PLACES TO GROW

Training and study visit Report

HUNGARY

10-11 OCTOBER 2022

International Child
Development Initiatives

The 'Places to Grow' Programme is an initiative originated and funded by the Porticus Foundation to put inclusive Early Childhood Development high on the policy agenda and to support its quality improvement and system change in Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovakia.

The programme aims to:

- Promote coordination among Early Childhood Development (ECD) services for children from marginalised communities and ethnic minorities (e.g., Roma),
- Build knowledge of policy makers and the workforce for future greater focus on early childhood services,
- Create evidence for reforms of financing of early childhood systems and follow-up advocacy at national and the European Union level.

International Child Development Initiatives - ICDI is a knowledge organisation that supports and develops initiatives in the field of ECD, child protection and well-being.

We aim to create rich, safe and nurturing environments for young children to live, grow and learn, especially for those who are most vulnerable.

International Child Development Initiatives

In this programme, ICDI's role is to:

1. Increase understanding, knowledge and skills of ECD service providers and local policy makers on how to catalyse whole child development through cross-sectoral cooperation.
2. Support cross-country capacity building and peer-mentoring in Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia.

During the kick-off meeting of Places to Grow (held in Summer 2022), thematic areas and inspirational projects for future collaboration were discussed together with the partner organisations from Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia.

Six topics were outlined as central in the upcoming learning exchanges, training events, and study visits:

1. Cross-sectoral cooperation and integration of services;
2. Importance of early years;
3. Reflective practices and quality assessment;
4. Intergenerational learning;
5. Diversity and inclusion in ECEC;
6. Learning through play.

HIGHLIGHTS

Mariana Palazuelos and Luisa Tesch from ICDI together with Éva Deák from Partners Hungry Foundation delivered a training on the Integration of Services in Éger, Hungary which was followed by a study visit to the Play Hub in Nagydobos.

The training and study visit were organised together with the Carpathian Foundation Hungary and 19 participants from 7* different Early Childhood Development (ECD) services in Hungary participated. Most of them, work closely with Roma communities in different parts of the country.

The integration of services and cross-sectorial cooperation was identified earlier this year as a key topic to facilitate learning, knowledge sharing, and study visits within this partnership. Therefore, the training was designed with the following learning objectives:

- Identify how the integration of services differs from fragmentation.
- Understand the benefits of integration services for children, families, and professionals.
- Learn a framework to work on the integration of services.
- Identify services and take actions towards integration in their own community.

Topics covered during the training were:

- Mapping of services.
- Integration vs Fragmentation.
- Nurturing Care Framework.
- Challenges for the integration of services.
- Good practices around the world.
- Building a common vision for the integration of services.

Participants worked in groups to reflect on and apply the content of the training to their own contexts. Possible initiatives to support the integration of services were developed by each organisation, as well as milestones and practical steps towards it.

Participants: Village Developers Association of Bükkszentmárton, Hungarian-Roma Association in Szomolya, National Association of Roma Women of the XXIst Century, Somnakuno Drom Roma Women's Association, Pearl of Tarna Association, Roma Self-helper Association of Cserehát and Laskó-spring Association.

Play Hubs are a flexible solution that offers educational opportunities for all those children who are often excluded from formal educational services or are yet too young to attend formal schooling and might have a difficult transition. They are also a power way to prevent school drop out for those children that are attending school but are at risk of exclusion.

The training was followed by a study visit to the Play Hub in Nagydobos, located in the northeastern part of Hungary. Representatives of the Local Action Team (LAT) gave a presentation on how the Play Hub was set up and about the activities they have done in the previous years. The Play Hub is located at the heart of the village and is a nest for inclusion where discrimination, especially against Roma population is widespread.

The Play Hub also hosts other community initiatives like community gardening and sharing of cultural traditions, which brings people from different age groups to the place.

The Local Action Team representatives (composed by different professionals such as a special needs teacher, a retired teacher, a volunteer teacher and members of the Roma community) led the morning and presented their experience running the Play Hub. Some of the takeaways of this conversation were:

- Children who attended the Play Hub became more social, improved their school performance and their transition to school was easier.
- During the run of the Play Hub, the relationship between parents improved. While they were in the Play Hub, they worked collectively, exchange ideas and their children played together.
- The distinction between Roma and Non-Roma faded. When parents and children visited the Play Hub, they built personal relationships and their bias broke down. They saw each other as the same.

> **“In the Play Hub, everybody can be themselves.”**

Afterwards, participants were able to discuss and reflect on how to build an effective partnership with other services. Some key points that emerged from the discussion were:

- Allies are needed:
  - Every community is different but for the Play Hub to be successful in the community, key stakeholders should be involved. This can mean involve the local government, preschools or even the church. The Local Action Team should be mindful of who can support the Play Hub's efforts and involve these stakeholders in activities and events so they can see the Play Hub in action.

- Involve the community:
  - Community members can help sustain the Play Hub. People can cooperate with their skills and time not only money. The Play Hub belongs to the community so everyone can contribute to it. It is important that the LAT can relay on people.

- Inclusion all around:
  - People who run the Play Hub should be both Roma and Non-Roma and this way inclusion is led by example.

- Parents matter:
  - In the Play Hub, it is easier for parents to engage in relationships. As it is a 'informal environment' they can be more relaxed and at the Play Hub, they have the opportunity to meet other parents with whom they can share their experiences. Planning activities with and for parents will help them feel more comfortable in the Play Hub.

> **SOCIAL INCLUSION STARTS WITH YOUNG CHILDREN'S EAGERNESS TO PLAY**

The study visit in Hungary was the second of a total of three study visits planned in the Places to Grow programme.

A special thank you and appreciation to all those involved in the organisation and planning for this study visit, with a special thank you to Éva Deák (Partners Hungary) and Beáta Csomós and Boglárka Bata (Carpathian Foundation)

NEXT STUDY VISIT

Belgium and the Netherlands, Spring 2023