protective factors in the family environment and strengthening relations with family members. The perspective of the child's relationship with the foster family. The support of the foster family by the supervisory body and the network of social services.

Evaluation - Participant Satisfaction Questionnaire

The above-mentioned thematic modules are specified according to the specific characteristics of the minors to be placed in foster care (e.g., infants refugee children,

children with multiple disabilities etc.) and form the basis of training in a new and largely unknown field for the candidates.

The training is based, in addition to lectures, on small group work, case analysis, role-playing, screening of relevant films and the use of various art forms that can serve as triggers for exploring dysfunctional assumptions. regarding fostering and adoption, narratives and experiences. The aim of the programmes of these, is to cultivate the Candidate Foster Parents through experiential activities, knowledge, skills and abilities and a positive attitude towards the special role they are called upon to play.

Programme evaluation methodology . The final evaluation is carried out at the end of the programme and aims to investigate the achievement of the objectives

objectives of the programme, its effectiveness or any modifications that may improve it in the future improvements.

The evaluation uses an anonymous self-administered evaluation questionnaire. The questionnaire is used to investigate whether the objectives and needs of the trainees are met, the satisfaction of the participants, the competence of the trainers, the use of a variety of educational techniques and supervisory tools and, at the organisational level, the duration, location and

The results will be exploited in order to improve the training programme and to improve the quality of the training.

The results will be used to improve the training programme and to highlight its strengths and weaknesses that need improvement and

3rd Parental Programme

Title: Parents Schools

<https://sxolesgonewn.gr/>

Organisation: Panhellenic Parent Education Groups' Association, Branch of the International Federation for Parent Education (F.I.E.P.)

Target group: Parents and Future Parents

- Group with children of infant, toddler and preschool age (0-6 years old).
- Parenting School Group with school-age children (6-12 years old).
- Parenting School Group with teenagers (12-18 years old).
- Prospective Parents' School Group

Programme Content: PARENTS' SCHOOL TEAMS FOR PARENTS WITH CHILDREN OF INFANT, PRE- SCHOOL and PREPARATORY AGE (0-6 years old):

Basic needs of the infant and toddler: physical, psychological. Stages of psychomotor development, walking, speech. Mental needs of the infant. The discovery of the ego and the first personality crisis. The socialisation of the infant. Kindergarten, nursery school and its importance. The child's sleep. Children's fears. The importance of play.

SUBJECTS OF PARENTS' SCHOOL GROUP WITH SCHOOL AGE CHILDREN (6-12 years old):

Is the child ready for school? The child's preparation for school and the role of parents. The child's school life and integration into the school group. Basic needs of the school-age child. Leisure time and extracurricular activities. The child's home study and the role of parents. Parents' cooperation with the school.

SUBJECTS OF PARENTS WITH ADOLESCENTS (12-18 years old):

Preadolescence and adolescence from a biological and psychological point of view. Characteristics of adolescence. How adolescents see their parents, themselves, school, society. How adults view adolescents. Second personality crisis. Parents' attitudes to adolescents' problems. Sex education in adolescence. The friendships of adolescents. Career orientation.

TOPICS OF THE GROUP OF CANDIDATES-FUTURE PARENTS:

The transition to the parental role. Psychology of new parents, the assumption of new roles. The influence of the personality and attitude of both parents on the upbringing of the child. The formation of the parent-infant bond. The role of temperament. Inheritance and environment. The infant's crying. Sleep. Feeding and breastfeeding.

CYPRUS

Gaps, inefficiencies and needs in Cypriot parental programmes.

Through the desk research and the literature review regarding free and national supported parental support in Cyprus, it is evident that while the state provides support, yet it is not the one anticipated by this project.

Local municipalities in Cyprus offer psychological support through individual and family support sessions. Additionally, through the low fare healthcare system (GESY), parents have the opportunity to get psychological support with a low fare. However, the majority of those services could be seen as intervention on individuals and families that already face specific problems such as drug addictions, conflicts etc. and not as general provision of parent education. In a similar manner, ad hoc seminars are offered

by municipalities, dealing with specific topics for a rather short period of time and not something with structure and continuity. Thus, there is clearly a framework for the provision of those services by the state, nevertheless the services are not offered exclusively and specifically to enhance parenting skills and also not promoted enough.

Other educational programmes, such the experimental programme “Support” are mentioned in the report. Even though this was a one-time project, it will be analysed for its significantly beneficial results for the parent- child relationship. Additionally, the NGO Pancyprian School of parents is the most popular organisation that provides seminars and educational training in collaboration with Parents association.

The support provided to parents is more focused on financial support rather than provision of services. For instance, there are various examples of positive policies focused on helping low-income parents with raising their children, especially targeting education, such as the “fee for kindergarten”, student allowance or single parent family allowance and many more. Moreover, the government offers financial support regarding motherhood, such as the maternity allowance, childbirth grant but also through services, such as the provision of midwife’s support before and after childbirth.

The only national provider of parent’s education in Cyprus is the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute (Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth). The pedagogical institute provides lectures and experimental workshops to all parents of school units and child groups. The topics are either chosen from a wide variety of thematic areas offered by the institution or can be jointly decided with the Parents Association and the school management. Even though seminars are evaluated from parents for their content, the trainer and for its practicality in everyday life, yet we did not have any access to the evaluation material in order to gain a holistic understanding of their significance.

In Conclusion, parent’s education as envisioned in this project is limited in Cyprus. There are various ad-hoc seminars and courses offered by non-governmental organisations and other associations but not free of charge. The state on the other hand, generally offers financial support to parents and only the pedagogical institution offers parental support with structured programmes with continuity.

Cypriot Parental programmes

1st Parental Programme

Title: Schools for parents (pi.ac.cy)

Programme/ Course/Activity Seminars for Parents conducted by Pedagogical Institute (PI) officials, as well as by external collaborators of the PI, who are selected through a relevant process of creating a register of trainers. The seminars are mainly held in the afternoon and after consultation with the school unit. One of the basic conditions for

the successful implementation of Seminars for Parents is that they respond directly to the needs of the school unit and successfully combine theory with practice.

Target groups

- Lectures: To all parents of school units (in small school units it is recommended that Parents' Associations organise informative lectures with other Associations of neighbouring communities).
- Experiential workshops: parents' groups and parents and child groups

Programme Contents Informative lectures that concern a specific topic, which is chosen among the thematic areas offered by the P.I. The purpose of the informative lectures is a general update on the subject and includes short practical suggestions that parents can apply with their children.

Experiential workshops are held on specific topics and under certain conditions which are jointly decided with the P.I.'s official, the Parents' Association and the School Management.

The institute offers a great variety of subjects which are different according to the educational level (Pre-school, Primary Education, Special education Secondary General Education and Secondary Technical and Vocational Education and Training).

Programme evaluation methodology. The evaluation of the seminar is carried out online, after the end of the lecture or workshops and aims to assess the satisfaction of the participants in terms of finding the subject useful or meeting their expectations in everyday life. The evaluation uses an anonymous self-administered evaluation questionnaire.

Conclusions and recommendations: Cyprus pedagogical Institute is the only national organisation in the country that offers parental support through structured programmes.

2nd Parental Programme

Title: Parents' Educational experimental programme "Support"

Target group: Parents with children between the ages of 6 to 12 years

Programme Content: The training programme was implemented in groups of 14-15 people, in eight (8) two-hour meetings, and it was aimed at parents with children between the ages of 6 to 12 years. The programme lasted from June to December 2018. The training was structured, and took the form of experiential workshops.

For the purpose of the initiative an interactive application was also created in the form of a platform game to further support parent's education. The application "Parenting

Game” was available on Google Play Store and it was based on scripts which were grounded on theoretical approaches of Social Work and Psychology. The programme included topics such as the Characteristics and needs of infancy, school and adolescence, characteristics of the child's psychosocial development, communication within the family, active listening, barriers to communication, strengthening the confidence / self-esteem of a child, expressing and externalising emotions, managing emotions such as anger, stress, sadness, limiting children's behaviour, setting limits, parenting style in setting boundaries for children, clear and reasonable boundaries, conflict resolution and handling, managing negative child behaviour and ways to change negative behaviour.

Programme evaluation methodology: Upon the completion of the program the participating parents evaluated the training program regarding the effectiveness of the instructor (preparation and organisation of the meetings, knowledge of the subject, parents' satisfaction with discussion encouragement and with the resolutions of questions). Moreover, participants also evaluated the objectives, the exercises and the material but also the place and duration of the meeting. The statistical analysis of the results showed a significant improvement of parents in the experimental group after the implementation of the program, in all the areas of parenthood such as affection / warmth, self-esteem, satisfaction and effectiveness of their parenting role. It also showed that parents reduced negative practices such as parental hostility, parental neglect and rejection to their children. The findings of the research conclude that it was established that the “democratic” parenting style takes more satisfaction from the parenting role and that he or she is more effective in advancing the social, school and family adequacy of the child.

3rd Parental Programme

Title: Pancyprrian School of parents

[Ιστορικό - Παγκύπρια Σχολή Γονέων \(scholigoneon.org.cy\)](http://scholigoneon.org.cy)

Target groups: To parents of Pre-Primary, Elementary, Middle & Technical Education students of all Public Schools of Cyprus, teachers and educators

Programme Content: The Pancyprrian School of Parents aims to provide support to parents, so that they can successfully respond to their complex and difficult role. The organisation provides a wide variety of seminars and educational training programmes covering all subjects related to parental role and responsibilities according to the request of the members.

The Pancyprrian School of Parents organises lectures, seminars, workshops and experiential workshops for parents, in collaboration with the Parents' Association of schools of all levels of Education.

Programme Contents The duration and subject of each seminar or training depends on the subject and the interests of its members.

The Pancyprrian School of Parents offers a great variety of subjects which are different according to the educational level and the requests of the members of Parents' Association of school units. Overall, the topics cover upbringing, education, training, education, psychology, child and youth risks, behaviour, interpersonal relationships of children, parents and teachers at all levels, from Kindergarten to High School.

Examples of topics throughout the years:

- Cyber safety
- Discipline methods that cultivate responsibility and mental resilience in children (duration 3 hours)
- Preventing Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation on the Internet (duration 5 hours)
- Parent-Child Interaction: A Lifelong Relationship
- Stop Bullying (duration 2 hours)
- Environmental education programme for parents and children (every weekend from March to August 2023)
- Family Creative Math's Weekends – activities and games to develop the mathematical thinking of 3–7-year-olds (duration 2 hours)