



# REPORT

## FOCUS RESEARCH

*INCREASING ACCESSIBILITY OF INTEGRATED ECEC SERVICES  
TO SUPPORT ALL FAMILIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN.*

*ZWIĘKSZENIE DOSTĘPNOŚCI ZINTEGROWANYCH  
USŁUG ECEC DLA WSPARCIA WSZYSTKICH RODZIN  
Z MAŁYMI DZIEĆMI*

ERASMUS +

## Table of Contents

Introduction	3
1. General information about the focus group.	4
A. Focus group No. I.	4
B. Focus group No. II.	5
2. What do you think is cooperation?	5
3. Do you cooperate? Is cooperation between institutions possible?	6
4. What do you think about service integration? It would be about the added value of integrating services from different perspectives (should these different services be integrated or should they operate separately)?	7
5. How does the availability of these services look like in Poland?	8
6. What are your services focused on to support children, parents and family? (the problem is help especially for those problem families and children)	9
7. What are the problems and how should they be addressed in relation to the availability of early childhood education and care services?	11
8. What is being done to increase the availability of services for the most disadvantaged families?	13
9. What is the role of non-governmental organizations in integrated work for families with young children?	13
10. What would be the value of involving families in developing early childhood education and child care?	14
11. How has family involvement increased the understanding / perception of integrated work?	15
12. What is necessary for the development of integrated work? What are the challenges and dreams of integrated work?	16

## **Introduction**

This report was created as a product following the focus study conducted for the Erasmus + project "IAS, Increasing Accessibility of integrated ECEC - services to support all families with young children". Focus group interviews were carried out (FGI - Focus Group Interview). The focus research was organized in two groups.

Discussions in groups of interested people focused on the following topics:

- 1. What do you think is cooperation?*
- 2. Do you cooperate? Is cooperation between institutions possible?*
- 3. What do you think about service integration?*
- 4. What does the issue of the availability of integrated services look like in Poland?*
- 5. What are your services focused on, bearing in mind the support of children and parents and family? (the problem is help especially for those problem families and children)*
- 6. What are the problems and how should they be addressed in relation to the availability of early childhood education and care services?*
- 7. What is being done to increase the availability of services to the most disadvantaged families?*
- 8. What is the role of non-governmental organizations in integrating work for families? with young children?*
- 9. What would be the value of involving families in developing early childhood education and care?*
- 10. How has family involvement increased the understanding / perception of integrated work?*
- 11. What is necessary to develop integrated work? What are your dreams about with integrated work?*

## 1. General information about the focus group.

### A. Focus group No. I.

Date	August 29, 2020
Duration	Two hours
Lokalizacja	Tuchola, Kujawsko-Pomorskie Voivodeship
Interviewers	PhD Jarosław Przeperski
Respondents (how many? professional background or background of the family? why those prof? why those parents?)	<p>9 respondents participated in the meeting. They represented the following professions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-family assistant</li><li>-school pedagogue</li><li>-sociotherapist</li><li>-a social worker</li><li>-professional probation officer</li><li>-head of the Vocational Activation Center</li><li>-NGO employee</li><li>-policeman officer</li></ul> <p>Their participation was mainly based on their professional and family experience.</p>
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) - A short description	<p>Work on integration is covered in later chapters. The respondents' places of work are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-District Court</li><li>-Social welfare Center</li><li>-Primary school</li><li>-County Family Assistance Center</li><li>-Poviat Labor Office</li><li>-Police Headquarters</li><li>-Regional Center for Social Policy</li></ul> <p>The above-mentioned jobs form a coherent whole for which these respondents have a full view of the situation of the family in Poland. Both those that require social support as well as those that do not require such support in the current policy.</p>

## B. Focus group No. II.

Date	September 22, 2020
Duration	One and a half hours
Lokalizacja	Tuchola, Kujawsko-Pomorskie Voivodeship
Interviewers	Prof. Jarosław Horowski
Respondents (how many? professional background or background of the family? why those prof? why those parents?)	<p>6 respondents participated in the meeting. They represented the following professions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Head of the environmental section</li><li>- Head of probation officers in a family court</li><li>- Manager of family assistants</li><li>- Manager of the community club,</li><li>- Primary school principal</li><li>- Social worker</li></ul> <p>Their participation was mainly based on their professional and family experience.</p>
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) - A short description	<p>Work on integration is covered in later chapters. The respondents' places of work are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-Primary school</li><li>-District Court</li><li>-Social welfare Center</li><li>-Community Club</li></ul> <p>The above-mentioned jobs form a coherent whole for which these respondents have a full view of the situation of the family in Poland. Both those that require social support as well as those that do not require such support in the current policy.</p>

### 2. What do you think is cooperation?

The focus group interlocutors indicate that for them cooperation is an essential skill in their daily work, thanks to which they can achieve common goals set by the system. Good cooperation is to lead them to achieve better results than those that would be achieved by a single aid worker, acting only on the basis of the level of their own knowledge and skills. Collaboration gives everyone the opportunity to take advantage of a broader perspective and assess the situation of, for example, a family. The example was taken from evaluating the experiences of our interlocutors. They noticed that thanks to the fact that the family of X has a

family assistant who has cooperated with the probation officer and the school educator - the assistant has the opportunity to see the situation of the family in a fuller light and reaching out to other problems he might not have known about. After talking to the school counsellor, it turned out that the child's emotional problems are much more complex than he had assumed after talking to the parents because their gaze does not always have to be objective.

Cooperation plays an important role in social assistance. Although the tasks before given institutions are different, the goal is often the same - our interlocutors emphasize this.

Collaboration by the interviewee:

- has many benefits;
- without effective cooperation it is very difficult to complete the intended tasks;
- cooperation is not always easy and pleasant, but even negative experiences in cooperation they can introduce positive aspects at work;
- is necessary to achieve development;
- it is especially beneficial to the families with which the worker relates;

### **3. Do you cooperate? Is cooperation between institutions possible?**

All participants in the focus groups unanimously agreed that they cooperate. They attribute great value to cooperation.

Cooperation is undertaken both within the framework of the employees of one institution, but the interlocutors attach more importance to inter-institutional cooperation and it is from it that they derive the greatest benefits. It is not only formal cooperation, they often undertake cooperation and contact informally, resulting from personal knowledge of people working in a given institution. It is noteworthy that employees for the good of the cause take the initiative of cooperation, especially when an action requires quick steps.

The cooperation is most often continuous, the data of the people who are employed in institutions, they cooperate for many years within specific working groups, departments or projects. This helps build a permanent framework for cooperation and cooperation.

Most people assess the quality of cooperation as satisfactory and good, they emphasize

that these positive experiences are the result of building cooperation between these working people in the institution for years. Initially, this cooperation was not that satisfactory, but over time, certain foundations were built, based on knowledge and trust, which allow the same tasks to be carried out as institutions, and if you want to implement them as fully as possible, you need to cooperate.

Of course, the interviewees emphasize that there are also negative experiences regarding cooperation, they often result from a negative attitude of a specific person or their personal conviction that it is not worth taking action.

Sometimes the cooperation is very difficult, due to a completely different point of view, different ideas, proposed methods of solving a given situation, but this does not discourage them as the most important thing for the interlocutors is achieving a specific goal.

It is important that people want to start such cooperation, because the interlocutors notice that, for example, cooperation agreements are often signed between institutions or municipalities,

from which, apart from many formalities, nothing follows. It is important that the cooperation is a real action, bringing results, and not the next signed document, a meeting that needs to be organized so that everything in the papers is correct.

**4. What do you think about service integration? It would be about the added value of integrating services from different perspectives (should these different services be integrated or should they operate separately)?**

According to focus group participants, the integration of services is perceived positively and may increase the availability of these services to a larger number of people. It is important that the increase in these services is a real response to people's needs and to support the integration of as many social groups as possible, e.g. not only seniors or families with various problems.

As an example in Poland, the interviewees give a new institution, which is the Social Service Centers (CUS in PL), whose task is to integrate and coordinate services provided by various local service providers (public and non-public) cooperating with the created CUS.

Social Service Centers is a combination of social service integration and caring o increasing their availability and quality, which guarantees better use of EU funds allocated to the development and professionalization of the sphere of social services. However, new institutions such as CUSs are optional, and this also raises concerns that they will not improve the integration of services.

For the most part, participants of the focus groups notice that there are definitely more advantages to service integration than its disadvantages.

### **5. How does the availability of these services look like in Poland?**

*"The most important , is the contact of children and adolescents  
with the staff of educators, educators, simple conversation  
about children's worries, problems or joys.,,"*

The participants of the focus groups believe that these services are available in Poland. They indicated many places, both from their local communities and those about which they have heard on a national scale, where integrated services are provided.

The very noticeable problem is the fact that often these services are directed only to a strictly defined group of people, e.g. in Poland there are many clubs, most often they are a place for children and adolescents from dysfunctional families at risk of alcoholism, drug addiction, families inefficient education, with low material status, or recently there are many places for seniors.

The interviewees indicated that there are no places open to everyone, for children who come from families without problems and those not covered by the system, but their parents, for example, work a lot or simply children/adolescents would like to take advantage of their housing estate with interesting entertainment, educational and educational offer. Participants noticed that if the children/adolescents actually do not participate in non-class activities (for various reasons) or do not participate in activities in the school club, which often applies to younger children, it will be difficult for them to find a place in their neighborhood where they will receive such comprehensive support such as they could in the common room.



Sometimes it is so that even though such a day-room does not have a clearly defined statutory activity, that it is a day-room only for children from families with problems - it is still difficult to find a child there from a family not covered by the support system. The interviewees notice that they themselves treat day-rooms in such a way that they give it such a social and negative meaning that only children from families with social disorders, dysfunctional ones, come here and they see it in this way. This is because most of these clubs are aimed at such children only and youth, which is why the social perception of them is immediately associated with families with various problems - beneficiaries of the system. Where no parent, who is not covered by the system, will think to enroll their child there and will certainly not consider it a place suitable for their children.

According to the interviewees, there should be universal accessibility and changing the status of such clubs to generally accessible ones, conducive to the development of children and youth. It would definitely benefit everyone, because in such places it is possible to provide appropriate care, education, entertainment, and the care of a pedagogue - due to the tools and staff at their disposal.

There is definitely a lack of places for people and families who are not beneficiaries of the system - no preventive measures.

*"Learning good role models and behavior is a great potential for children"*

**6. What are your services focused on to support children, parents and family?  
(the problem is help especially for those problem families and children)**

In Poland, children and adolescents from families with various problems are particularly supported, it is they who receive special support and there are the most places for them, in which they can receive comprehensive support.

The participants of the focus groups notice that in practically every commune, city there are community centers or after-school clubs run, for example, by a church (for children and adolescents from problem families), where many children can receive help.

In places such as day-rooms, there is room for teaching activities for classrooms, in which children and young people study, do their homework, learn how to learn, they can count for

help in acquiring and understanding the material, they may ask for the so-called tutoring, they develop their interests by participating in various interest circles.

An important aspect is the implementation of an addiction prevention program, where they learn to recognize and control their emotions, eliminate negative behaviors as part of participation in occupational therapy. Much emphasis is placed on children's learning principles of social coexistence, showing and learning the correct behavior that adults must follow, and shaping a proper attitude to work. It is extremely important that due to the environment from which they come and often such places are the only way to fight the exclusion of these young people.

In the common room, the creative interests of young people are developed, there is a play area for the youngest children, a place where they can watch a movie, listen to the tutor reading fairy tales. Various events are organized periodically, e.g. carnival balls, outings to various institutions, or festivals (in which organizations involve children and youth). The participants of the focus groups point out that apart from everything that such places offer, the most important thing is the contact of children and adolescents with the staff of educators, educators, a simple conversation about children's concerns, problems or joys.

Apart from helping children and adolescents, parents from struggling families in day-care centers with various problem, can also get help in solving their own upbringing problems, they can talk about how to shape the child's future, how to deal with everyday problems, but as the interlocutors notice and emphasize too little work with parents. Teaching them appropriate parenting attitudes that could support children's development, no systematic work with parents that could have long-term effects. Only some parents report their willingness to talk to educators, or a pedagogue or psychologist - and in fact each of these parents should also undertake therapy or work on their parenthood. This is certainly a weak point as it works with children/adolescents can be very effective, but if they return home to a troubled home, the work is often wasted.

**7. What are the problems and how should they be addressed in relation to the availability of early childhood education and care services?**

*"The postulate is to create attractive places for families from outside the system"*

Focus group participants notice and pay attention to 3 main problems: these services, as they have repeatedly indicated, are not available to everyone, there are practically no such services for families who are not beneficiaries of the aid system, such families have a problem that finding a place for themselves (usually if they are families without various problems, they must meet a different criterion, e.g. single motherhood, having many children and support for families with disabled children comes to mind here.

There are also many places where single mothers can receive support both for themselves and their children - they can count on psychological help, a teacher, and there are also special meeting places only for single mothers. There are also families with many children, for whom some initiatives and meeting places sometimes appear. However, the interviewees note that if a family that does not meet very specific criteria, without problems with addiction, violence, low income, etc., there is not much nowhere to go. The postulate is to create generally accessible and attractive places for families from outside the system. Such places would contribute to counteracting social exclusion and thinking that these services are only for children and families who are the beneficiaries of the system.

*"Working with families does not bring the intended goals quickly,,*

The second important problem that the interviewees paid special attention to was the lack of places, in which preventive actions are taken. The problem is the lack of places to support the family. The family support system is entering late or simply does not enter at all, and thanks to effective and long-term prevention and prophylaxis, many negative situations can be avoided. For example, focus group participants indicated that e.g. a mother who is or pregnant and confused, feels depressed, has many fears related to motherhood, there is no place to which she could go for help, e.g. a support center pregnant women, young mothers or young parents. So that she has the opportunity to, for example, talk to a specialist (e.g. a therapist / psychologist / midwife), from workshops, from stress relief, learning how to care for a child, consultations with a midwife or someone who, for example, will talk about learning how to feed and nourish children. Usually such women or young parents are left to themselves. This future mother is alone and she learns, for example, from her mother, grandmother or friend all those things related to childcare.

This is generational, not scientific. The knowledge that young mothers should draw should be scientific, developed in accordance with applicable medical standards, of course there are birth schools, but not everyone can afford them, and they also do not strictly solve the problems of the future mother, her fears, and depressive thoughts - there you can draw from knowledge about childbirth or newborn care. Knowledge passed down through the generations is of course important, but it should be enriched with expert knowledge.

*"It is a tedious and long-lasting process,  
and the effect may take years  
-  
but it is always worth it"*

Another example is premarital studies (they are compulsory if people are getting married in a church, there are no workshops before the civil marriage to prepare for marriage). People are not at all prepared for and unaware of their roles, there is no science of conflict resolution, no science of building relationships based on fundamental foundations or simple dialogue, building closeness, etc. There is no place or institution such as . would be a meeting place for people who want to get married or young marriages. It is here that the participants of focus groups see a gap that should be filled by creating a support system by the aid system, e.g. for young and future mothers, for married couples - sometimes it could save people from making hasty decisions about breaking up, not getting into addiction or going into extreme situations. cases of catching and working with people who may soon come under the care of the system and become its beneficiaries.

*"Working with families does not bring the intended goals quickly.,,*

The last but very noticeable problem is that the actions are right and are interesting short-term activities. These are the design activities that they are taken for a specified period of time, they are not continued because they do not bring eg, deliberate effects that are binary. However, working with people often does not bring the desired goals quickly, the interlocutors emphasize that working with people is a tedious and long-lasting process, so the goal can be achieved, for example, after a few years. It happens that projects are one-off and you cannot provide a continuity of activities that would be useful.

## **8. What is being done to increase the availability of services for the most disadvantaged families?**

The participants of the focus groups do not see a great need to increase the availability of integrated services for the most disadvantaged families. There are many places that offer support to such families.

An important note is that most services are geared towards families with a variety of problems, including the most disadvantaged and lacking money.

to meet basic needs. Most of these services are free, and you do not need to pay for these services. community clubs. Only pre-school care is paid, but you can apply for a grant for kindergarten and nursery, which often they get low-income. The interlocutors indicate that the 500+ program also creates an opportunity to improve the situation of the family, and parents can use the funds, for example, for kindergarten fees.

Increasing accessibility for low-income families could be through work with parents over their competences and educational skills, so that they can pass positive models to their children when it comes to their attitude to work and education. Preventive action can prevent future social exclusion of their children.

## **9. What is the role of non-governmental organizations in integrated work for families with young children?**

Participants of focus groups notice the great role of non-governmental organizations in promoting integrated work for families with young children. It has been known for a long time that non-governmental organizations, foundations and associations have a very interesting offer, it is more often addressed to various social groups - it is known that they implement many projects that are targeted at specific social groups, but still have much greater freedom in the chosen subject. . The interviewees have the impression that these projects are more often more creative, innovative and interesting, but they also understand that social welfare is faced with other more serious tasks, so it is not always possible to afford, for example, an interesting experimental project. An example of an interesting project was, for example, a scout project, which concerned the organization of Saturday activities for children and parents - it was carried out for two years. Children carried out tasks developing key competences, but parents were involved in these tasks. Twice a year there was contact

with a psychologist, i.e. the assessment of the parents' actions, sometimes the observation of the parent's behavior towards the child gave interesting observations. Children sometimes found themselves in new situations much faster than adults. Both parents benefited greatly, they strengthened the bond with the child, but thanks to their knowledge, they helped children develop key skills. You could see a very big difference in the behavior of these parents and children after just a few months. Interlocutors believe that more activities should be directed at parents.

Often, non-governmental organizations run interesting and valuable programs, initiatives are a good alternative for families with young children. Often, non-governmental organizations operate only in a strictly defined area and these projects and initiatives are only undertaken in a given city or commune - despite the achieved success, they are not implemented on a national scale.

The interlocutors believe that non-governmental organizations are perceived much better, but also have much more money to promote their activities and are not so limited by a rigid framework, as they determine their statutory activities.

#### **10. What would be the value of involving families in developing early childhood education and child care?**

The participants of the focus groups note that parental involvement in developing and promoting early childhood education and care services is very important. Thanks to it, you can achieve much better results. According to the interviewees, it is much easier to involve parents in activities undertaken by non-governmental organizations, and this is often due to the fact that parents themselves willingly participate in these meetings, initiatives or projects, because they have an attractive offer and see the benefit for themselves. In social assistance, this is the most difficult task due to the clients that employees deal with.

A certain pattern is also formed when parents feel they have a real influence they are more willing to engage in activities. These actions can not be apparent because then they are very discouraging and acting the next time they will not want to take this trouble.

The interviewees notice that the younger the parents are, the more willing they are to take the initiative (it is much easier to work with the parents of pre-school rather than school children).

In kindergarten, teachers are also much more willing to enter into dialogue and interaction with parents, involve them in activities for the benefit of children and more often they pick up problems or abnormalities in children's development. In schools, the problems are often greater, but not fully identifiable, according to the interviewees, the preparation of teachers to work with children and youth is not sufficient. As a rule, there is also much less space at school for parents to be involved.

### **11. How has family involvement increased the understanding / perception of integrated work?**

Certainly, family involvement according to the focus group participants showed that that parents are a great potential that we have, and it is not always noticeable. Job with parents is necessary for the development of integrated work and for directing this work to the real needs of families in the 21st century. The interviewees emphasize that although they spent many years in the support system, or as educators in schools, kindergartens, etc., families and children have changed over the years, they also need to find themselves and work effectively despite generational changes. More and more problems are diagnosed in areas such as computer addiction and life in the virtual world. Many problems are noticed in children in good families. Cooperation with parents and involvement in the lives of children will be of great value. It also shows the direction in which to take preventive and preventive actions effectively.

### **12. What is necessary for the development of integrated work? What are the challenges and dreams of integrated work?**

Necessary for the development of integrated work is certainly the cooperation and good cooperation and cooperation of all institutions, starting from kindergartens, schools, aid units, in extreme cases courts and the police. Everyone must have only one overriding goal in their actions, which is development and helping families. The development of integrated work will also take place if the people who are to work in integrated services are competent, well-prepared and have certain skills - which, as participants of the focus groups pointed out, was often a weak point.

As a dream, the interviewees indicated that they would like services to go towards greater integration, that they would be available to everyone (not only for those children and families with various problems) and that much more attention was paid to preventive measures and programs. Additionally, for the actions taken to be systemic actions, not design.