

IAS- INCREASING ACCESSIBILITY OF INTEGRATED ECEC SERVICES TO SUPPORT ALL FAMILIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

Report of the focus groups

Overview of the key questions

Specific research questions:

- What are the perceived benefits of 'cooperation'/'integrated working' in order to promote parenting/family support?
- What kinds of elements/factors increase accessibility to meeting places /family centre services?

1. Questions for Field workers

Integrated work/collaboration/...

- What do you mean by 'collaboration'/'integrated work'/?
- What is your service's main focus in supporting children, parents and families?
- Can you give examples of integrated working in your practice/service?
- What is the added value of integrated working from your perspective?
- What are costs/obstacles/... (extra time,...) of integrated working?
- What is essential for integrated working to develop?
- What are the main challenges regarding integrated working in your practice?
- What are inspiring, encouraging examples of integrated working?
- OPTIONAL (depending on the local context) What is the role of NGO's in integrated working around children and families?

Accessibility

- How do you work to increase accessibility in the services you work in?
- Can you give examples of thresholds that create challenges for accessing the services? And how do you cope with them?
- How do you work to promote accessibility of vulnerable families?

Involving families

- Are the families involved in developing the services and activities, if so how is this done?
- What have you learned from families in regard to integrated working?

OPTIONAL Closing question

- What are your dreams?

2. Questions for Managers

Integrated work

- What is the added value of integrated working from your perspective?
- What are possible costs/obstacles of integrated working?
- What is done to promote integrated work?
- How is integrated working presented in the public policies on ECEC in your country (how is it communicated in the public,...)? /What are the main aims of integrated working on policy level?
- OPTIONAL (depending on the local context) What is the role of NGO's in integrated working around children and families?

Accessibility

- How do you work to increase accessibility in the services you work in?
- Can you give examples of thresholds that create challenges for accessing the services? And how do you cope with them?
- How do you work to promote accessibility of vulnerable families?
- What is important to address regarding accessibility in ECEC?

Involving families

- Do you involve families and if yes, how do you do that and did it increase your insight of integrated working?
- What can be the added value of involving families in developing ECEC services?
- OPTIONAL (if it's done) How can involvement of families increase your insight of integrated working?



Report of the focus groups

Topic	Professionals	Parents
General information		
Date	14/02/2020	Leuven: 17/01/2020 Gent: 16/02/2020 Brussel: 06/02/2020
Duration	3h30min	Leuven: 10.30-11.15, 1h15min Gent: 13.30-14.30, 1h Brussel: 11.15-12.30, 1h15min
Location	Brussels (at Kind & Gezin)	Leuven: Huis van het Kind Leuven Gent: De Sloep Brussel: Huis van het Kind Brussel Noord
Interviewers	2 interviewers: Hester Hulpia and Rudy De Cock	Leuven: 2 interviewers (also 2 professionals were present) Gent: 2 interviewers (also 2 professionals were present) Brussel: 2 interviewers (also 2 professionals were present)
Respondents	<p>Number of respondents: 17 (including the IAS team (6 persons)).</p> <p>Background: mainly staff and managers, with direct connections to the practice. respondents are working either in a “Huis van het Kind”, for a local authority or for a governmental agency, university or non-profit organisation.</p>	<p>Leuven: 8 mothers & 9 children</p> <p>Gent: 12 mothers living in the neighbourhood of De Sloep, country of origin: Palestine, Tunisia, Syria, Somalia, Morocco, Albania; limited knowledge of Dutch (most mothers do not speak Dutch fluently, some mothers don't understand Dutch, but the other mothers translate)</p> <p>Brussel: 7 mothers, 1 grandmother, 10 children, country of origin: Morocco, UK, Spain, Algeria, Turkey.</p>



Topic	Professionals	Parents
General information		
<p>Short description of the context of the country with regard to integrated working + what is the place of the services the respondents work in (for professionals)/use (for parents)</p>	<p>Huis van het Kind¹: the local network for diverse partners providing family support</p> <p>This network exists since 2014 in the Flemish part of Belgium. The goal is to stimulate inter-professional collaboration between local actors to provide a range of family support services in an integrated and accessible way and attuned to the local needs. The decree points out some principles and goals, but at the same time leaves quite some margin as well to partners on the local level to shape their own 'Huis van het Kind' to best fit the local context. This way, cooperation is stimulated and facilitated rather than obligatory.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Huizen van het Kind" are local networks of local services providing preventative family and educational support and preventive health care for young children and their families. These networks can cover different services and organisations, such as education, youth care services, child care, youth services, social welfare services and local health services, libraries, cultural organisations,... They consist of partnerships between local authorities and local actors. • The main mission of "Huizen van het Kind" consists in offering preventative family support and to create equal opportunities for all children and their families. "Huizen van het Kind" have to contribute to health equity in the broadest sense of the world, which is considered of great social importance. • "Huizen van het Kind" aim at all families and pay special attention towards families in need. The basic point of departure is proportional universalism. One of the key elements is the possibility for parents and children to meet one another, as it is considered as the most powerful way to support parents in parenting from a preventative point of view. • In many places a "Huis van het Kind" is a building or a campus housing the different services who joined the network. In some places they are linked to child care and/or pre-school activities. 	<p>Leuven: Huis van het Kind, more specifically KOALA</p> <p>Gent: De Sloep (non-profit organisation): an open house, an integrated family centre for parents with young children and provides parenting support to (mostly vulnerable) families of various origins.</p> <p>Brussel: Huis van het Kind, more more specifically KOALA</p> <p>KOALA²:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is a local partnership in a House of the Child. It offers locally integrated child and parent activities to combat poverty. • has an integrated offer of meeting places, thematic group activities and language stimulation for expectant families and families with children up to the age of 3. This partnership includes a childcare setting receiving subsidies in order to realise a proactive admissions policy to give a childcare place to vulnerable families. • objectives are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o strengthen the social participation of vulnerable families o support parents in the care and education of their child o increase children's developmental opportunities

¹ <http://www.expoo.be/sites/default/files/atoms/files/Huizen%20van%20het%20Kind%20-%20Basiskader%20-%20Engels.pdf>

² KOALA is an abbreviation for Child (Kind) and Parent (Ouder) Activities for local (Lokaal) poverty reduction (Armoedebestrijding)



- The “Huizen van het Kind” are in general financed by public funding, but from various domains (welfare, youth, culture) and levels (regional, local). In many cases they are depending from the municipality for the housing, coordination and their place in the local social policy. On the 1st of January 2019 there were 221 Houses of the Child in 288 communities, a coverage of 96%.



Topic	Professionals	Parents
Integrated working		
<p>Main points on integrated working</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">ADDED VALUE FOR FAMILIES ACCORDING TO PROFESSIONALS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A shared goal is positive impact for families and children ● Collaboration is necessary, but it can be more. We work together with a view to building bridges, but building bridges alone will not get us there. The question is then with what? In the perception of the families, the network should be 1 point (the bridges should not be visible to them). So being more 1 - trying to find a common denominator as an entry point, but after that parents must also be able to make choices (e.g. also be given space - if it does not click in one place - to ask their question in another place) + each organization does have its own vision and approach within the network. ● Wherever families end up, they are helped (regardless of the various types of supply that exist). From their perspective, it is important to have "one gate" from which to connect to what is needed. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Tailored to the family ○ Client central ○ Child as a starting point ● Forum + safe space with and for families: Interact with everyone in the partnership around the table, make it clear to each other what the interests are. In order to work in an integrated manner, a safe space must be created for all partners who work together. This is not easy, but it is necessary to be able to work together. Be open to all partners, everyone must feel safe in the network in order to arrive at a coordinated approach to families. ● Sometimes it is also good that families can start all over again. Being one but parents must have choice. ● Professional attitude ● Family needs is focus ● From openness to diversity of perspectives to a coordinated approach ● Dialogue and doing: Tuning in and getting to know each other is OK as a first step, but it shouldn't stop there. At some point, actions must be taken towards families. In addition, an extra 	<p style="text-align: center;">ADDED VALUE FOR FAMILIES (Why do they come to the service?)</p> <p><u>For their child</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Play with other children ● Learn to be social, learn to make friends, learn to share, being less shy and scare ● Lots of toys ● Let off steam/ enjoy themselves/having fun ● Prepare for school (instead of childcare) ● Importance of learning Dutch ● activities <p><u>For themselves</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Peaceful place, find some rest ● Meet other mothers ● Receive / possibility to ask questions ● Play intentionally with their child (otherwise they would work in the house) ● Provides a structure during the week ● Out of isolation, "stay at home for too long is limiting" ● Importance of learning Dutch, talk Dutch, "I want to learn Dutch , especially when my child goes to school" (Leuven) ● Activities and trips learn to know other places ● Cosiness <p style="text-align: center;">IMPORTANCE OF INTEGRATED WORKING ACCORDING AS PERCEIVED BY FAMILIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Receive information on other services (like schools: which schools, subscriptions, ...) ● Can ask questions on raising children, breastfeeding etc. ● Also other information (material): like housing ● Professionals provide help with documents/papers/bills/... or make an appoint at the doctor, "they help with 'papers' " (Gent)



step often has to be taken because the partners in the network sometimes adhere too much to their own regulations. It is often difficult to let go of these for whatever reason. There is still a long way to go to really arrive at 1 family, 1 plan.

- Working together for all families with respect for each other's individuality and the desire to go that extra step further
- Equal partnership
- Collaborate with relevant actors towards clear goals

CRUCIAL ASPECTS OF INTEGRATED WORKING

- Shared vision, e.g. on vulnerable families
- Daring to question each other's services based on the needs / experiences of the families vis-à-vis partners, while respecting each other's functioning
- Consensus on the fact that the perspective of the families / children / young people is central.
- It is essential that policy also takes responsibility and not just practitioners. Policy level with a mandate to make decisions can only really make a difference.
- It is important to put everyone (basic workers) together and to work together. This can be done by going to the workplace together and getting to know each other's frameworks.
- Continuity in partners
- Leadership: time for leadership is necessary - leadership in a partnership requires a different kind of leadership with specific skills - connecting the perspective of partners and parent - Leadership is being able to deal with two poles: talking and communicating about vision but also being able to take action - important that people own organization is given the mandate to participate in the partnership and there is a win for each individual organization, for individuals and for families (this is central). Focus on long term effects instead of quick wins.



Topic	Professionals	Parents
Integrated working		
<p>Inspiring quotes: with regard to the meaning of integrated working/services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ <i>“One-stop-shop approach -. one gate for families. From the perspective of families it is important to have 'one gate', from which connections can be made to what family needs.”</i> ✓ <i>“Being” together more than “working” together. We work together with the goal of building bridges, but you can also lose people on bridges (if the bridge is too sloping).”</i> ✓ <i>“Tuning in and getting to know each other’ is OK as a first step, but it cannot stop there. At some point, actions must be taken towards families.“</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ <i>In KOALA we are all friends (Leuven)</i> ✓ <i>I’m always at home, KOALA is good (Leuven)</i> ✓ <i>I want him to be happy (Leuven)</i> ✓ <i>It is a place to refuel (Leuven)</i> ✓ <i>We learn a lot from each other (Gent)</i> ✓ <i>Everything in De Sloep is my family (Gent)</i> ✓ <i>They take weight out of my heavy backpack (Gent)</i> ✓ <i>I dream we had more KOALA’S</i> ✓ <i>I can ask many questions to X (professional) (Leuven)</i> ✓ <i>They told me to subscribe my daughter in the school. If they wouldn’t have said it, I wouldn’t have known it (Gent)</i> ✓ <i>Problems are solved when you come here. Or they make it easier for you. They never say ‘no’ (Gent)</i>



Topic	Professionals	Parents
<p>Main points on accessibility</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Accessibility</p> <p>How is it realized/promoted in practice? What are the challenges that are still encountered?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">CHALLENGES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The signals that parents given to "field workers/practitioners", very often are related to (not realizing) the accessibility of the services. They can tell something about 'the usefulness', 'the (physical) accessibility or attainability', 'the availability', 'the affordability' or 'the comprehensibility' of the services. The approach of "capturing, bundling and following up on those signals" is a form of internal and external quality control of the service provision and of internal quality assurance to work on increasing accessibility. • Identifying and following up on signals... is a necessary structural element of policy making. The accountability to do so, can be found in the goals of social work practice and in the realization of basic social rights. It takes confidence and courage in the cooperation to question permanently the functioning of systems (not individuals) and / or to reflect on barriers. <p><u>Inspiring practice of the of Ghent: 'De Gentse signalenbundel'</u> The 'signal report of the City of Ghent' is an initiative of the OCMW (the public centre for Social Welfare) and the poverty director. "Practitioners in Ghent bundle structural problems that require cross-sectoral solutions, in order to be able to work on them together with policy actors. Fundamental social rights form the starting point of the Local Welfare Policy in Ghent. Signalling is part of this. After all, wellbeing is about the full participation of people in the various domains of social life."</p> <p style="text-align: center;">'HARD TO REACH FAMILIES or HARD TO REACH SERVICES?' How can we work on increasing accessibility?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • by FOCUSING on <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - an accessible and LOW-TRESHOLD ACCES - into VARIUOS FORMS of supply/services - with the INVOLVEMENT of families and users (participation) <p><u>Inspiring Practices on communication: Facebook, Whats App, mouth to ear by parents,...</u></p>	<p>How do families experience this? Are there still challenges that are formulated by them?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">HOW DID FAMILIES KNOW ABOUT THE SERVICES?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By accident, just passing by • Social media • Via friends • Via a professional of another service (e.g. Kind en Gezin, ONE = consultation office 0-3) or another organisation (such as Dutch classes) • Via professional of the service • Conscious search by the mothers <p style="text-align: center;">WHAT HINDERS THE ACCESSIBILITY?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Brussels: difference between French and Dutch 'services' • In brussels: huge differences between the communities • Public transportation is not adjusted to wheelchairs should be walking distance • Proximity • Spaces are too small, not enough material (cfr. Brussels FG – mothers don't go to that place anymore) <p style="text-align: center;">WHAT STRENGTHENS THE ACCESSIBILITY?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family like feeling, know each other • Professionals always the same persons (Brussels), "they are sweet and sympathic" (Gent), friendly " all colleagues smile" (Gent) • Same location as other services/activities • No appointments • Importance of 'for free' • Space is beautiful • cosiness <p style="text-align: center;">WHAT DO MOTHERS WISH?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More services/supply/activities (for older children, swimming pools, schools, pregnant women/ perinatal) • More outdoor spaces, more 'green' spaces • Road/traffic safety, better public transportation • Cfr. Brussels is not a family friendly city



	<p><i>Inspiring Practices on bridging: building bridges with local communities (e.g. local associations, community centres, community work,...), including working with experts by experience</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • by CONNECTING SERVICES WITHIN LOCAL NETWORKS (also connecting material and immaterial resources). <p><i>Inspiring practices: Play hub: parents can meet each other and exchange their experiences and strengthen their educational skills, while in the mean time they have the opportunity to borrow toys to use at home.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • by OUTREACHEND AND IN-SOURCEND WORK in and from basic facilities that are available for everyone (Kind en Gezin, Education, child care to a more limited extent,...). <p><i>Inspiring practices: Social services of the city keeps permanence (e.g. every Monday morning) at the child care setting, VDAB (Flemish employment mediation service) makes individual appointments with parents in the childcare setting, where they already are familiar with.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More information, more information on raising children explicit need for more support in raising children (preventive family support)
<p>Inspiring quotes on accessibility</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ “As a professional, one should really not underestimate the power of word-of-mouth advertising. Families refer each other to the services. Facebook is also a good tool in that respect.” ✓ “In Kortrijk there is a growing (fairly closed) community of Somalis: they find it difficult to ask for help from others. Within their community we have trained social advisers. One day after the training, we had half of the Somali community at the counter. ” ✓ “A mom who tells something to other mom works much better than translated brochures, ...” ✓ “Link between material and immaterial support is important to reach (out to) people.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ “I got to know it through “x” who is also here, because she talked about it on her facebook.” ✓ “We will go on a home visit to invite them to KOALA.... Some of them bring friends along.”



Concluding notes

Some overarching results, important notes, crucial lessons learned, reflections that gives input for the IAS recommendations towards practice and policy.

Professionals

This part is important for the concluding report of your country, overarching all focus groups you organized.

The IAS team has certainly learned also something new in these exchanges and organizing focus groups!

- Structural capture of signals and making policy on it, is very inspiring.
- The use of peer evaluation could be very interesting on these topics, within organizations and also between organizations.

Parents

Important note:

The mothers that were interviewed can be seen as 'strong' women.

- ✓ They consciously searched for place to go to with their child, as they experienced an added value for themselves and for their child. There were mothers that each day went to a different place
- ✓ Some mothers really make an effort to go to the services (more than 1 hour to get to the service)

In all FG the mothers state that they visit different places

On the organisation of the focus groups (FG):

The FG were not easy due to

- ✓ Language issues – not all respondents understand/speak Dutch
- ✓ Children were also present during the interviews
- ✓ Short timing of the FG (1h -1h30)