Implementing Positive Behaviour Support in Early Childhood Education and Care
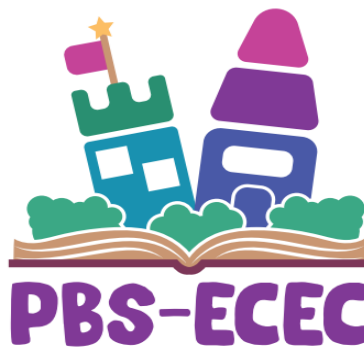
PBS-ECEC

Erasmus+

Report of the Impact Assessment Study and Practice Recommendations

Result 3: Transnational Report

PBS-ECEC

P.PORTO ESCOLA SUPERIOR DE EDUCAÇÃO POLITÉCNICO DO PORTO CARDET

INTERNATIONAL HELLENIC UNIVERSITY ICEP europe Institute of Child Education and Psychology INSTITUTE FOR DEVELOPMENT M. CHARALAMBOUS

PROJECT INFORMATION

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LEADING PARTNER	INSTITUTO POLITÉCNICO DO PORTO
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The PBS-ECEC project utilised online learning materials to train early years educators in implementing the Programme-Wide Positive Behaviour Support (PW-PBS) approach. Each partner in the consortium was responsible for conducting training programmes for early years educators in their respective countries and guiding the implementation of PW-PBS practices. This report presents the evaluation of the training programmes and implementations phase conducted in Ireland, Portugal, Greece and Cyprus.

In all partner countries, the training followed a train-the-trainers approach, where two coaches in each country (N = 8) contributed to empower the early years trainers (preschool managers/owners) with the necessary knowledge and skills to train ECEC teams in implementing PW-PBS. The trainers (N = 54) were then responsible for training their respective ECEC teams in the use of PW-PBS (N = 124). Following the training, the trainers and ECEC teams implemented PW-PBS in their settings for approximately 8-9 weeks. Throughout the process, coaches provided support and addressed any concerns. A set of three questionnaires were utilised to gather data for evaluation.

By analysing the collected data, valuable insights and findings regarding the effectiveness and impact of the training programme in Ireland, Portugal, Greece and Cyprus are provided. Across all four countries, the impact of the PW-PBS training programmes on early childhood educators' professional development was notably positive. The findings highlight the need for continued training opportunities in evidence-based approaches like PW-PBS, addressing specific challenges faced by educators and promoting inclusive environments. The study also emphasises the importance of comprehensive online training programmes that enhance educators' professional development and provide them with the skills to effectively support children's learning and wellbeing. The report provides practice recommendations which emphasise continuous professional development, collaborative approaches, data-driven decision-making, inclusive multi-tier support, addressing implementation barriers, and creating supportive learning environments for children. The recommendations emerged from this activity and aim to enhance the implementation of PW-PBS strategies in ECEC settings throughout Europe, ultimately creating socially inclusive environments and addressing behaviour problems from the early years of children's education.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. PBS-ECEC PROJECT OVERVIEW

This report has been prepared as part of the project titled "Implementing Positive Behaviour Support in Early Childhood Education and Care" (PBS-ECEC), funded by the European Commission under the Erasmus+ funding scheme (project number: 2021-1-PT01-KA220-SCH-000034367). The PBS-ECEC consortium comprises five partners (P1: Instituto Politécnico do Porto – leader, P2: Centre for Advancement of Research and Development in Educational Technology LTD, P3: International Hellenic University, P4: Institute of Child Education and Psychology Europe, P5: Neophytos Charalambous - Institute of Development LTD) from four countries (Cyprus, Greece, Ireland and Portugal). The Project duration is 24 months (01/01/2022 – 01/01/2024).

The PBS-ECEC project aims to promote a whole-school approach titled Programme-Wide Positive Behaviour Support (PW-PBS) in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) settings in Europe. Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) is a research-based educational framework, originally developed during the 1980s in the USA. It was designed to promote learning, social and behaviour outcomes for all children (Horner et al., 1990). Through collaboration with ECEC centres and academic institutions in Europe, PBS-ECEC focuses on applying a programme-wide approach to enhance children's socioemotional competence. The project focuses on:

- training centre-based teams to deliver elements of PW-PBS to other professional in the centres;
- developing educator training resources on evidence-based practices for the development of socioemotional competence and addressing challenging behaviour; and
- creating a web-based space to disseminate project activities, facilitate communication between consortium partners and other participants, and provide access to project resources.

Key project activities include supporting educator professional development and coaching in effective classroom management, socioemotional learning, and behaviour assessment. The project aims to address behaviour problems from the early years of children's education by building socioemotional competence in a socially inclusive environment.

To achieve these aims, the following Results were created during the lifespan of the PBS-ECEC project:

- Result 1 – Guide on Positive Behaviour Support in Early Childhood and Care: This result serves as a planning tool for educators in early childhood settings to create a proactive and high-quality environment that promotes PBS. (https://pbs-ecec.eu/wp-content/uploads/outputs/PBS-ECEC_Guide_EN.pdf)
- Result 2 – Online Modules of PW-PBS Instructional Practices in ECEC Settings: Result 2 involves the development of online learning modules and Open Educational Resources (OER) to support the delivery of the curriculum and workshops for educators and other stakeholders. (https://pbs-ecec.ese.ipp.pt/login/index.php)
- Result 3 – Impact assessment study and practice recommendations: During this result, the material of the e-learning space (Result 2) was expected to be used to effectively train at least 100 early childhood educators and 40 trainers from all partner countries in the use of PW-PBS practices, and to encourage them to implement these practices in their work.
- Result 4 – Policy and Strategy Toolkit and recommendations for PBS in ECEC: Result 4 includes lessons learned, promising practices, policy recommendations, and user-friendly tools for professionals and policymakers to implement PW-PBS strategies.

1.2. RESULT 3: IMPACT ASSESSMENT STUDY AND PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS

This report is presented as part of Result 3 of the PBS-ECEC project - Impact Assessment Study and Practice Recommendations. Result 3 involved the utilisation of the online learning materials developed during Result 2 and designed to train early years educators in implementing the PW-PBS approach. Each partner in the consortium was responsible for conducting training programmes for ECEC educators in their respective countries and guiding the implementation of PW-PBS practices in their work. In this report, we present the evaluation of the training programmes and implementation phases conducted by all partner organisations of the project. By examining the collected data, we aim to provide valuable insights into the effectiveness and impact of the training programmes in Ireland, Portugal, Greece and Cyprus and to include practice recommendations that emerged from these activities.

1.3. THE ROLE OF COACHES AND TRAINERS

In all partner countries, a train-the-trainers approach was used. Two coaches were selected from the staff of each participating organisation, due to their expertise in psychology and early childhood education. The coaches were tasked with equipping early years trainers (preschool managers, owners, etc.) with the necessary knowledge and skills needed to train ECEC teams (their staff and colleagues) in the use of the PW-PBS approach. Following the training, the trainers and educators were responsible for introducing and implementing PW-PBS in their own respective ECEC settings.

Table 1
Definition of 'coach', 'trainer', 'ECEC team' and 'leadership team' as used for the purpose of this report

Participant title	Definition for the purpose of this report
Coach	This professional, who is associated with the PBS-ECEC partner organisation and is involved in the PBS-ECEC project, has the responsibility of training preschool trainers. Their goal is to improve the knowledge and skills of these trainers required to effectively support their staff and colleagues in PW-PBS implementation.
Trainer*	This professional, whether he/she is a preschool manager, owner, educator, or another staff member, participates in training with PBS-ECEC coaches. Their purpose is to gain the necessary skills and knowledge to subsequently train and support their own staff and colleagues in implementing the PW-PBS approach. *In Portugal, the term 'pedagogical mediators' was used to describe trainers.
ECEC team	A group of preschool professionals participating in PW-PBS training facilitated by a trainer within their early years setting and implementing PW-PBS practices in their work, with support from their trainers.
Leadership team	A group of up to 5 professionals that manage and lead the successful and sustainable implementation of the PW-PBS components in an ECEC setting and supervise its efficacy. It may include a manager, a teacher, a specialized professional, a representative from parents, an assistant professional, or others. Each member has a predetermined role associated with PW-PBS.

1.4. TIMELINE OF THE TRAINING AND IMPLEMENTATION PHASE

This project activity began with a coaches' webinar in January 2023, which was held online via Zoom. The purpose of the webinar was to introduce the coaches from all partner countries to the project and their

role in Result 3. The content of the online learning platform was presented, and a detailed timeline of activities to be undertaken as part of Result 3 was discussed. The webinar gave the coaches an opportunity to ask questions and gain clarity on what was expected of them as part of their involvement in the project.

Then, a coaches' accelerated programme took place in each participating country at the beginning of February 2023. Researchers on the PBS-ECEC project worked with the coaches to further plan the activities of Result 3. The coaches were given an opportunity to review the online learning content in their own time and to prepare materials to be used in the training of preschools.

Following the preparation of the coaches, the training activities of the project began in each of the partner countries. All partner countries followed the same guidelines when working with the early years' settings (see Figure 1 below for a general timeline agreed upon by all partners). However, each partner had some flexibility to adapt and change the process slightly to suit the needs of their participants.

In all partner countries, three online training sessions took place with participating preschools across two weeks in March 2023 (In Portugal, some additional sessions were held, and this process is described in more detail in section 3.2):

- Session 1 was used to introduce the trainers to the project and to present to them the e-learning platform (link: https://pbs-ecec.eu/elearning/).
- Session 2 was used to present the content of the five learning modules in detail. The trainers were encouraged to study the modules independently after this session in order to gain a better understanding of the content. Additionally, the trainers were asked to prepare for the next session by developing some ideas for training their colleagues, according to the needs of their professional setting and the time that they can dedicate to taking part in the project activities.
- Session 3 was used for further exploration of the module content and the planning of the training of the ECEC TEAMS. This session was a critical point for trainers to ask questions and deepen their understanding of how they could train their colleagues effectively.

The coaches encouraged the trainers to organise an information session with their colleagues to explain the preschool's involvement in the PBS-ECEC project. The trainers were asked to explain the project aims,

particularly the aims of Result 3, and what their involvement in this result would entail. In this session, trainers were asked to confirm with their colleagues whether they wished to be involved.

Next, the training of ECEC teams occurred across March and April 2023. The coaches explained to the trainers that the training could be formal or informal, depending on the resources and time available to the trainers and the ECEC teams. If possible, trainers were asked to schedule five training sessions with the ECEC teams, with each session being dedicated to the learning objectives of one of the five modules prepared as part of Result 2.

The coaches explained to the trainers that the training sessions should occur in a short space of time (e.g., 1-2 weeks) and could take place in a number of formats, according to the time and resources available to the trainers:

- Example 1: The trainer and the ECEC teams work through the content on Moodle simultaneously, with the trainer explaining and reading the content within the modules and asking the ECEC teams to take part in the learning activities during the training session.
- Example 2: The trainer presents the learning content of the modules using a PowerPoint presentation, and asks the ECEC teams to autonomously explore the Moodle, the learning activities and the additional resources in their own time.
- Example 3: The trainer introduces the learning modules and asks the team to explore them independently before coming back for a follow-up session to discuss the content and to explore the online learning activities.

All preschools taking part followed the format presented in example 3, as they found this gave them and their colleagues the greatest level of flexibility to study the content of the online learning platform at a time suitable to them. The trainers reported asking the ECEC teams to study the content during break times, during quiet periods at work and after work hours.

Following the training sessions, the ECEC teams were expected to have a clear idea of the importance of socioemotional learning in early years, what PBS is and how it can be implemented and assessed. During the training, the trainers were asked to discuss with their colleagues the needs of their ECEC settings and

the aspects of PBS which they wish to implement in their work. The trainers and ECEC teams were then asked to implement PW-PBS in their settings over a period of approximately 8-9 weeks.

Trainers had an opportunity to meet with the project coaches after the first four weeks of implementation and at the end of the implementation. These sessions were held online and gave the trainers an opportunity to ask questions and raise any concerns they had in relation to the implementation of PW-PBS in their settings, as well as provide informal feedback about the training and implementation phase. The coaches also encouraged the trainers to get in touch via email at any point of their involvement in this project activity, should any issues arise. The majority of the questions and concerns reported by the trainers were centred around time issues. Trainers found that the ECEC teams struggled to find time to study the content and to effectively plan and implement PW-PBS practices in their work. The coaches encouraged the trainers to adapt the implementation level and timeline to suit the needs of the preschool and the availability of the ECEC teams. Trainers were encouraged to send regular updates on their progress.

1.5. CONSENT, ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

All participants (trainers and ECEC teams) were asked to fill out a consent form prior to their involvement in the project activity. Separate consent forms were sent to teachers and trainers, which outlined their tasks as part of Result 3. The consent form explained that participants can withdraw from the activity at any point and that their data will be stored anonymously and will only be used as part of this project result. The consent forms for trainers and ECEC teams can be found in Annexes I and II.

Before taking part in the training, participants (trainers/ and teachers) were asked to fill out the pre-intervention questionnaire (Questionnaire 1) which was designed to gather demographic information and information on their current knowledge of PBS, the use of behaviour programmes in their professional setting and their thoughts on the behavioural and socioemotional needs of the children they work with. Questionnaire 1 was distributed to the trainers online, before taking part in the training. The trainers were also asked to distribute it to the ECEC teams, before training them in the use PBS.

At the end of the last training session, participants (trainers/ and teachers) were asked to fill out the post-training questionnaire (Questionnaire 2) to evaluate the support provided by the training facilitators, the learning content, the training effectiveness and the tools used. Trainers responded to the questionnaire following their online training sessions with coaches, while ECEC teams completed it after finishing the training within their respective settings.

A follow-up questionnaire (Questionnaire 3) was given to the participants at the end of the implementation phase, to analyse the knowledge they gained through the training, whether they chose to implement aspects of PBS in their practice and whether they identified any changes in the children's behaviour and socioemotional skills as a result. All questionnaires can be found in Annexes III, IV and V.

Figure 1. *Timeline of the training of trainers and ECEC teams, including the schedule of evaluation and assessment*
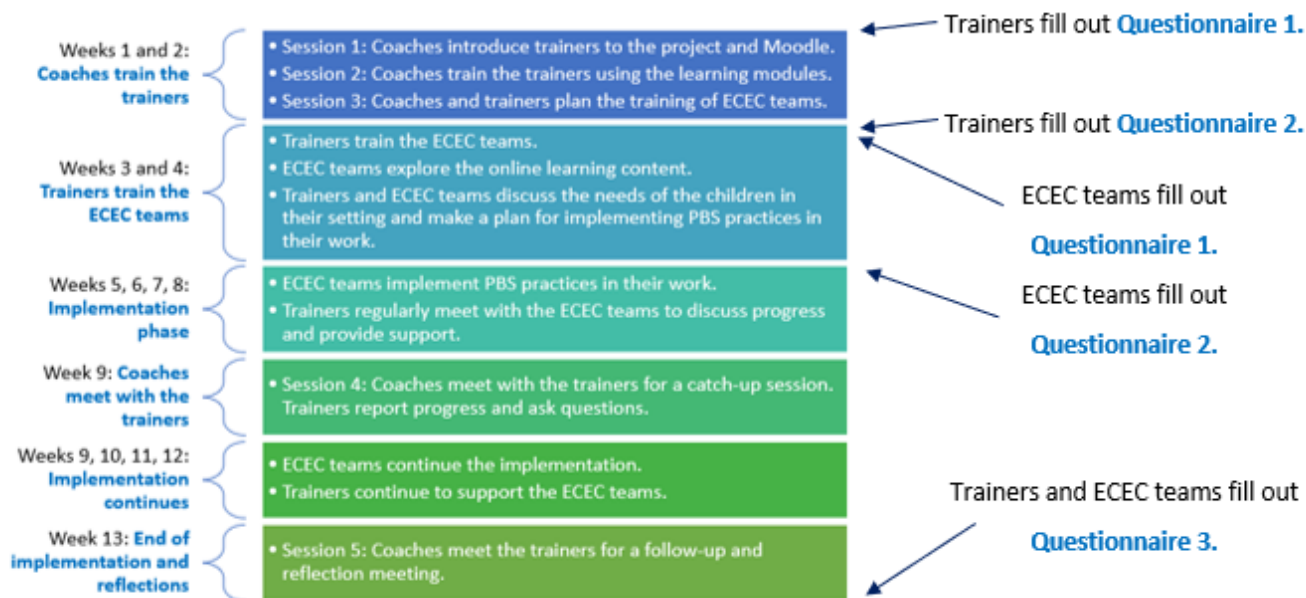
2. IRELAND

2.1. PRESCHOOL RECRUITMENT AND PROFILES

A number of activities were employed in the recruitment of participating preschools. The ICEP Europe marketing team utilised social media platforms to disseminate information about the recruitment process. Additionally, a press release was created as a requirement for the PBS-ECEC project, which also served to announce the recruitment. However, most preschools were recruited through direct contact by phone and through ICEP's mailing list. Each preschool was requested to nominate 1 or 2 trainers who would engage in online meetings with the coaches and receive training to subsequently support the rest of the preschool team in PW-PBS implementation.

Initially, 8 preschools were recruited for the training and implementation activity, with 11 trainers agreeing to train their staff or colleagues. However, following the initial training sessions, 2 preschools (accompanied by 2 trainers) decided to withdraw from the activity. The reasons for dropping out provided by the preschools related to the programme not being suitable to their current needs and availability. Among the remaining 6 preschools, 4 were public institutions while 2 were private. The remaining 9 trainers successfully recruited 18 ECEC professionals to participate in this project activity and trained them in the utilisation of the PW-PBS approach. Information regarding each participating preschool can be found in Table 2 below.

Table 2
Information relating to participating preschools

Preschool	No. of trainers	No. of professionals (ECEC teams)	Sector
Preschool 1	2	3	Public
Preschool 2	1	4	Private for-profit
Preschool 3	1	4	Private for-profit
Preschool 4	1	3	Private for-profit
Preschool 5	2	2	Private for-profit
Preschool 6	2	2	Public

2.2. FINDINGS FROM QUESTIONNAIRE 1: PRE-TRAINING QUESTIONNAIRE

Trainers' Demographic Information

Nine trainers took part in this project activity, all of them female, with an average age of 45.5 (age range 35-56). Eight participants held a Bachelor's Degree (88.9%) and 1 participant completed the Advanced Certificate/Higher Certificate (11.1%). When asked about their professional roles, 5 of the trainers described themselves as preschool leaders/managers/owners (55.6%), 3 as preschool teachers (33.3%) and 1 participant described themselves as a member of preschool care staff (11.1%). Four of the participants reported working with children aged 4-5 (44.6%), 2 participants reported working with children aged 1-3 (22.2%), and the remaining 3 participants reported working with children aged 2 years 8 months to 3, 3-4 years and 3-5 years. Four of the trainers reported working in a public (government-funded preschool) (44.4%), while 5 of the trainers worked in private settings (55.6%). In terms of their work location, 5 trainers reported working in small towns (approximately 3,000-15,000 people) (55.6%), 2 reported working in in towns (approximately 15,000-100,000 people) (22.2%) and 2 reported working in cities (approximately 100,000-1,000,000 people) (22.2%).

ECEC Teams' Demographic Information

Based on the demographic data collected, it was observed that out of the total 18 participants of the ECEC teams, the majority consisted of females (17 participants, accounting for 94.4%), while only one participant was male (5.6%). The age range of the participants varied from 20 to 47 years old, with an average age of 30.2. When considering their educational qualifications, the distribution was as follows: 9 participants held a Bachelor's Degree (50%), 6 participants completed the Advanced Certificate/Higher Certificate (33.3%), and 3 participants possessed a Masters Degree (16.7%). In terms of their professional roles, the participants identified themselves as follows: 13 participants were preschool teachers (72.2%), 3 were preschool care staff (16.7%) and 2 were preschool leaders/managers/owners (11.1%). The majority of participants worked with children aged 3-4 years (61.1%), followed by those working with children aged 4-5 years (27.8%), and those working with toddlers aged 1-3 years (1.1%).

The participants were employed in various settings, with 13 indicating their affiliation with private preschools or creches (72.2%), while 5 were associated with public (government-funded) preschool settings (27.8%). When considering the population size of their work locations, 9 participants described

their work locations as small towns (50%), 8 participants worked in towns (44.4%), and 1 participant worked in a city (5.6%).

Trainers' Perceived Status of Children's Behavioural and Socioemotional Difficulties

In this section, the focus was to investigate the status of children's behavioural and socioemotional difficulties, as perceived by the participants. The majority of trainers reported that preschool children 'sometimes' (55.6%) and 'often' (33.3) experience great difficulty in managing and expressing their emotions, and that children 'sometimes' (55.6%) face challenges in social interactions with others. The majority (77.8%) reported that children in their classroom 'sometimes' lack motivation and are prone to boredom. Most of the trainers (66.7%) reported that the children in their classroom 'misbehave occasionally', and that their socioemotional competencies are 'moderately developed' (77.8%).

ECEC Teams' Perceived Status of Children's Behavioural and Socioemotional Difficulties

Just as the trainers, the majority of participants of ECEC teams (66.7%) reported that preschool children 'sometimes' experience great difficulty in managing and expressing their emotions. A similar proportion (66.7%) indicated that preschool children 'sometimes' face challenges in social interactions with others. Additionally, a significant number of participants (61.1%) reported that children in their classrooms 'sometimes' lack motivation and are prone to boredom. Regarding overall behaviour, 55.6% of participants perceived that the children in their classes 'misbehave occasionally', while 44.4% reported that children 'behave well'. When assessing the socioemotional competencies of children, 50% of participants considered them 'moderately developed' and 44.4% considered them 'well developed'.

Trainers' Current Use of Behaviour Management Programmes and Knowledge of PBS

Regarding the current use of behaviour management programmes and their knowledge of PBS, all trainers indicated that their schools/preschools have explicit written guidelines to handle behaviour difficulties: 55.6% of those reported using a specific behaviour management programme (mostly the High Scope Preschool Programme – 60%), while 44.4% reported that they do not follow any programme. Trainers who used behaviour management programmes generally perceived them to be 'moderately' effective in reducing children's challenging behaviours (80%) and supporting their socioemotional and behavioural needs (80%). When asked about their awareness of PBS as an evidence-based, tiered framework for supporting children's behavioural, academic, social, emotional, and mental health, a large majority of

trainers (88.9%) indicated they were not aware of PBS before the study. Likewise, the majority of trainers (88.9%) had not previously participated in a training programme focusing on the use of PBS to aid the socioemotional learning of preschool children.

ECEC Teams' Current Use of Behaviour Management Programmes and Knowledge of PBS

Again, all participants indicated that their schools/preschools have explicit written guidelines to handle behaviour difficulties. However, only 33.3% reported following a specific behaviour management programme, while the majority (66.7%) did not. Among those who reported using a programme, 50% indicated using the HighScope Preschool Programme and 50% indicating the use of their own policy or programme. In general, participants found the behaviour management programmes to be 'moderately' effective in addressing children's challenging behaviours (66.7%) and meeting their socioemotional and behavioural needs (66.7%). As was the case with the trainers, the significant majority of ECEC team members (83.3%) were unaware of PBS as an evidence-based, tiered framework designed to support children's behavioural, academic, social, emotional, and mental health, prior to the research. Interestingly, all participants of the ECEC teams indicated that they had not previously participated in a training programme focusing on the use of PBS to aid the socioemotional learning of preschool children.

2.3. FINDINGS FROM QUESTIONNAIRE 2: POST-TRAINING QUESTIONNAIRE

The project findings presented below are based on the responses received from 24 participants (9 trainers and 15 ECEC professionals). Despite the efforts to encourage all ECEC teams to fill out Questionnaire 2 within the specified timeframe, 3 participants did not comply. However, these individuals reportedly still participated fully in the activity, completing the training and implementing PW-PBS practices in their work.

Trainers' and ECEC Teams' Evaluation of the Online Modules

Learning Objectives

Firstly, the participants were asked to evaluate the learning objectives of the training materials. The majority of the trainers found the learning objectives easy to understand (77.8% agreed, 22.2% strongly agreed). Additionally, most trainers considered them relevant to their professional practice (66.6% agreed, 33.4% strongly agreed). Similarly, the ECEC teams found the learning objectives easy to

understand (73.3% agreed), and they reported that the learning objectives were relevant to their professional practice (73.3% agreed)

Learning Content

Then, the participants were asked to evaluate the learning content of the training materials. The majority of trainers agreed that the content met their expectations (77.8% agreed), was relevant to their daily work (100% agreed) and was enjoyable to read (88.9% agreed, 11.1% strongly agreed). Again, the responses from the ECEC teams largely mirrored those of the trainers, with the majority agreeing that the learning content met their expectations (66.7% agreed), was relevant to their daily work (66.7% agreed) and was enjoyable to read (53.3% agreed, 33.3% agreed).

When asked "What aspects of the learning content will you use in your daily work?", the trainers and ECEC team participants provided the responses such as: "Choral repetition to enforce expected rules and behaviours in a fun way", "Practicing tips on socioemotional learning", "The TPOT assessment tool", "Active supervision", "The voice meter", "Letting the child lead the curriculum using open ended questions and use the behavioural strategies", among others. From further discussions and from the results of Questionnaire 3 (presented below), it is evident, however, that all preschools attempted to implement many aspects of PW-PBS. In fact, most preschools reported implementing most or all examples of the PW-PBS approach presented in the online content of the PBS-ECEC project.

The participants were also asked what they enjoyed most about the learning content and their responses highlighted the content's flexibility and convenience ("Could do at your own pace", "No pressure to attend classes all done in my own time at home", "I liked doing it in my own time. Oftentimes we miss out on training opportunities as they happen during the working day. We are already understaffed and often can't afford to leave the room to take part in training."), the clarity of design and content ("The clear explanation of everything", "Very interesting and liked the little quizzes!", "It was well laid out and easy to follow", "So much information and great graphics, assessments, tips. Very easy to follow."), the content's contribution to their professional development and the validation of their current practices ("It was definitely like a refresher course and assurance that what we are doing is correct", "I liked learning new ways to interact with children in my care and help them display better behaviour", "Comparing the

content of the course to what I already do in my work", "It refreshed the importance of PBS with preschool aged children and how important it is to implement in this age bracket").

The participants were then asked "Is there something that should be included in the learning content? If yes, what is it?". This was a required question, with 2 trainers and 8 participants of the ECEC teams indicating that there is nothing that should be included in the learning content. The remaining participants provided ideas related to specific scenarios and instructions ("More scenarios with possible solutions that can be implemented in our workplace", "More specific examples of activities to use in the classroom", "More Tier 2 and Tier 3 information", "More examples for younger children", "I feel that for our service, we would have benefited from having information on Tier 2, as we are at this stage."), clarity and instruction ("Some of the activities could be a little clearer. I didn't understand everything I was being asked to do.") and possible expansion and enhancements:

- "Time sampling behaviour observation sheet"
- "I feel more quizzes as it will encourage more discussion and interaction"
- "I know this course is focusing on Tier 1 of the pyramid model, but we do have children that I feel would require Tier 2. To be honest, I did not find anything new as such to implement so I would have liked a lot more suggestions than was supplied. Don't get me wrong, it is an excellent course for new practitioners, but I am almost 30 years in early years, and I have done numerous 'challenging behaviour' 'child wellbeing' 'supporting anxious children' courses, etc., so I didn't feel I learned anything new."
- "More relevant videos which clearly show how to implement PBS in the classroom."
- "A discussion forum to talk with other teachers."
- "Option to download it and learn offline."
- "Maybe some interviews with Irish/English preschools and how they implement PBS, maybe less Americanised?"

The participants were asked "do you think that any aspects of the learning content should be left out? If yes, what are they?". Again, this question required a response to move forward with the survey, with 8 trainers and 9 ECEC professionals indicating that there is nothing that should be excluded from the content. The remaining 7 participants provided ideas relating to the content relevance and applicability ("Not so much left out as there are many different sizes/types of services but we are a small service -

myself the owner/manager and then 2 staff. So, I felt the piece on leadership and being led by a team of 4 or 5 people was not relevant to me. Also, I loved the idea of 'if teacher can't deal with it go to the leadership team'!! If only that option was available. Or even for us another support group/person. Sometimes we can feel very alone."), the language used and the clarity of the content ("I feel it repeats some aspects at times!!", "Some of the quizzes had responses in a foreign language", "There was a bit of repetition between the different courses so some information could be left out or replaced") and resource streamlining ("There was quite a lot of content to get through. Could maybe be condensed and make it easier to follow for preschool staff who are very busy", "There are a lot of resources provided - it's a bit overwhelming not knowing what's important and what isn't").

Learning Activities

The participants were then asked to evaluate the learning activities presented alongside the online learning content and overall reported positive experiences with the activities. A significant portion of participants agreed that they were able to complete the activities within the modules (55.6% trainers agreed and 22.2% strongly agreed, 73.3% ECEC team members agreed) and enjoyed doing so (77.8% trainers agreed, 66.7% ECEC team members agreed).

Additional Materials

In the last part of the evaluation of the learning content, the participants were asked to evaluate the additional learning materials and resources provided in the online modules. The majority of participants found the materials and resources to be relevant to the training programme (88.9% trainers agreed, 73.3% ECEC team members agreed) and they reported that they enjoyed exploring them (55.6% trainers agreed, 66.7% ECEC team members agreed).

Trainers' Evaluation of the Training Programme

The trainers evaluated the programme positively (see Figure 2), indicating that they found the programme useful (44.4% agreed, 33.3% strongly agreed), that it will help them support socioemotional skills and behavioural needs of children in their work with (66.7% agreed), and that it increased their knowledge of Positive Behaviour Support (66.7% agreed). The majority of trainers indicated that they would recommend this type of training programme to their colleagues (88.9% agreed).

The majority of trainers believed that it is important to implement this kind of training programme in early childhood settings (55.6% strongly agreed and 22.2% agreed) and believed that this training programme will be helpful for staff working with children in early years settings (88.9% agreed). Interestingly, the majority of trainers remained neutral when asked whether the programme supported their work in developing the socioemotional competencies of children (66.7% neither agreed or disagreed, 33.3% agreed), but all believed that this programme is useful for early years teachers aiming to improve children's socioemotional competencies (100% agreed). To the statement "Overall, I am satisfied with the training programme", all participants (100%) responded, "agree".

Figure 2. *Trainers' Evaluation of the Training Programme*
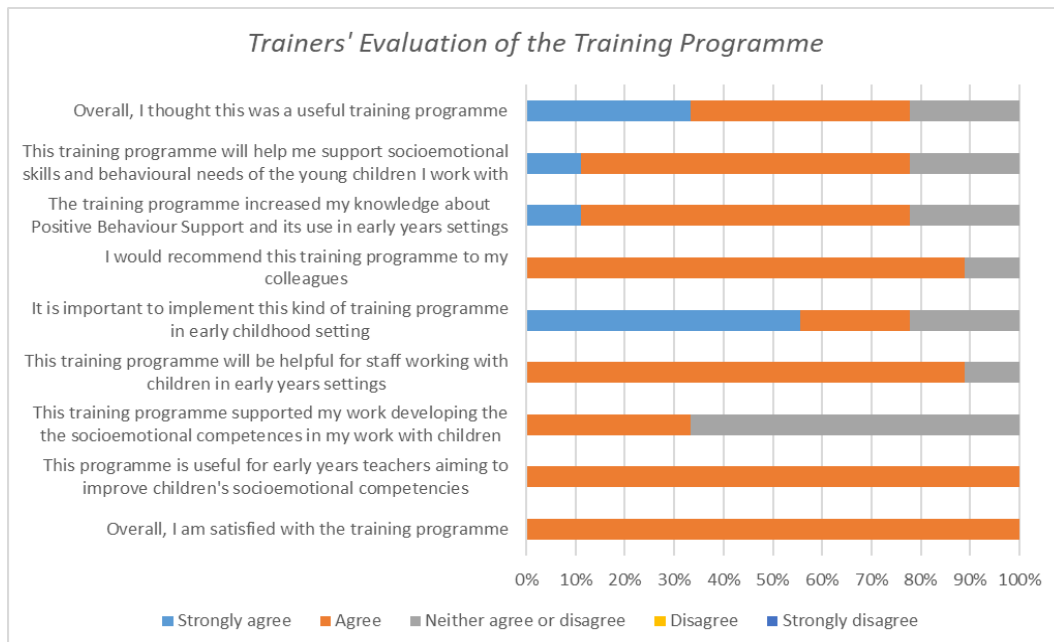
The trainers were then asked what they enjoyed most about the training programme and they provided responses such as: "That it was online and easy to navigate", "Done at my own pace at home", "Learning new ways to support children's social and emotional learning", "Understanding different aspects of positive behaviour", "The easy to access extra support materials.", "That it was online", "I enjoyed the introductory sessions that came with the online learning. It was nice to meet the researcher behind this programme and get an explanation as to why it was developed."

The trainers were also asked if there was anything that could be improved about the training programme and provided suggestions relating to content and delivery ("Give specific scenarios and possible solutions", "Some language was difficult to understand", "More interactive quizzes") and the relevance and appropriateness of the content ("Maybe some videos of early years educators implementing strategies in the learning environment. Some of the videos were American and didn't replicate the teaching strategies we would follow.").

The trainers were then asked if they plan on implementing PBS in their professional practice in the ongoing school year. Seven trainers said 'yes' and the remaining 2 trainers indicated that they have already began implementing PBS in their work and that they have already been implementing most of the aspects of PBS mentioned in the course.

ECEC Teams' Evaluation of the Training Programme

Similarly to the trainers, the training programme was positively evaluated by participants from the ECEC teams (see Figure 3), with a significant majority finding the programme useful (80% agreed). Participants believed the programme would help them support socioemotional skills and behavioural needs of children in their work (60% agreed), it increased their knowledge of PBS (60% agreed, 26.7% strongly agreed) and they were generally satisfied with the training programme (86.7% agreed). When asked if they would recommend this type of training programme to their colleagues, 10 participants (66.7%) indicated that they "agree", 3 participants (20%) indicated that they "neither agree or disagree" and 2 participants (13.3%) indicated that they "strongly agree".

Not unlike their trainers, the majority of ECEC team members showed strong support for implementing this training programme in early years settings (73.3%). They also believed that the programme would be beneficial for staff working with young children (53.3% agreed, 20% strongly agreed). Regarding the programme's impact on developing children's socioemotional competencies, 66.7% agreed that it offered support to their work. Moreover, a substantial 73.3% of participants agreed that the training was useful for early years teachers seeking to improve children's socioemotional competencies. Similarly to the trainers, the ECEC team members indicated high satisfaction with the training programme, as an overwhelming majority of participants (86.7%) responded "agree" to the statement, "Overall, I am satisfied with the training programme."

Figure 3. *ECEC Team's Evaluation of the Training Programme*
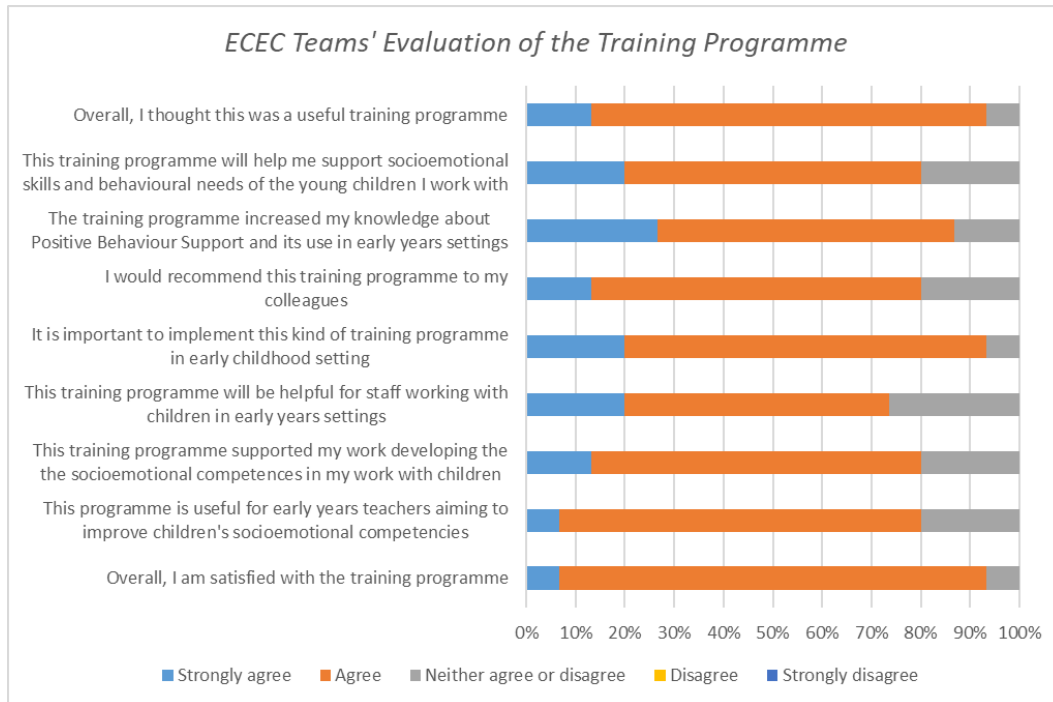
Similarly to the trainers, the ECEC teams provided examples of things that they enjoyed about the programme, including: "That I could do it in my own time and that I could save the resources and share them with my colleagues", "I got to compare HighScope with PBS", "It was well laid out.", "That it was online and I could study from my phone", "No tests required to pass to the next module. Could access all information at once.", "Reassurance that the methods we use with our children are good".

The ECEC teams were also asked if there was anything that could be improved about the programme and provided suggestions relating to content and delivery ("More condensed content", "Some more country-specific video examples. Not many Irish videos included.", "Some of the information about social and emotional learning is pretty basic and all preschool staff should already be aware of it. Not sure it is needed, except maybe for people only starting their careers in the area."), the accessibility of the content ("Make it available to everyone.") and the user experience and navigation ("It was difficult to find the courses when I logged onto Moodle - it needs to be clearer how many modules we are supposed to do and where to find them.", "Provide some downloadable/printable materials").

Six participants indicated that they plan on implementing PBS in their work and again, the remaining participants indicated that they have already begun implementing PBS in their work, that they have already been implementing most of the aspects of PBS mentioned in the course or that they will implement some aspects of it.

Trainers' Evaluation of the Training Facilitators/Training Organisers

The final section of the questionnaire was designed to evaluate the training facilitators. For the trainers, this meant evaluating the coaches whom they met in the online sessions. The trainers believed that the training organised by the coaches was well organised (66.7% agreed, 33.3% strongly agreed) and that the facilitators (coaches) of the training programme explained everything clearly (66.7% agreed, 33.3% strongly agreed). The trainers indicated that the training facilitators (coaches) were helpful in answering their questions (55.6% agreed). The trainers indicated that they would be happy to contact their coaches again if they had further queries after the completion of the training programme (66.7% agreed).

ECEC Teams' Evaluation of the Training Facilitators/Training Organisers

In the final section of this questionnaire, the ECEC teams were asked to evaluate the trainers from their setting. They positively evaluated the training organised by their trainers, with the majority indicating that the training was well organised (80% agreed), and that their trainers explained everything clearly (46.7% agreed, 33.3% strongly agreed). The participants also indicated that the training facilitators (trainers from their settings) were helpful in answering their questions (60% agreed).

2.4. FINDINGS FROM QUESTIONNAIRE 3: FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONNAIRE

Again, despite the trainers' and the research team's efforts to encourage all teachers to fill out Questionnaire 3 within the specified timeframe, 4 participants did not comply. The project findings presented below are based on the responses received from 9 trainers and 14 members of ECEC teams.

Trainers' Perceptions of the Training Programme

Firstly, the trainers were asked to evaluate the training programme which they took part in. The majority of trainers reported that they were glad to have taken part in the programme (55.6% strongly agreed and 33.3% agreed), and they agreed that the programme increased their knowledge of the importance of

children's socioemotional learning (55.6% agreed and 33.3% strongly agreed), their knowledge of PBS and its use in preschool settings (55.6% strongly agreed and 33.3% agreed) and their competencies in dealing with challenging behaviours and supporting socioemotional learning in the classroom (66.7% agreed and 11.1% strongly agreed). The trainers also agreed that the programme encouraged them to learn more about socioemotional learning, challenging behaviours and positive discipline (66.7% agreed, 30.3% strongly agreed). All trainers indicated that they have discussed the training programme with their colleagues and recommended the programme to their colleagues.

ECEC Teams' Perceptions of the Training Programme

Similar responses were provided by the ECEC teams, with the majority indicating that they were glad to have taken part in the training programme (57.1% agreed, 42.9% strongly agreed). Again, the majority of participants reported that they agreed that the programme increased their knowledge of the importance of children's socioemotional learning (57.1% agreed, 42.9% strongly agreed), their knowledge of PBS and its use in preschool settings (57.1% strongly agreed, 42.9% agreed) and their competencies in dealing with challenging behaviours and supporting socioemotional learning in the classroom (57.1% agreed, 42.9% strongly agreed). Just as their trainers, the ECEC teams agreed that the training programme encouraged them to learn more about socioemotional learning, challenging behaviours and positive discipline (64.3% agreed, 28.6% strongly agreed). All participants indicated that they discussed the programme and recommended it to their colleagues.

Trainers' Implementation of PBS in the Preschool Classroom

All trainers indicated that they implemented aspects of PBS in their classroom since taking part in the programme. When asked what aspects of PBS they took on in their professional practice, 4 trainers indicated implementing "all aspects" form the course, and 4 trainers provided responses such as:

- "Now using a lot more visuals, positive feedback to the children, positively stating rules, keeping directions short, using provided questionnaires to assess children's behaviour."
- "Choral repetition for encouraging rules."
- "Positive phrasing, routines, active supervision, visual rules."
- "Choral response."

The trainers were then asked about the barriers to using PBS in their practice, with 44.4% indicating that they encountered barriers and 55.6% that they did not. When asked what barriers they encountered, participants provided responses related to time constraints and staff and resource shortages ("Lack of time and staff was a huge issue for us and continues to be whenever we try to implement or try anything new", "Lack of time and I felt that only certain aspects could be considered for the children with additional needs, especially those that need support in the areas of communication.", "Many barriers including time constraints, staffing issues and insufficient resources") and the general approach and perspective ("The main barrier is as a result of the label 'PBS'. PBS is very behaviour based, when behaviour is from a struggle with communication or an inability for the child to communicate clearly what they need. When we focus on behaviour instead of communication and language we can be drawn into a focus of punishing or rewarding. There are many great examples in this training and the delivery was very good and easily accessible, but the name would need to change for widespread use in ELC to support the rights of the child to be heard and listened and communicated with.").

The majority of trainers (77.8%) indicated that they encountered facilitators and resources that helped with PBS implementation, including: "The questionnaires you provided especially the TPOT and the Strengths and Difficulties questionnaire", "Plenty online resources", "Support from colleagues", "Everything presented in the course acted as a facilitator ", "The ease of access and quality of resources were great and the support from (the coach) was very good." Finally, all trainers indicated that since taking part in the training programme, they have encouraged or trained their colleagues to use PBS.

ECEC Teams' Implementation of PBS in the Preschool Classroom

Again, all members of ECEC teams indicated that they have implemented aspects of PBS in their classroom since taking part in the training programme. When asked what aspects of PBS they took on in their professional practice, the participants provided responses such as the following:

- "Stating rules in a positive manner, giving feedback when children are doing something good."
- "The voice meter and other strategies."
- "Taking advantage of undesirable behaviour to create a moment of learning."
- "Whole-classroom approach to PBS."
- "The voice meter, modelling desired behaviour, behaviour matrix, monitoring progress, etc."

- "More use of reinforcement of positive behaviours using different reinforcers, setting out rules and expectations, active supervision."
- "All aspects from the training."
- "Modelling to the children the behaviour that they should be displaying."
- "Pretty much everything from the course, though it was hard to have a leadership team in such a small setting like ours."
- "Mostly ensuring that we state rules and expectations in the classroom in a positive manner and that we provide regular positive feedback when these expectations are met."

A slightly larger percentage of ECEC members reported encountering barriers to implementation when compared to their trainers, with 57.1% indicating that they encountered barriers and 42.9% indicating that they did not. Similarly to their trainers, the ECEC teams reported that the barriers related to staffing and resource issues ("We are a small preschool so we don't have enough staff to have a leadership team.", "Lack of a whole school approach", "Being understaffed") and time constraints ("Lack of time definitely.", 'Not enough time to fully see results", "Time is scarce when it comes to doing any additional training and trying new approaches").

Interestingly, all ECEC team members indicated that they encountered facilitators and resources that helped with PBS implementation, including: "Support from colleagues", "The resources on the online modules were very helpful", "Well-structured online course", "Supportive manager", "Team work", "Help from colleagues", "The online resources were fantastic". Finally, all participants indicated that since taking part in the training, they have encouraged or trained their colleagues to use PBS.

Trainers' Perceived Status of Children's Behavioural and Socioemotional Difficulties Post-training

The questionnaire's final section aimed to gather information on whether participants observed any changes in the socioemotional and behavioural needs of the children in their preschool settings. It is important to acknowledge that the implementation phase of this project was relatively short, and it is unlikely to have yielded significant results in terms of children's socioemotional competencies and behavioural needs. However, the research team sought to gain insights into the participants' perspectives

on even minor improvements and encouraged them to continue using PBS practices in their professional practice beyond the project's completion.

Post-training, the majority of trainers reported that preschool children 'sometimes' experience great difficulty in managing and expressing their emotions (55.6%) and that children 'sometimes' face challenges in social interactions with others (88.9%). When asked whether the children in their classroom are prone to boredom, 55.6% trainers responded 'never', 30.3% responded 'sometimes' and 11.1% responded 'often'. A comparison of trainer's perceived status of children's behavioural and socioemotional difficulties pre- and post-training can be found in Figure 4 below.

Figure 4. *Comparison of Trainer's Perceived Status of Children's Behavioural and Socioemotional Difficulties Pre- and Post-training*
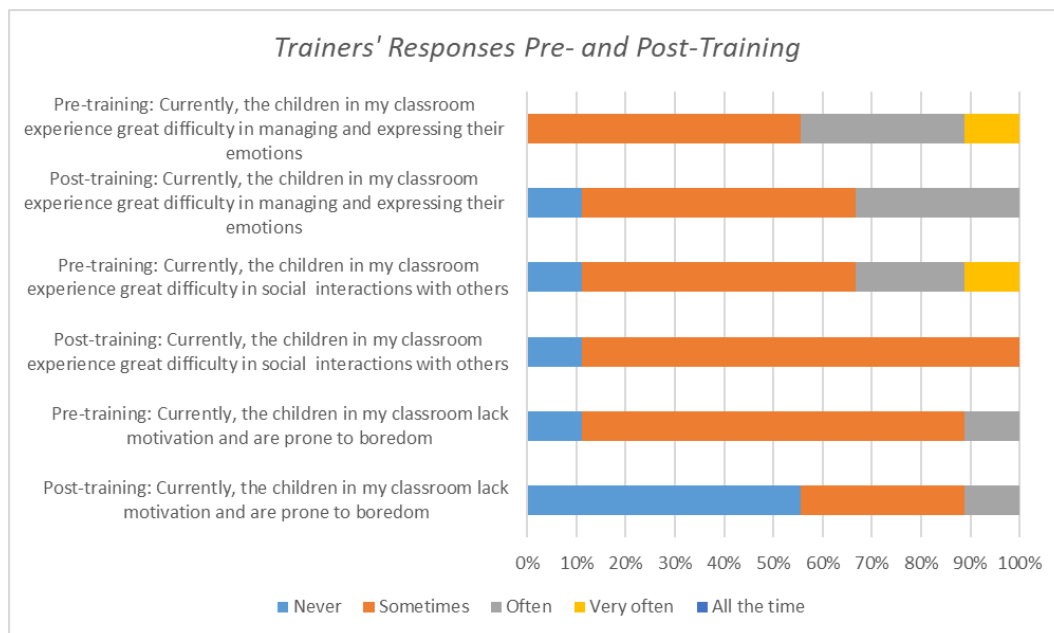
Regarding overall behaviour, 66.7% of trainers perceived that children in their classes 'misbehave occasionally', while 33.3% reported that children 'behave well'. When assessing the socioemotional competencies of children, 66.7% of trainers considered them 'well developed', 22.2% considered them moderately developed, and 11.1% considered them 'very well developed'.

Finally, the trainers were asked if they noticed improvements in the socioemotional learning of the children in their classroom since using PBS (see Figure 5), with 55.6% of trainers responding 'slightly', 33.3% responding 'moderately' and 11.1% responding 'very'. The participants were also asked if they noticed a decrease in challenging behaviours of the children in their classroom since using PBS, with 44.4% responding 'slightly' and 44.4% responding 'moderately'.

Figure 5. *Trainers' Perceived Changes in Children's Socioemotional Learning and Challenging Behaviours Post-training*

ECEC Teams' Perceived Status of Children's Behavioural and Socioemotional Difficulties Post-training

The results of the questionnaire distributed to ECEC team members largely mirrored those of their trainers, with the majority of participants reporting that preschool children 'sometimes' experience great difficulty in managing and expressing their emotions (64.3%) and that they 'sometimes' face challenges in social interactions (78.6%). When asked whether the children in their classroom are prone to boredom, 50% responded 'sometimes', 35.7% responded 'often' and 14.3% responded 'never'.

Regarding overall behaviour, 50% of participants perceived that children in their classes 'misbehave occasionally', while 50% reported that children 'behave well'. When assessing the socioemotional competencies of children, 64.3% of participants considered them 'well developed', 28.6% considered them 'moderately developed', and 7.1% considered them 'very well developed'. Comparison of ECEC

team member's perceived status of children's behavioural and socioemotional difficulties pre- and post-training can be found in Figure 6 below.
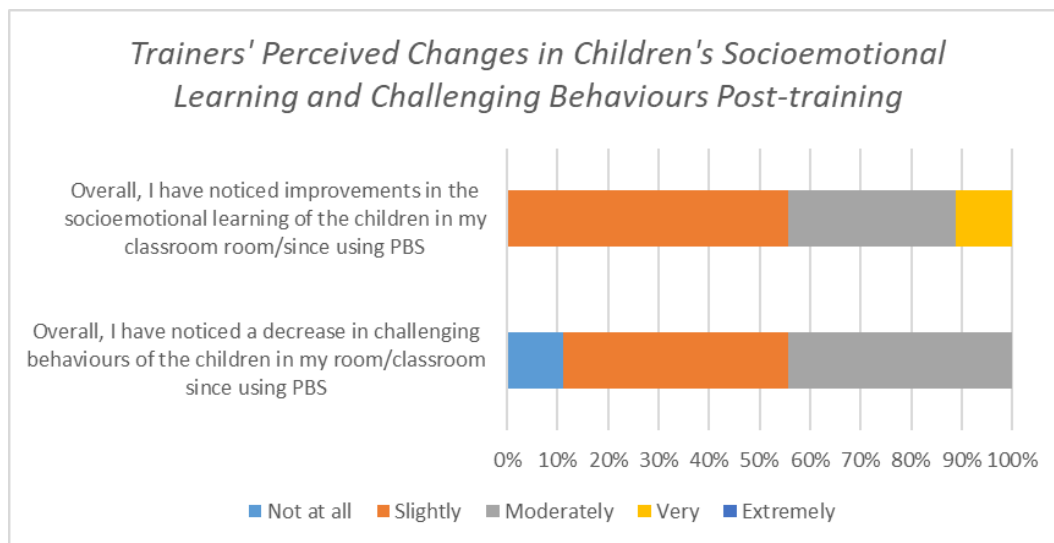
Figure 6. *Comparison of ECEC Team's Perceived Status of Children's Behavioural and Socioemotional Difficulties Pre- and Post-training*
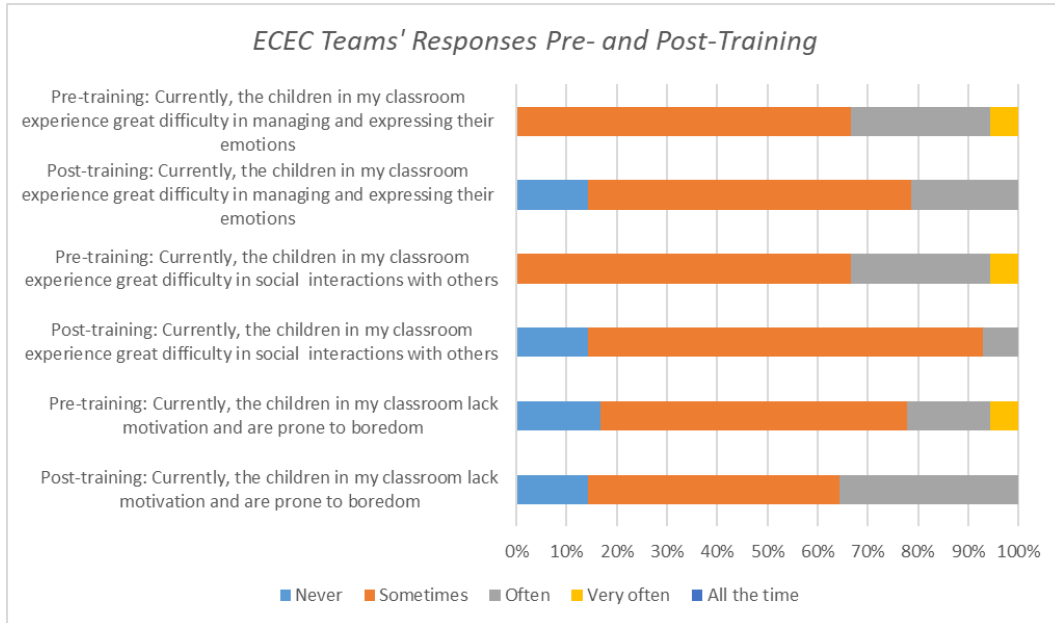
In terms of noticing improvements in the socioemotional learning of the children in their classroom since implementing PBS, 42.9% of participants responded 'moderately', 35.7% responded 'slightly' and 21.4% responded 'very'. The participants were also asked if they noticed a decrease in challenging behaviours of the children in their classroom since using PBS, with 57.1% responding 'slightly', 28.6% responding 'moderately' and 14.3% responding 'very' (see Figure 7).

Figure 7. *ECEC Teams' Perceived Changes in Children's Socioemotional Learning and Challenging Behaviours Post-training*
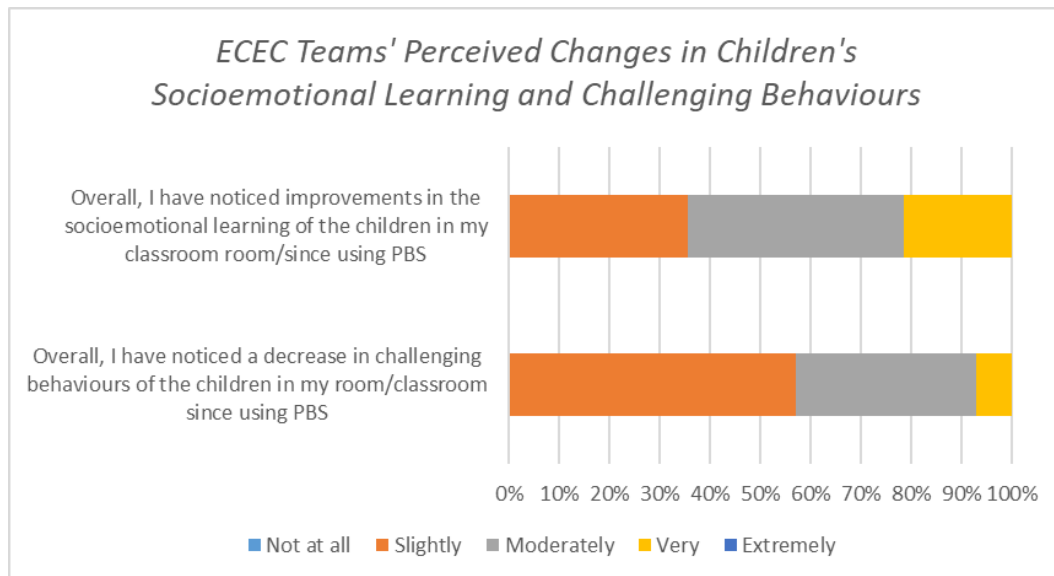
2.5. CONCLUSION OF THE IMPACT ASSESSMENT STUDY IN IRELAND

The findings of the impact assessment study highlight the positive impact of training early childhood educators in the use of PW-PBS and contribute to the growing body of research on the effectiveness of PW-PBS in early childhood settings (Jolstead et al., 2017; Robbins et al., 2022). This report highlights the importance of comprehensive training programmes for preschool educators, particularly those that are available online and offer flexible and accessible learning opportunities that enhance educators' professional development and equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively support children's learning and wellbeing.

Training Assessment

The findings from the questionnaires distributed as part of this study provided valuable insights into the participants' perceptions of the online learning materials used in the training. Both the trainers and the ECEC teams expressed overall satisfaction with the online learning content, considering it relevant, enjoyable, and meeting their expectations. Many participants appreciated the ability to learn at their own pace and the convenience of completing the training online. They expressed satisfaction with the clear explanations, engaging videos, interactive quizzes, and the opportunity to reflect on teaching strategies

and learning tools. The online format allowed participants to engage with the content comfortably, without the pressure of attending in-person classes or taking part in exams, which was particularly beneficial for those juggling busy schedules and staffing limitations.

Participant feedback also provided suggestions for improvement of the online materials. While most educators found the learning activities enjoyable, some expressed a desire for more specific scenarios and solutions, additional videos demonstrating the implementation of PW-PBS in diverse ECEC settings, and clearer instructions in certain activities. They also suggested the inclusion of more country-specific examples and downloadable/printable materials. Further development efforts can address the suggestions and recommendations provided by participants to enhance the training materials.

The majority of participants expressed their satisfaction with the training programme as a whole, highlighting its positive impact on their understanding of the importance of children's socioemotional learning and the use of PBS, and on their competencies in dealing with challenging behaviours. Prior to the training, a substantial majority of participants (85.2%) acknowledged their lack of awareness regarding PBS as an evidence-based, tiered framework for supporting various aspects of children's development. Moreover, the majority of participants (96.3%) had never undergone training specifically focused on utilising PBS to enhance the socioemotional learning of preschool children. However, after completing the training and participating in the study, the educators' understanding of PBS underwent a significant transformation. When evaluating the training programme, the majority of participants expressed their gratitude for having had the opportunity to take part in the programme. They reported that the training had enhanced their knowledge of the importance of children's socioemotional learning. Additionally, they agreed that the programme significantly improved their comprehension of PBS and its effective implementation in preschool settings.

Moreover, the training programme served as a catalyst for the participants' curiosity and motivation to further explore the topics of socioemotional learning, challenging behaviours, and positive discipline. The educators indicated that the programme had encouraged them to delve deeper into these areas, highlighting the programme's success in fostering ongoing professional development. Importantly, all participants stated that they had engaged in discussions with their colleagues about the programme, emphasising the positive ripple effect it had on their professional communities. These outcomes

underscore the need for continued training opportunities in evidence-based approaches like PW-PBS within the field of early childhood education. Equipping early childhood educators with the knowledge and skills to implement PW-PBS empowers them to effectively support children's socioemotional development and create nurturing environments conducive to learning.

Implementation Assessment

One notable outcome of the study was the clear indication that participants successfully embraced and implemented PBS practices in their classrooms. In fact, all trainers and ECEC team members reported incorporating various aspects of PBS into their professional practice following their participation in the programme. Participants reported incorporating more visual strategies in their work, emphasising the importance of providing positive feedback and reinforcement to children, establishing clear rules and expectations to promote consistency and clarity in the classroom environment, utilising behaviour questionnaires as a means to assess and monitor children's behaviours, amongst other PW-PBS strategies. A whole-classroom approach to PBS was embraced by many participants, recognising the significance of creating a positive and inclusive community where everyone is involved in promoting appropriate behaviours and social-emotional development. The diverse range of PBS strategies implemented by the participants demonstrates their commitment to enhancing their teaching approaches and creating a positive and supportive learning environment for young children.

Both the trainers and the ECEC team members reported encountering similar barriers to PW-PBS implementation. A number of participants mentioned the limitations imposed by their small preschool setting, where they lacked the staff resources required to establish a leadership team. Limited time availability was a common challenge mentioned by several participants, who expressed the difficulty of engaging in additional training and exploring new approaches amidst their busy schedules. It was noted that certain aspects of PBS may need to be tailored to meet the needs of children with additional support requirements, particularly in areas like communication and understanding. Despite these barriers, participants acknowledged the significant support they received in their PBS implementation journey. Colleague support emerged as a valuable facilitator, with participants expressing gratitude for the assistance they received from their fellow educators. The online training programme was found to be a particularly valuable resource, providing comprehensive modules, well-structured content, and a wealth of resources that participants found helpful and accessible. Participants also appreciated the support of

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their managers and the collaborative nature of teamwork, emphasising the importance of a whole-school approach to PBS. These facilitators played a crucial role in overcoming implementation challenges and reinforcing the participants' commitment to PBS practices.

Furthermore, while acknowledging the limitations of the short implementation phase, both the trainers and the ECEC teams expressed positive perspectives on the socioemotional and behavioural needs of the children in their classrooms following PW-PBS implementation. It is worth noting that some participants have not noticed positive changes and encountered challenges in effectively addressing certain behavioural issues, highlighting the ongoing need for comprehensive, long-lasting and collaborative behaviour support practices. However, while the participants recognised that preschool children still struggle with managing and expressing emotions, facing social interaction challenges, and occasionally experiencing boredom, their responses indicated fewer issues with these aspects than before PW-PBS implementation. Some participants reported a perceived reduction in challenging behaviours and positive changes in socioemotional growth of children, which can be attributed to the implementation of proactive strategies, consistent expectations, and a supportive classroom environment.

In conclusion, the impact assessment study in Ireland underscores the positive influence of training early childhood educators in PW-PBS, contributing to a growing body of research on its efficacy in ECEC settings. This section of the report emphasises the significance of comprehensive, flexible online training programmes for Irish preschool educators, enriching their professional development and equipping them to effectively foster children's learning and wellbeing through PW-PBS implementation.

3. PORTUGAL

3.1. PRESCHOOL RECRUITMENT AND PROFILES

To recruit preschools, firstly, the IPP team utilised social media platforms and a press release to disseminate information about the recruitment process. Additionally, an invitation with a link to an online questionnaire was sent to professionals and schools using institutional mailing lists. A total of 227 individual responses were obtained and, from these, 10 preschools were available to start the training immediately and showed the needed conditions to implement a whole-programme approach after the training. Each preschool nominated 2 trainers who would engage in online meetings with the coaches and receive training to professionally support their ECEC team in PW-PBS practices. Initially, 10 preschools were recruited for the training and implementation activities, with 20 professionals agreeing to train their colleagues. However, following the initial training sessions, 1 public preschool (with 2 trainers) had difficulties following the training/implementation schedule and decided to withdraw from the project. Among the remaining 9 preschools, 5 institutions were from the social sector (private non-profit), 3 were from the private sector (private for-profit) and 1 from the public sector. Information regarding each participating preschools can be found in Table 3 below.

Table 3

Information Relating to Participating Preschools

Preschool	No. of trainers	No. of professionals	Sector
Preschool 1	2	16	Private for-profit
Preschool 2	2	training pending (July)	Private non-profit
Preschool 3	2	10	Private non-profit
Preschool 4	2	training pending (July)	Private non-profit
Preschool 5	2	training pending (July)	Private for-profit
Preschool 6	2	training pending (July)	Private non-profit
Preschool 7	2	17	Private non-profit
Preschool 8	2	16	Private for-profit
Preschool 9	2	8	Public

After the initial training with the coaches, due to time constraints and/or conflicting schedules as well as difficulties in involving professionals in structured training sessions between April and June, only 5

preschools moved to the training and implementation phase as planned, and the remaining preschools (*n* = 4) organised the training sessions to start during July 2023, with PW-PBS implementation beginning in September 2023. Overall, during the implementation phase, the trainers from those five preschools successfully recruited a total of 67 ECEC team members to participate and receive training in the utilisation of the PW-PBS approach according to their professional roles. Amongst these team members, a total of 32 ECEC professionals, including coordinators, directors, teachers, psychologists, and assistants, received a more in-depth training and preparation in the PW-PBS approach and were directly involved in the preparation of materials and resources for implementation in preschools. As a result of the previous challenges identified, the trainers focused on involving and training (or preparing the training for) the professionals in each ECEC team, establishing the leadership team, developing PW-PBS materials and resources, and programming the further implementation for the near future (September 2023).

3.2. TIMELINE OF THE TRAINING AND IMPLEMENTATION PHASE

In Portugal, four online training sessions took place with 9 preschools (18 trainers) between February and March 2023 (Sessions 1-3 are described in section 1.4). Session 4 was conducted individually with each of the 9 preschools to further develop the training and implementation plan, to identify challenges and solutions to those challenges, and to assess the overall understanding about PW-PBS implementation. This session was a critical point for trainers to ask questions and deepen their understanding of how they could proceed with the implementation. The coaches encouraged the trainers to build a leadership team, organise an information session with their colleagues to explain the preschool's involvement in the PBS-ECEC project, ask professionals to sign the preschool agreement and explain what their involvement in this project would entail. Additionally, the teams were introduced to 3 new assessment and implementation tools, translated and adapted by the IPP team, to guide their implementation: the *BoQ – Benchmarks of Quality* (Fox et al., 2017), the *Checklist of Early Childhood Practices that Support Socioemotional Development* (National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations, 2023), and the *PW-PBS Implementation Plan* (designed by the IPP team).

Next, the training of ECEC teams began during April 2023 in 5 preschools (July in the remaining 4 preschools). The coaches explained to the trainers that the training could be formal or informal, depending on the resources and time available as well as the characteristics of the professionals involved

in the training. If possible, sessions should be dedicated to the learning objectives of the five modules prepared as part of Result 2.

Overall, the training sessions took place in a variety of formats, according to the goals, time, and resources available in each institution. In some cases, ECEC teams worked through the content of the modules simultaneously, with the trainers explaining and reading the content within the modules and asking the ECEC teams to take part in the learning activities during the training session. Others, explored the content of the modules using a PowerPoint presentation provided by the IPP team, asking the ECEC teams to autonomously explore the Moodle, the learning activities and the additional resources in their own time. In all cases, the trainers prepared training sessions with additional activities based on a joint team reflection about the shared values and purpose of each preschool, a discussion on desired behaviours and what were the identified challenging behaviours, the definition of behavioural and socioemotional difficulties experienced on a daily basis, and the core SEL competences each team would focus on. This training was designed to involve all professionals. As a result, some sessions and resources were adapted in order to include auxiliary staff. The training also involved using the tool *Checklist of Early Childhood Practices that Support Socioemotional Development* (National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations, 2023) to help professionals reflect upon their current practices.

Following these training sessions, the ECEC teams were expected to have a clear idea of the importance of socioemotional learning in early years, what PBS is and how it can be implemented and assessed. Throughout the training, the trainers were asked to discuss with their colleagues the needs of their ECEC settings and the aspects of PBS which they wished to implement in their work as a function of their shared purpose and values, their goals, and needs. The trainers and ECEC teams were asked to start implementing PW-PBS practices in their respective settings and progressively testing its effectiveness.

Next, a fifth session (between April and May 2023) was held and the coaches visited the preschools. During these visits, the coaches assessed the current status of implementation and supported the leadership teams in fulfilling the next steps of their *PW-PBS Implementation Plan*. The plan was used as a basis for discussion, in which the implementation status of each PW-PBS component was assessed. Coaches provided the guidance needed to further develop the implementation of PW-PBS with fidelity.

Additionally, in the final weeks of implementation, the trainers had the opportunity to meet with the project coaches during Sessions 6 and 7 (equivalent to Sessions 4 and 5 in the remaining countries). These sessions were held online and the trainers were invited to ask questions and raise any concerns they had in relation to the implementation of PW-PBS in their settings, as well as provide informal feedback about the training and implementation phase. Additionally, a revision of the key elements of a PW-PBS sustainable implementation in preschools was presented and the teams were challenged to develop and present a SWOT analysis in the final session (S7). The coaches also encouraged the trainers to get in touch via email at any point of their involvement in this project activity, should any issues arise. A log of all these sessions was kept, in which the difficulties experienced by the ECEC teams and the central issues and challenges were recorded, as well as the main topics of the SWOT analyses presented during Session 7 (see Section 3.4 for a synthesis).

3.3. FINDINGS FROM QUESTIONNAIRE 1: PRE-TRAINING QUESTIONNAIRE

Trainers' Demographic Information

Based on the demographic data collected, the 18 participants were female (100%). The age range of the participants varied from 27 to 61 years old, with an average age of 43.8 years. When considering their educational qualifications, the distribution was as follows: 27.8% (n = 5) held a bachelor's degree or a higher degree (ISCED 6) and 72.2% (n = 13) had a master´s degree or equivalent (ISCED 7).

In terms of their professional roles, the participants identified themselves as follows: preschool teachers (50%), preschool leaders/managers (44.5%), and psychologists (5.6%). These participants, who had an average of 18 years in the current job, worked in creches (0 to 3 years) (16.7%), with children aged 3-4 years (5.6%), 4-5 years (16.7%), 5 years (11.1%), and mixed-age groups (33.3%), and the remaining had other roles. The participants were employed in various settings, with 22.2% working in private preschools (for-profit), 11.1% in public preschool settings, and 66.7% in the social sector (private non-profit). When considering the population size of their work locations, 5.6% worked in a village (less than 3000 people), 22.2% worked in small towns (approximately 3,000-15,000 people), 44.4% worked in towns (approximately 15,000-100,000 people), and 27.8% worked in cities (approximately 100,000-1,000,000 people). The professionals that reported working in a creche were usually moved from age group to age group during their daily routine in ECEC (i.e., coordinating activities in different classrooms/groups from

0-2 years to 3-5 years) or changed between age groups in each school year. Due to their flexible role in each ECEC centre and their academic/professional qualifications, they were included as trainers (as described above) or ECEC team members (as described below).

ECEC Teams' Demographic Information

Out of 54 participants, the majority were female (96.3%), while two participants were male (3.7%). The age range of the participants varied from 20 to 65 years, with an average age of 42.2. Their educational qualifications were as follows: 51.9% completed high-school or less (ISCED 1 to 3), 5.6% had post-high-school training (ISCED 4), 11.2% held a bachelor's degree or a higher degree (ISCED 5 and 6), and 31.5% had a master´s degree or equivalent (ISCED 7).

In terms of their professional roles, the participants identified themselves as follows: preschool teachers (24.1%); preschool leaders/managers/owners (3.7%); preschool auxiliary care staff/assistant teachers (55.6%); and the remaining participants (16.5%), included psychologists, technical assistants, and others. Participants, who overall had an average of 16.2 years in the current job, worked in creche (0 to 2 years) (22.3%), with children aged 3-4 years (18.6%), 4-5 years (20.4%), and 5-6 years (13%), and the remaining with mixed-age groups. The participants were employed in various settings, with 20.4% working in private (for profit) preschools, 20.4% in public preschool settings, and 59.2% in the social (private non-profit) sector. When considering the population size of their work locations, 3.7% worked in a village (less than 3000 people), 25.9% worked in small towns (approximately 3,000-15,000 people), 44.4% worked in towns (approximately 15,000-100,000 people), 24.1% worked in cities (approximately 100,000-1,000,000 people), and 1.9% worked in a city with over 1 million people.

Trainers' Perceived Status of Children's Behavioural and Socioemotional Difficulties

The majority of the trainers reported that preschool children 'often' (27.8%) and 'very often' (44.4%) experience great difficulty in managing and expressing their emotions, and that 'sometimes' (50%) and 'often' (44.4%) children face challenges in social interactions with others. The majority of the trainers reported that children in their classroom 'sometimes' (38.9%) and 'often' (55.6%) lack motivation and are prone to boredom. Most of the trainers (77.8%) reported that the children in their classroom 'misbehave occasionally', and that their socioemotional competencies are 'moderately developed' (72.2%).

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ECEC Teams' Perceived Status of Children's Behavioural and Socioemotional Difficulties

Most participants of ECEC teams reported that preschool children 'sometimes' (38.9%) and 'often' (37%) experience great difficulty in managing and expressing their emotions. A similar proportion indicated that preschool children 'sometimes' (42.6%) and 'often' (40.7%) face challenges in social interactions. A significant number of participants reported that children in their classrooms 'sometimes' (51.9%) and 'frequently' (33.3%) lack motivation and are prone to boredom. Regarding overall behaviour, 51.9% of participants perceived that the children in their classes 'misbehave occasionally', while 29.6% reported that children 'behave well'. When assessing the socioemotional competencies of children, 59.3% of participants considered them 'moderately developed' and 33.3% considered them 'well developed'.

Trainers' Current Use of Behaviour Management Programmes and Knowledge of PBS

Regarding the current use of behaviour management programmes and their knowledge of PBS, 88.9% of trainers indicated that their preschools did not have explicit written guidelines to handle behaviour issues, and 100% reported that they do not follow any specific behaviour management programme. The majority of trainers (94.4%) indicated they were not aware of PBS before the project. Likewise, 100% of trainers had not previously participated in a training programme focusing on the use of PBS to aid the socioemotional learning of preschool children.

ECEC Teams' Current Use of Behaviour Management Programmes and Knowledge of PBS

A total of 22% of participants indicated that their preschools have explicit written guidelines to handle behaviour difficulties. However, only 11.1% reported following a specific behaviour management programme (e.g., "ABC of Emotions"), while the majority (88.9%) did not. In general, participants found the behaviour management programmes to be 'moderately' effective in addressing children's challenging behaviours (42.9%). As was the case with the trainers, a significant majority of ECEC team members (90.7%) were unaware of PBS prior to this activity. Only 1.9% of the ECEC teams staff indicated that they had previously participated in training focusing on the use of PBS.

3.4. SYNTHESIS OF THE ONLINE/FACE-TO-FACE SESSIONS´ LOG

Overall, the recurrent topics arising from discussions with the trainers and members of the leadership teams included the following: how to promote family/parental involvement and professionals'

engagement, the low quality or underutilisation of ECEC spaces/rooms and lack of resources (materials, staff), the persisting behavioural difficulties in children and how to deal with these cases, the lack of staff to support children with specific/special needs, managing classrooms with large groups that include children with special needs, and the behavioural/attitudinal change of professionals (motivation, professional development). Table 4 shows a synthesis of the key-points related to sustainable implementation of PW-PBS arising from the sessions' log, including the results from the leadership teams' SWOT analysis shared during Session 7.

Table 4

Synthesis of the Key-Points Related to the Implementation of PW-PBS in ECEC centres

Potential, Strengths, and Resources	Needs, Difficulties, and Challenges
-Participants found the Moodle easy to use, with good materials and resources	-Need for long-term coaching by specialists to aid PW-PBS implementation and sustainability
-A motivated and highly engaged leadership team is crucial for an effective implementation of PW-PBS	-Lack of support from specialists in the setting to work effectively at Tier 2 and 3 levels with children with behavioural and developmental difficulties
-The pedagogical stance of the centre should be aligned with the PW-PBS approach	-PW-PBS leadership teams need valid, quality instruments to implement the approach with fidelity and effectiveness
-Training materials were adapted to include all ECEC professionals	
-A highly effective practice includes involving children in the definition of the desired behaviours and norms, in the development of materials, and in building/improving the school culture	-Inexistence of a system to record data that informs decisions in ECEC settings/a common registration document (e.g., challenging behaviours, incidents, important observations) is needed
-The involvement of all professionals in the PW-PBS approach is generally seen as a highly positive factor influencing the quality of implementation (shared goals and philosophy is seen as crucial)	-Need for external support in the socioemotional development of all professionals and for continuous high-quality training
-A cohesive team is important for sustainable implementation	-Some schools experience difficulties in creating positive family-ECEC partnerships
-Interest and participation of families is important	-Some professionals lacked ICT skills/had difficulties accessing and exploring the online resources
-Both the institution and the professionals must be highly motivated and open to innovation	-Leadership teams often encounter professionals who are disengaged, unwilling to change practices, are not reflexive, lack communication skills
-Time for team reflection and effective teamwork, opportunities to reflect and work together with shared goals are an asset	-The lack of time to reflect together as a team
	-Excessive workload decreases quality
	-Isolation of professionals in their classrooms

-Existence of a specialised support service/office to assess and support the cases with more challenging behaviours (tiers 2/3) -Online platform for communication with parents -After the training, the staff felt empowered -Positive relationship among staff/children -The provided tools (e.g., Benchmarks of Quality) aided the preschool leadership team's efforts	-Different communication styles/practices in each area of the centre (playground, classroom, etc) -Very large groups and increase in the number of children with special education needs -The preschool infrastructure does not favour cooperative or community work -Time management in collaborative work is very challenging

Note: The table includes the various issues that arose during the sessions, without weighting their importance or frequency.

3.5. FINDINGS FROM QUESTIONNAIRE 2: POST-TRAINING QUESTIONNAIRE

The findings presented below are based on the responses from 28 participants (15 out of 18 trainers and 13 out of the initial 67 ECEC professionals). Despite the efforts to encourage all ECEC members to fill out Questionnaire 2 within the specified timeframe, a few participants did not comply. However, these individuals reportedly still participated fully in the activity, completing the training, and implementing PW-PBS practices in their work.

Trainers' and ECEC Teams' Evaluation of the Online Modules

Learning Objectives

The majority of the trainers found the learning objectives of the online modules easy to understand (60% agreed, 33.3% strongly agreed). Additionally, most trainers considered them relevant to their professional practice (53.3% agreed, 40% strongly agreed). Similarly, the ECEC teams found the learning objectives easy to understand (46.2% agreed, 53.8% strongly agreed), and they reported that the learning objectives were relevant to their professional practice (61.5% strongly agreed).

Learning Content

Participants generally expressed satisfaction with the content. The majority of the trainers agreed that it met their expectations (73.3% agreed, 26.7% strongly agreed), was relevant to their daily work (46.7% agreed, 46.7% strongly agreed) and was enjoyable to read (66.7% agreed, 33.3% strongly agreed). Again, the responses from the ECEC teams mirrored those of the trainers, with the majority agreeing that the

learning content met their expectations (53.8% strongly agreed), was relevant to their daily work (61.5% strongly agreed) and was enjoyable to read (30.8% agreed, 53.8% strongly agreed).

When asked "What aspects of the learning content are relevant for your daily work?", the trainers and ECEC team participants provided responses related to positive changes in their knowledge and pedagogical practices, such as: "relevant content to work with teaching and non-teaching staff"; "examples of assessment and monitoring methods"; "increased attention in my approach to challenging behaviour"; "in managing my response to children's challenging behaviours, (…) as well as what strategies I can use to prevent certain difficulties in self-regulation of the children and to act with some children, more resistant to compliance with rules and routines"; "they made us aware of new approaches and strategies"; "deconstructing challenging behaviour, reframing it"; "reflection of my practices and restructuring of strategies"; "review, learn, update and adapt ways to promote positive behaviours in children and adults". Some preschools reported implementing various examples of the PW-PBS approach presented in the online content of the PBS-ECEC project, such as the *voicemeter* and using pictures of desired behaviours. The participants were also asked what they enjoyed most about the learning content and their responses included the following, among others: "effective practices and tips in applying the PW-PBS approach"; "adjust my practice to the needs of children"; "The way they were presented and the organisation"; "the reflections they proposed that lead us to change practices"; "tips for applying the methodology"; "They are easy to understand contents that make a lot of sense when thinking about my activity as an education professional"; "the accessible, practical and close way in which the training programme and the contents are organised"; "Watching videos proving the effectiveness of the method used".

The participants were then asked "Is there something that should be included in the learning content? If yes, what is it?". This was a required question, with 5 trainers and 3 participants of the ECEC teams indicating that there is nothing that should be included in the learning content. The remaining participants provided ideas related to: "the presentation of more strategies, especially related to work with children with neurodevelopmental disorders; "give more suggestions of activities/materials to apply to help in solving problems associated with SEL skills"; "visual support (videos) and the exchange of experiences of those who already have the project implemented would give a new dynamic to the presentations". Next,

the participants were asked "do you think that any aspects of the learning content should be left out? If yes, what are they?", but no contents were identified.

Learning Activities

A significant portion of participants agreed that the activities were easy to understand (73.3% of the trainers agreed and 26.7% strongly agreed; 46.2% ECEC team members agreed and 53.8% strongly agreed), they were relevant (60% of the trainers agreed and 40% strongly agreed; 46.2% ECEC team members agreed and 53.8% strongly agreed), and enjoyable to complete (64.3% of the trainers agreed and 28.6% strongly agreed, 53.8% of ECEC team members strongly agreed).

Additional Materials

The majority of participants found the materials and resources to be relevant to the training programme (50% of trainers strongly agreed, 50% ECEC team members also strongly agreed) and they reported that they enjoyed exploring them with 46.7% of the trainers strongly agreeing and 45.5% of ECEC team members also strongly agreeing.

Trainers' Evaluation of the Training Programme

The trainers evaluated the programme positively (see Figure 8), indicating that they found the programme useful (44.7% agreed, 53.3% strongly agreed), that it will help them support socioemotional skills and behavioural needs of children in their work (53.3% agreed, 40% strongly agreed), and that it increased their knowledge of PBS (40% agreed, 53.3% strongly agreed). The majority indicated that they would recommend this type of programme to their colleagues (42.9% agreed, 57.1% strongly agreed).

The majority of trainers believed that it is important to implement this kind of training programme in early childhood settings (73.3% strongly agreed and 26.7% agreed) and believed that this programme will be helpful for staff working with children in ECEC settings (73.3% strongly agreed). When asked whether the programme supported their work in developing the socioemotional competencies of children, the majority responded "agree" (40%) and "strongly agree" (60%). They also believed that this programme is useful for ECEC professionals aiming to improve children's socioemotional competencies (78.6% strongly agreed). To the statement "Overall, I am satisfied with the training programme", participants responded "agree" (66.7%) and "strongly agree" (33.3%).

The trainers were then asked what they enjoyed most about the training programme and they provided responses that included: "the possibility of having a personalised follow-up to each educational entity according to their needs"; "I liked everything: it validated and raised awareness of my practice and knowledge"; "the coach was very available and used a very simple and assertive speech throughout the training"; "the reflections"; "the way the contents were presented"; "all the information shared and the platform that we can access whenever necessary"; "the availability shown by the coaches"; "the accessible, practical and close way in which the training programme is organised".

Figure 8. *Trainers' Evaluation of the Training Programme*
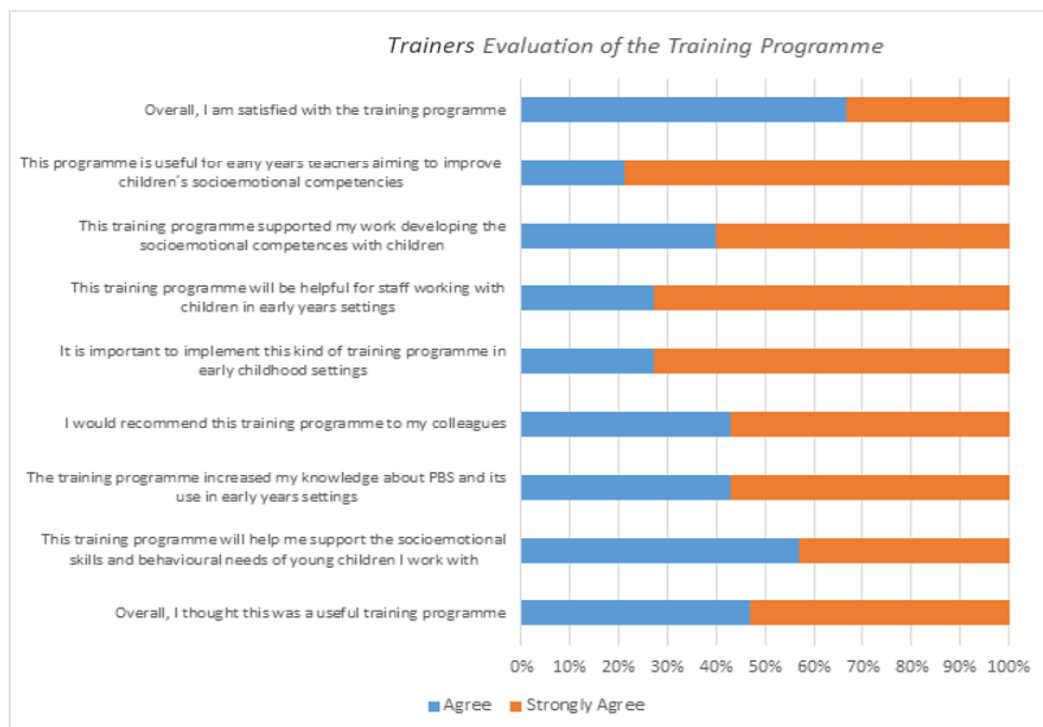
Note: Answer options ranged from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*.

The trainers were asked if there was anything that could be improved about the programme and provided suggestions relating to: "more initial training time to build capacity in the approach"; "if it was face-to-face, people would be more involved in discussing the content"; "more resources/tools/materials because they are never too many"; "providing more exchange of practices and analysing them"; "not all the team members working with children master the resources made available digitally, which may delay the

process a little because it will be necessary to use other strategies of action and dissemination". When asked if they plan on implementing PBS in their practice in the ongoing school year, all trainers said 'yes'.

ECEC Teams' Evaluation of the Training Programme

Similarly, the programme was positively evaluated by participants of the ECEC teams (see Figure 9), with a significant majority finding the programme useful (46.2% agreed and 53.8% strongly agreed). Participants believed the programme would help them support socioemotional skills and behavioural needs of children in their work (33.3% agreed and 66.7% strongly agreed), it increased their knowledge of PBS (46.2% agreed, 53.8% strongly agreed) and they were generally satisfied with the training programme (46.2% agreed, 53.8% strongly agreed). When asked if they would recommend this type of training programme to their colleagues, 53.8% indicated that they "strongly agree" and 46.2% indicated that they "agree".

Additionally, the majority of ECEC team members showed strong support for implementing this training programme in early years settings (61.5% strongly agreed). They also believed that the programme would be beneficial for staff working with young children (38.5% agreed, 53.8% strongly agreed). Regarding the programme's impact on developing children's socioemotional competencies, 58.3% strongly agreed that it offered support to their work. Moreover, a substantial 61.5% of participants strongly agreed that the training was useful for early years teachers seeking to improve children's socioemotional competencies. To the statement "Overall, I am satisfied with the training programme.", 46.2% responded "agree" and 53.8% responded "strongly agree".

Similarly to the trainers, the ECEC teams also provided examples of things that they enjoyed about the training programme, including: "interactions with colleagues"; "its application to the practice"; "the CASEL proposal"; and "learning how to deal with challenging behaviours". The ECEC teams were also asked if there was anything that could be improved about the training programme and provided suggestions relating to content and delivery, for example: "to make the concepts covered visible, with concrete proposals for realisation in the kindergarten context, as well as to develop how these contents can be worked on/developed in collaboration with families". All participants indicated that they plan on implementing PBS in their work.

Figure 9. *ECEC Team's Evaluation of the Training Programme*

ECEC Team's Evaluation of the Training Programme
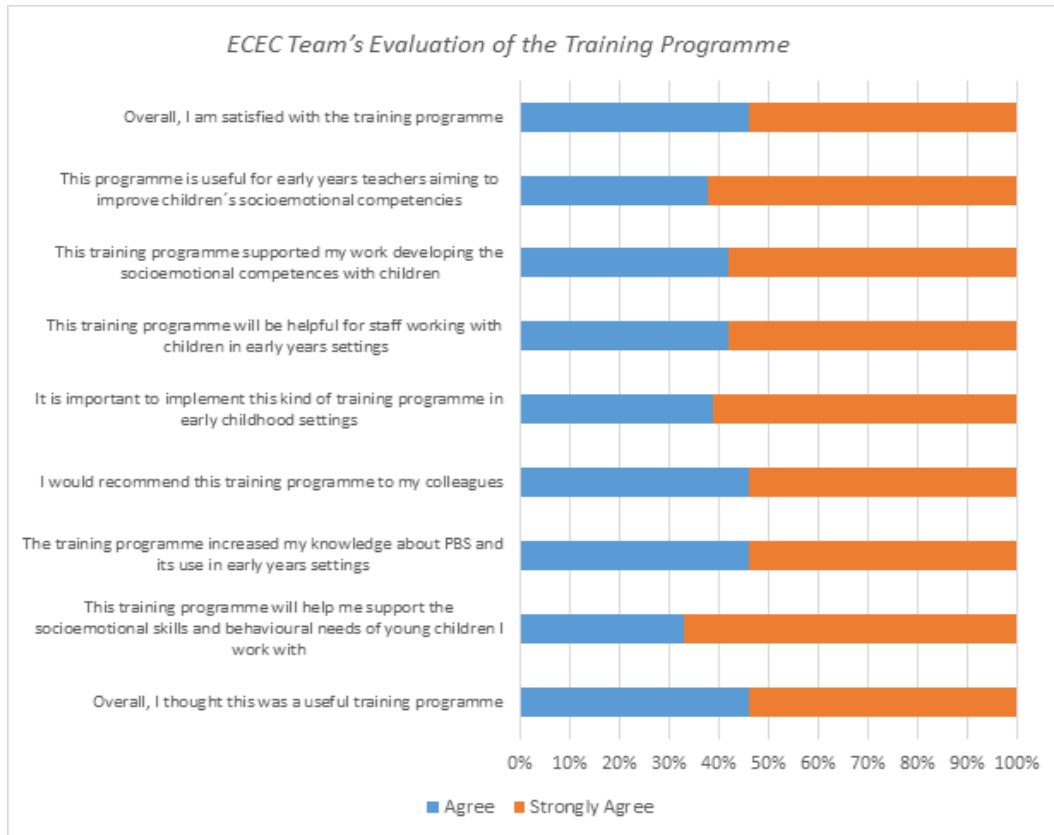
Note: Answer options ranged from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*

Trainers' Evaluation of the Training Facilitators/Training Organisers

For the trainers, this meant evaluating the coaches whom they met in the online sessions. The trainers believed that the training was well organised (53.3% agreed, 40% strongly agreed) and that the coaches explained everything clearly (46.7% agreed, 53.3% strongly agreed). The trainers indicated that the coaches were helpful in answering their questions (80% strongly agreed). The trainers indicated that they would be happy to contact their coaches again if they had further queries after the completion of the programme (80% strongly agreed).

ECEC Teams' Evaluation of the Training Facilitators/Training Organisers

The ECEC teams positively evaluated the training, with the majority indicating that the training was well organised (46.2% agreed, 53.8% strongly agreed), and that their trainers explained everything clearly

(30.8% agreed, 53.8% agreed). The participants also indicated that the trainers were helpful in answering their questions (38.5% agreed, 53.8% strongly agreed).

3.6. FINDINGS FROM QUESTIONNAIRE 3: FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONNAIRE

The project findings presented below are based on the responses received from 6 trainers and 20 members of ECEC teams. Despite the research team's efforts to encourage all ECEC teams to fill out Questionnaire 3 within the specified timeframe, several participants did not comply.

Trainers' Perceptions of the Training Programme

The majority reported that they were glad to have taken part in the programme (83.3% strongly agreed and 16.7% agreed), and they agreed that the programme increased their knowledge of the importance of children's socioemotional learning (83.3% agreed and 16.7% strongly agreed), their knowledge of PBS and its use in preschool settings (66.7% strongly agreed and 33.3% agreed) and their competencies in dealing with challenging behaviours and supporting socioemotional learning in the classroom (66.7% agreed and 16.7% strongly agreed). The trainers also agreed that the training programme encouraged them to learn more about socioemotional learning, challenging behaviours, and positive discipline (83.3% strongly agreed). As expected, the trainers indicated that they have discussed the training programme with their colleagues (66.6% agree and strongly agree) and recommended the programme to their colleagues (83.3% agree and strongly agree).

ECEC Teams' Perceptions of the Training Programme

Similar responses were provided by the ECEC teams, with the majority indicating that they were glad to have taken part in the training programme (60% agreed, 30% strongly agreed). Again, the majority agreed that the programme increased their knowledge of the importance of children's socioemotional learning (65% agreed, 30% strongly agreed), their knowledge of PBS and its use in preschool settings (60% strongly agreed, 30% agreed) and their competencies in dealing with challenging behaviours and supporting socioemotional learning in the classroom (65% agreed, 20% strongly agreed). Just as their trainers, the ECEC teams also agreed that the programme encouraged them to learn more about socioemotional learning, challenging behaviours, and positive discipline (55% agreed, 30% strongly agreed). Finally, 70%

of participants indicated that they have discussed the training programme with their colleagues and 65% that they recommended the programme to their colleagues.

Trainers' Implementation of PBS in the Preschool

A total of 83.3% of the trainers indicated that they have implemented aspects of PBS in their classroom during the training programme. When asked what aspects of PBS they took on in their professional practice, trainers provided responses, including the following: "attitudes towards challenging behaviour"; "I have become aware of how my energy, posture, organisation, attitude, language and tone of voice can affect not only the management of emotions and behaviour in the class, but the whole classroom dynamic. This awareness helps me to self-regulate and therefore better manage more troubled moments."; "Moderate the tone of voice"; "observation and intervention for the improvement of challenging behaviour in children".

The trainers were then asked about the barriers to using PBS in their professional practice, with 83.3% indicating that they encountered barriers and 16.7% indicating that they did not. When asked what barriers they encountered, the participants provided said: "constraints related to projects already established, timings already defined; "Lack of articulation between the entire educational community"; "Incompatibility of assistants' schedules that allow them to meet with the team"; "lack of motivation on the part of teachers"; "there is not enough motivation to embrace this new challenge"; "Lack of time".

The majority of trainers (66.7%) indicated that they encountered facilitators and resources that helped with PBS implementation, including: "the educator of the other preschool class, the executive board of the school and the motivation of the assistants assigned to the preschool"; "reflective partnership"; "The fact that there were already internal moments for team training facilitated the implementation of the project"; "Online resources, help from colleagues". Finally, 83.3% of the trainers indicated that since taking part in the training programme, they have encouraged or trained their colleagues to use PBS.

ECEC Teams' Implementation of PBS in the Preschool

Again, 70% of the members of ECEC teams indicated that they have implemented aspects of PBS in their classroom since taking part in the training. When asked what aspects of PBS they took on in their practice, the participants provided responses like: "The PW-PBS approach has added intentionality to the use of

the word *no*"; "encourage more meaningful learning moments"; "always speak positively with children"; "Conflict management"; "implementing rules in the group"; "transmitting clear expectations and rules, reinforcing them whenever necessary"; "being proactive in anticipating problems and difficulties felt by the children"; "short and efficient transitions between activities"; "giving them the possibility to make choices"; "a more individualised attention to each child, giving them space and time to develop, respecting their pace of growth"; "using positive reinforcement"; "the *voicemeter*".

ECEC members reported encountering barriers to implementation, with 30% indicating that they encountered barriers and 70% indicating that they did not. Similarly to the trainers, the ECEC teams reported that the barriers related to: "Lack of (human) resources and time to work and follow up in a more individual and personalised way the most challenging behaviours. With such large groups, and with the tendency to get larger, the number of people working in the classroom (usually 2) makes it difficult to provide more individualised support to those who need it"; "Lack of time".

A total of 60% of ECEC team members indicated that they encountered facilitators and resources that helped with PBS implementation, including: "Articulation of the vision of all professionals on the importance of children's socioemotional development"; "The help from the institution"; "Help and collaboration from colleagues"; "Personal involvement"; "Training with the psychology service support"; "I was very supported by theoretical resources. Studying, reading and discussing were the essential points to be able to overcome the different situations and to be more secure and confident in my professional action"; "Online resources"; "A good relationship with the team"; "Videos that were shown with several positive evidence". Finally, 80% of participants indicated that since taking part in the training programme, they have encouraged or trained their colleagues to use PBS.

Trainers' Perceived Status of Children's Behavioural and Socioemotional Difficulties Post-training

Post-training, the majority of trainers reported that preschool children 'slightly' experience great difficulty in managing and expressing their emotions (66.7%) and, that preschool children face challenges in social interactions with others 'slightly' (50%). When asked whether the children in their classroom are prone to boredom, 33.3% of trainers responded 'not at all', 33.3% responded 'slightly' and 33.3% responded

'moderately'. A comparison of trainer's perceived status of children's behavioural and socioemotional difficulties pre- and post-training can be found in Figure 10 below.
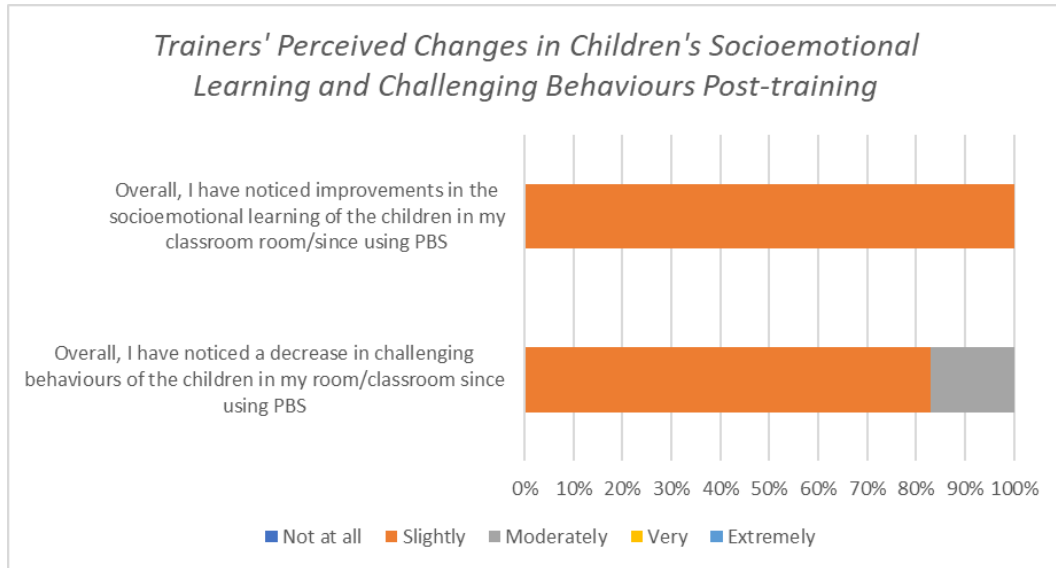
Figure 10. *Comparison of Trainers' Perceived Status of Children's Behavioural and Socioemotional Difficulties Pre- and Post-training*
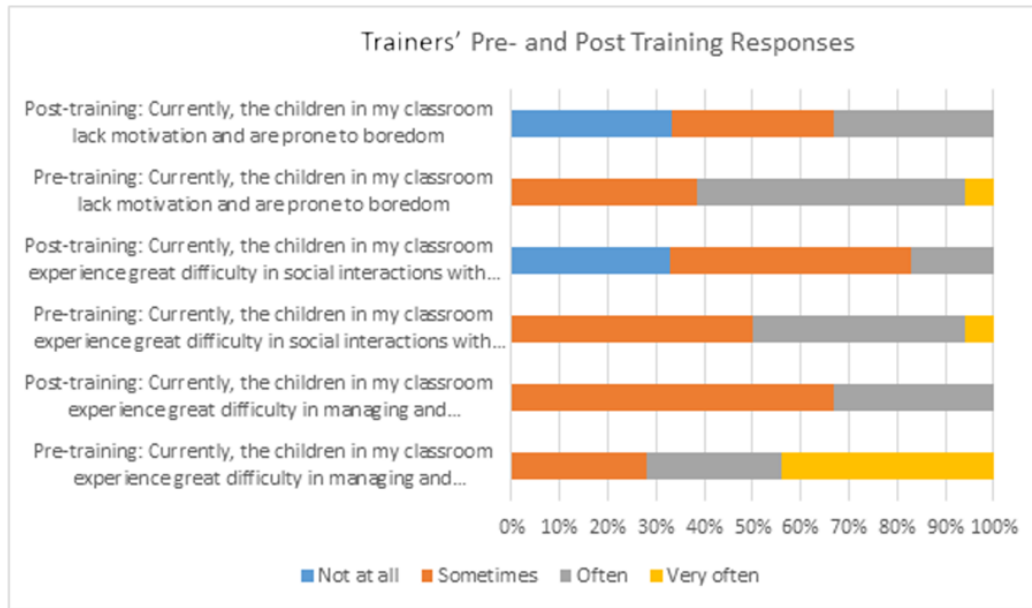
Note: Answer options ranged from 1 = *not at all* to 5 = *all the time*

Regarding overall behaviour, 83.3% of the trainers reported that children in their classrooms 'misbehave occasionally', while 16.7% reported that children 'behave well'. When assessing the socioemotional competencies of children, 16.7% of the trainers considered them 'well developed', 66.7% considered them moderately developed, and 16.7% considered them 'very well developed'. Finally, the trainers were asked if they noticed improvements in the socioemotional learning of the children in their classroom since using PBS, with 100% of the trainers responding 'slightly'. The participants were also asked if they noticed a decrease in challenging behaviours of the children in their classroom since using PBS, with 83.3% responding 'slightly' and 16.7% responding 'moderately' (see Figure 11).

Figure 11. *Trainers' Perceived Changes in Children's Socioemotional Learning and Challenging Behaviours Post-training*

ECEC Teams' Perceived Status of Children's Behavioural and Socioemotional Difficulties Post-training

ECEC team members reported that preschool children 'sometimes' experience great difficulty in managing and expressing their emotions (45%) and that preschool children 'sometimes' face challenges in social interactions (40%). When asked whether the children in their classroom are prone to boredom, 25% responded 'sometimes', 20% responded 'often' and 40% responded 'never'. A comparison of ECEC team member's perceived status of children's behavioural and socioemotional difficulties pre- and post-training can be found in Figure 12 below.

Figure 12. Comparison of *ECEC Teams' Perceived Status of Children's Behavioural and Socioemotional Difficulties Pre- and Post-training*
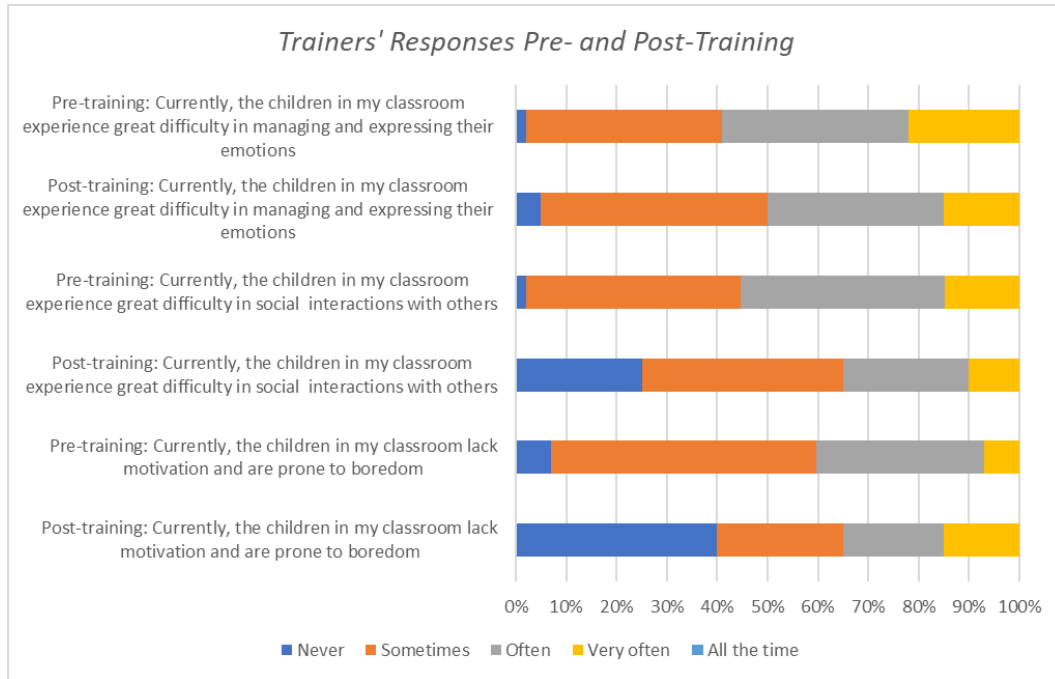
Regarding overall behaviour, 55% of participants perceived children in their classrooms to 'misbehave occasionally', while 35% reported that children 'behave well'. When assessing the socioemotional competencies of children, 45% of participants considered them 'well developed' and 55% considered them 'moderately developed'. In terms of noticing improvements in the socioemotional learning of the children in their classroom since implementing PBS, 45% of participants responded 'moderately', 40% responded 'slightly' and 10% responded 'very'. The participants were also asked if they noticed a decrease in challenging behaviours of the children in their classroom since using PBS, with 25% responding 'slightly', 65% responding 'moderately' and 10% responding 'not at all' (see Figure 13).

Figure 13. *ECEC Teams' Perceived Changes in Children's Socioemotional Learning and Challenging Behaviours Post-training*

ECEC Teams' Perceived Changes in Children's Socioemotional Learning and Challenging Behaviours
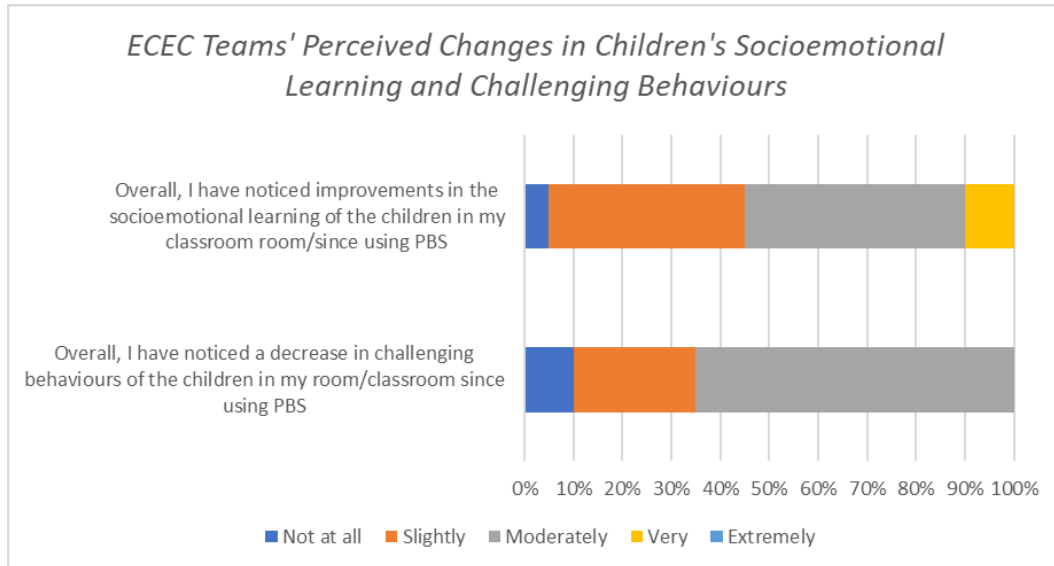
The Portuguese team added two open-ended questions at the end of this follow-up questionnaire to which we obtained 26 responses each. To the question "Please, name three strengths of this project", participants responded: "Practicality, easy applicability, sharing ideas with colleagues"; "Bringing people together (everyone)"; "Peer sharing"; "It presents a very practical and consistent approach of what should be the adults' behaviour"; "easily adjustable to the various contexts that adopt it"; "Allows each adult to do a self-analysis of their values, attitudes and behaviours"; "The strong extended teamwork that the Project advocates"; "The importance given to socioemotional skills, not only for the prevention and mitigation of challenging behaviours, but above all for the integral development of children, as well as for the development of professional and parental skills"; "It allowed me to learn new methods and techniques, new behaviours and attitudes, to be more proactive and empathetic"; "Focus on prevention: the PBS-ECEC project takes a preventive approach, focusing on creating a positive and supportive school environment. It seeks to anticipate and prevent challenging behaviour"; "Equal line of action for all staff"; "I emphasise its relevance. It is a necessary and urgent project in educational institutions, to empower all those involved in the educational process of children for these issues.

Regarding the question "Please indicate what you plan to implement in your professional practice in the next school year that has resulted from participation in this project", participants responded: "Making

behavioural issues easier to resolve"; "Speaking assertively and positively to children"; "Continue to use the *voicemeter*, traffic lights"; "Continuity of training with the educational team"; "evaluation moments with the leadership"; "use of the evaluation tools"; "I intend to build strategies with the team, children and parents that make sense to us and help us all to better manage emotions, behaviours, as well as to equip ourselves with tools that enable us to apply in other contexts and at other stages of life"; "always use positive speech in managing challenging behaviours"; "the way I talk and the tone of voice I use"; "Establish positive relationships of respect and closeness"; "communicate positively and clearly"; "Have an intentional and conscious interaction with children"; "Continuous valorisation of children's personal and social development"; "Establish a relationship of trust through empathy, respect and good communication"; and "active listening of the child".

3.7. CONCLUSION OF THE IMPACT ASSESSMENT STUDY IN PORTUGAL

The report underscores the importance of providing training programmes for preschool teachers in Portugal, offering flexible learning opportunities (such as training available online) to enhance their professional growth and equip them with essential skills to effectively support children's emotional development and wellbeing. This blended approach, which encompassed online availability of resources and in-person support to professional development, has shown to be an asset for ECEC professionals.

Training Assessment

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the participants' perceptions of the online modules used in the training. Both the trainers and the ECEC teams expressed overall high levels of satisfaction with the online learning objectives, content, and activities, considering them relevant, enjoyable, and meeting their expectations. Many participants were satisfied with the fact that the training promoted a very positive change in their pedagogical perspective, becoming more reflexive professionals, and focusing more on the socioemotional learning of children. These professionals expressed satisfaction with the clear explanations and examples provided and the opportunity to reflect on teaching strategies and learning tools. Participants' feedback also provided suggestions for improvement of the online modules which generally included the addition of materials, examples and videos demonstrating the implementation of PW-PBS in diverse early childhood settings, as well as the addition of tools and

practices that help to effectively manage the behavioural and socioemotional difficulties experienced by young children (particularly those with developmental disorders).

The majority of participants expressed their satisfaction with the training programme as a whole, highlighting that the training had substantially enhanced their knowledge of the importance of children's socioemotional learning and changed their perspective on children´s challenging behaviours and how to deal with those behaviours. Additionally, they agreed that the training programme significantly improved their comprehension of PBS and its effective implementation within preschool settings. As a result, the participants also felt more confident and competent in managing challenging behaviours and providing support for socioemotional learning in their classrooms.

Participants also valued the possibility of having a personalised follow-up to each setting/centre according to their needs, the accessibility to the training resources, and the interactivity of the whole process. Some of the strengths of this project, identified by participants, include its practicality, applicability, consistency, the whole-school approach, its positive and preventive/promotive focus, and overall relevance for the needs experienced by preschools and its professionals. Additionally, they suggested some improvements that can guide future endeavours, such as an increase of the initial training time to build capacity in the approach, more opportunities for the exchange of practices among professionals and experts, and more concrete proposals/practices for ECEC implementation as well as more guidance in developing collaboration with families.

Implementation Assessment

In the beginning of the implementation, a substantial majority of participants acknowledged their lack of awareness regarding PBS as an evidence-based, tiered framework for supporting various aspects of children's socioemotional development, the lack of written guidelines to handle behavioural difficulties, and a very low prevalence of behaviour management programmes use. Moreover, the majority of participants had never undergone a training programme specifically focused on utilising PBS. After completing the training and participating in the study, the participants' understanding of PW-PBS underwent a significant transformation. Firstly, they presented high levels of satisfaction with their participation in the programme, which provided them with the knowledge and skills necessary to implement PW-PBS in their preschools. Secondly, this led to the progressive implementation of PW-PBS

in ECEC settings, as participants (and leadership teams) reported incorporating (or planning to incorporate) various aspects of PBS into their professional practice and in their preschools in a very structured manner.

Participants reported incorporating many aspects of PBS in their work, like using visual schedules and cues to aid children in understanding expectations and transitions, controlling the tone of voice, providing positive feedback and reinforcement to children, and recognising and praising their efforts and appropriate behaviours. Clear rules and expectations were established to promote consistency and clarity in the classroom environment and children were given more opportunities to make choices. Active supervision was also highlighted as an essential aspect of their PBS implementation, particularly in the case of children experiencing behavioural problems. They reported including moments of relaxation with mindfulness techniques (that in some cases were also shared with families) and incorporating moments where children could share their thoughts and feelings in a warm, positive environment. Participants also reported paying more attention to the characteristics of each child and the environmental factors influencing challenging behaviours, acting with increased intentionality and comprehension in dealing with those behaviours, and effectively preventing and managing conflicts. Some participants expressed that they took advantage of undesirable behaviour as an opportunity for teaching and learning, using these moments to address and guide children toward more positive alternatives. A whole-school approach to PBS was embraced by the leadership teams, recognising the significance of creating a positive and inclusive community where everyone is involved in promoting appropriate behaviours and socioemotional development.

Both the trainers (83%) and the ECEC team members (30%) reported encountering barriers to PW-PBS implementation. Participants mentioned several limitations such as constraints related to projects already established, lack of time availability, lack of staff and incompatibility of professionals' schedules to work as a team, and the lack of motivation on the part of some teachers and other professionals to participate in the training and change their practices. Despite these barriers, the participants acknowledged the significant support they received in their PBS implementation journey. Peer and management support emerged as a valuable facilitator, with participants expressing gratitude for the assistance and encouragement they received from their fellow educators and managers. The online training programme was reported to have been a particularly valuable resource, providing comprehensive modules, well-

structured content, and a wealth of online resources that participants found helpful and accessible. The tools and additional resources provided by the IPP team were specifically mentioned as highly valuable to their implementation (e.g., *Benchmarks of Quality*). Participants appreciated the collaborative and reflexive nature of teamwork that is at the centre of PBS, emphasising the importance and effectiveness of a whole-school/programme-wide approach. They also acknowledged the importance of having a psychology service support to help with the training and implementation. These facilitators played a crucial role in overcoming implementation challenges and reinforcing the participants' commitment to PBS practices in the long-term.

Before the training, a majority of participants recognised that children in their preschools faced difficulties in regulating and expressing emotions, struggled in social interactions, lacked motivation, occasionally misbehaved, and had moderately developed socioemotional skills. Notwithstanding the limitations of the short implementation phase, both the trainers and the ECEC teams reported observing a slight improvement in the socioemotional and behavioural needs of the children following PW-PBS implementation. Noteworthy, participants reported a perceived reduction in challenging behaviours and positive changes in socioemotional growth of children, which can be attributed to the implementation of proactive strategies, consistent expectations, and a supportive environment.

In summary, the assessment study in Portugal underscores the positive effects of training early childhood educators in PW-PBS, reinforcing the need for continuous training opportunities to equip educators with skills for socioemotional development and behaviour management. Despite challenges, the successful implementation of PW-PBS strategies highlights the potential for transformative change in early childhood education, benefiting children's socioemotional growth and behaviour.

4. GREECE

4.1. PRESCHOOL RECRUITMENT AND PROFILES

The IHU team contacted the assistant supervisor of the Pre-school Education Directorate and the general managers of the preschool centres of the Municipality of Thermi. Additionally, the team utilised social media platforms to disseminate information about the recruitment process. A press release was created as a requirement for the PBS-ECEC project, and it served to announce the recruitment. Each preschool was asked to nominate 1 or 2 trainers who would engage in online meetings with the coaches and receive training to subsequently support the rest of the preschool team in PW-PBS implementation.

Seven preschools were recruited for the training and implementation activity, with 9 trainers agreeing to train their colleagues. All preschools were public institutions. Across the seven preschools 9 trainers successfully recruited 23 ECEC professionals to participate in this activity. Information about the participating preschools can be found in Table 5 below.

Table 5

Information relating to participating preschools

Preschool	No. of trainers	No. of professionals (ECEC teams)	Sector
Preschool 1	1	5	Public
Preschool 2	2	8	Public
Preschool 3	2	3	Public
Preschool 4	1	3	Public
Preschool 5	1	1	Public
Preschool 6	1	2	Public
Preschool 7	1	1	Public

4.2. FINDINGS FROM QUESTIONNAIRE 1: PRE-TRAINING QUESTIONNAIRE

Trainers' Demographic Information

Nine trainers took part in this project activity, all of them female, with an average age of 49.6 (age range 43-58). Four participants held a Bachelor's Degree (44%) and 5 participants held a Master's Degree (56%).

When asked about their professional roles, 3 of the trainers described themselves as preschool leaders/managers/owners (33%) and 6 as preschool teachers (67%). Four of the participants reported working with children aged 3-4 (44%) and 5 participants reported working with children aged 1-3 (56%). All trainers reported working in a public (government-funded preschool). Five trainers reported working in small towns (approximately 3,000-15,000 people) (56%), 2 reported working in towns (approximately 15,000-100,000 people) (22%) and 2 reported working in villages (less than 3,000 people) (22%).

ECEC Teams' Demographic Information

All participants of the ECEC teams were female (23 participants). The age range of the participants varied from 33 to 56 years old, with an average age of 45.5. When considering their educational qualifications, the distribution was as follows: 7 participants held a Bachelor's Degree (30%), 8 participants completed the Advanced Certificate/Higher Certificate (35%), and 8 participants possessed a Masters Degree (35%). In terms of their professional roles, all the participants were preschool teachers (100%). The majority of participants worked with toddlers aged 1-3 years (15 participants, 65%), followed by those working with children aged 3-4 years (6 participants, 26%), and those working with children aged 4-5 years (2 participants, 9%). All participants were employed in public (government-funded) preschool settings (100%). Sixteen participants described their work locations as small towns (70%), 2 participants worked in towns (9%), and 5 participant worked in a village (22%).

Trainers' Perceived Status of Children's Behavioural and Socioemotional Difficulties

The majority of trainers reported that preschool children 'often' (44%) and 'sometimes' (33%) experience great difficulty in managing and expressing their emotions, and that children 'often' (56%) and 'sometimes' (33%) face challenges in social interactions with others. The majority of trainers (44%) reported that children in their classroom 'often' lack motivation and are prone to boredom. Most of the trainers (56%) reported that the children in their classroom 'misbehave occasionally' and that their socioemotional competencies are 'well developed' (67%).

ECEC Teams' Perceived Status of Children's Behavioural and Socioemotional Difficulties

The majority of participants of ECEC teams (43%) reported that preschool children 'sometimes' experience great difficulty in managing and expressing their emotions, while 26% of them answered 'often', 17% of them answered 'very often' and 13% answered 'never'. The majority of ECEC team members indicated

that preschool children 'sometimes' (39%) face challenges in social interactions with others. The remaining participants answered 'often (30%), 'very often' (17%). The majority of participants of ECEC teams (35%) reported that children in their classrooms 'often' lack motivation and are prone to boredom.

Regarding overall behaviour, a significant number of participants (57%) perceived that the children in their classes 'misbehave occasionally', 30% reported that children 'misbehave frequently', while 13% reported that children 'behave well'. When assessing the socioemotional competencies of children, 52% of participants considered them 'well developed' and 48% considered them 'moderately developed'.

Trainers' Current Use of Behaviour Management Programmes and Knowledge of PBS

All trainers indicated that their schools/preschools do not have explicit written guidelines to handle behaviour difficulties and all of them reported that do not follow any specific behaviour management programme. When asked about their awareness of PBS as an evidence-based, tiered framework for supporting children's socioemotional wellbeing, a large majority of trainers (78%) indicated they were not aware of PBS before the study. Likewise, the majority of trainers (78%) had not previously participated in training focusing on the use of PBS to aid the socioemotional learning of preschool children.

ECEC Teams' Current Use of Behaviour Management Programmes and Knowledge of PBS

Again, all participants indicated that their schools/preschools do not have explicit written guidelines to handle behaviour difficulties and all of them reported that do not follow any specific behaviour management programme. As was the case with the trainers, the significant majority of ECEC team members (88%) were unaware of PBS as an evidence-based, tiered framework designed to support children's behavioural, social, emotional, and mental health, prior to the research. Likewise, the majority of participants (88%) of the ECEC teams indicated that they had not previously participated in a training programme focusing on the use of PBS to aid the socioemotional learning of preschool children.

4.3. FINDINGS FROM QUESTIONNAIRE 2: POST-TRAINING QUESTIONNAIRE

Despite the research teams and the trainer's efforts to encourage all ECEC teams to fill out Questionnaire 2 within the specified timeframe, 2 participants of the ECEC teams did not comply. However, these

individuals reportedly still participated fully in the activity. Therefore, the project findings presented below are based on the responses received from 30 participants (9 trainers and 21 ECEC professionals).

Trainers' and ECEC Teams' Evaluation of the Online Modules

Learning Objectives

The majority of trainers found the learning objectives easy to understand (56% agreed, 33% strongly agreed). Additionally, most trainers considered them relevant to their professional practice (44% agreed, 56% strongly agreed). Similarly, the ECEC teams found the learning objectives easy to understand (71% agreed, 24% strongly agreed, 5% neither agree or disagree), and they reported that the learning objectives were relevant to their professional practice (67% agreed, 33% strongly agreed).

Learning Content

Participants generally expressed satisfaction with the learning content. The majority of trainers agreed that it met their expectations (56% agreed, 44% strongly agreed), was relevant to their daily work (33% agreed, 67% strongly agreed) and was enjoyable to read (56% agreed, 44% strongly agreed).

Again, the responses from the ECEC teams largely mirrored those of the trainers, with the majority agreeing that the learning content met their expectations (71% agreed, 29% strongly agreed), was relevant to their daily work (71% agreed, 29% strongly agreed) and was enjoyable to read (62% agreed, 24% strongly agreed, 14% neither agree or disagree).

When asked "What aspects of the learning content will you use in your daily work?", the trainers and ECEC team participants provided the responses such as: "practices for promoting positive behaviours, kindness and responsibility", "the suggested practical activities", "we will try to apply the proposed concepts of the PW-PBS approach with my colleagues to enhance our relations", "practical tips for socializing and promoting cooperation", "establishing routines for the promotion of positive behaviours", strategies to encourage cooperation and effective communication with colleagues", "suggested tips to promote a positive culture at our preschool", among others.

The participants were also asked what they enjoyed most about the learning content. Their responses highlighted the easy-to-follow structure ("the structure of the modules was very well organised and made the study easier", "the presentation, analysis and clarity") and the easy-to-comprehend modules

("the content of the modules was easy to understand", "It was quite clear and understandable", "It was readable and comprehensible", "the simple language-presentation of the topics"). The majority of participants highlighted the importance of the practical part of each module ("the practical part with the ideas", "the part of the activities for more practicing and consolidation", "the activities"), the examples ("there were several examples to better understand the concepts", "the existence of many examples helped me in understanding the content of the modules", "the examples", "there were very helpful examples in the modules that helped in understanding the content") and the clear learning objectives ("the introduction of each module with the aim and the learning objectives. It helped me to focus on the important topics of each module", "the learning objectives in each module was a good start for the study"). Participants also highlighted the content's contribution to their professional development ("the study of new concepts, which although I was aware of, I did not know their terminology and the broader theoretical background") and practice ("overall, it will help me to improve the preschool climate and increase positive behaviours in my classroom", "it presents some practices that are useful to my everyday preschool activities and helps me to regulate difficult behaviours", "the activities and practical tips for implementing the approaches of an preschool-wide programme", "the activity-based approach for implementing the programme"), while other focused on specific sections ("the voice-meter", the strategies for problem-solving", "the self-assessment quizzes", "section 5 with the assessment tools"). A participant stated that "the content is flexible to adapt to the age range of children, who I work with".

The participants were then asked "Is there something that should be included in the learning content? If yes, what is it?". The majority of participants (all trainers and members of the ECEC teams) reported that that there is nothing that should be included in the learning content. However, almost all participants (8 trainers and 16 members of the ECEC teams) provided some ideas for improvements. Almost all participants reported the importance to include more practical activities to apply in the classrooms with children ("it would be useful to read suggested activities to implement in the classroom with the children", "despite there are several examples and activities to understand the theoretical concepts, it would be interesting to read examples and activities to implement with children, eg. on how to promote socioemotional learning in the classroom", "I would like it to be more detailed and not so brief in the presentation of practices with children", "it would help me to read more examples of practical application with children", "more hands-on exercises for children", "more good practices for children") and suggestions for adaptations to toddlers ("adaptions to each age group", "adaptions to younger age

groups"). Other suggestions included the provided resources ("adding more resources in Greek, e.g., suggested books, videos etc."), the time and conditions of implementations ("more time to implement and test in practice more of the proposed elements of the programme", "better conditions (e.g. time, stability of the training staff) for the implementation of learning modules)").

The participants were asked "do you think that any aspects of the learning content should be left out? If yes, what are they?". Again almost all participants indicated that there is nothing to exclude.
The remaining participants noted that "some components are repeated and these parts could be reduced", "the theoretical part could be reduced and more practical activities would be added".

Learning Activities

Overall, participants reported positive experiences with the learning activities. A significant portion of trainers agreed that they were able to complete the activities within the modules (78% trainers agreed, 22% strongly agreed). Likewise, the majority of ECEC team members agreed that they were able to complete the activities within the modules (67% ECEC team members agreed, 33% strongly agreed).

Additional Materials

The majority of participants found the materials and resources in the learning modules to be relevant to the training programme (44% trainers agreed, 44% strongly agreed; 57% ECEC team members agreed, 33% strongly agreed) and they reported that they enjoyed exploring them (56% trainers agreed, 33% strongly agreed; 62% ECEC team members agreed, 33% strongly agreed).

Trainers' Evaluation of the Training Programme

The trainers evaluated the programme positively (see Figure 14), indicating that they found it useful (44% agreed, 56% strongly agreed), that it increased their knowledge of the importance of supporting children's socioemotional learning (33% agreed, 67% strongly agreed), it increased their knowledge of PBS (78% strongly agreed, 22% agreed) and it will help them support socioemotional and behavioural needs of children in their work (67% strongly agreed, 33% agreed). The majority of trainers indicated they would recommend this type of programme to their colleagues (56% strongly agreed, 44% agreed).

The majority of trainers believed that it is important to implement this kind of training programme in early childhood settings (67% strongly agreed and 33% agreed) and that this training programme will be helpful for staff working with children in early years settings (78% strongly agreed and 22% agreed). The trainers responded positively when asked whether the programme supported their work in developing the socioemotional competencies of children (67% strongly agreed, 33% agreed). Trainers, also, believed that this programme is useful for early years teachers aiming to improve children's socioemotional competencies (56% strongly agreed and 44% agreed). To the statement "Overall, I am satisfied with the training programme", the majority of participants responded "agree" (67%) and 'strongly agree' (33%).

Figure 14. *Trainers' Evaluation of the Training Programme*
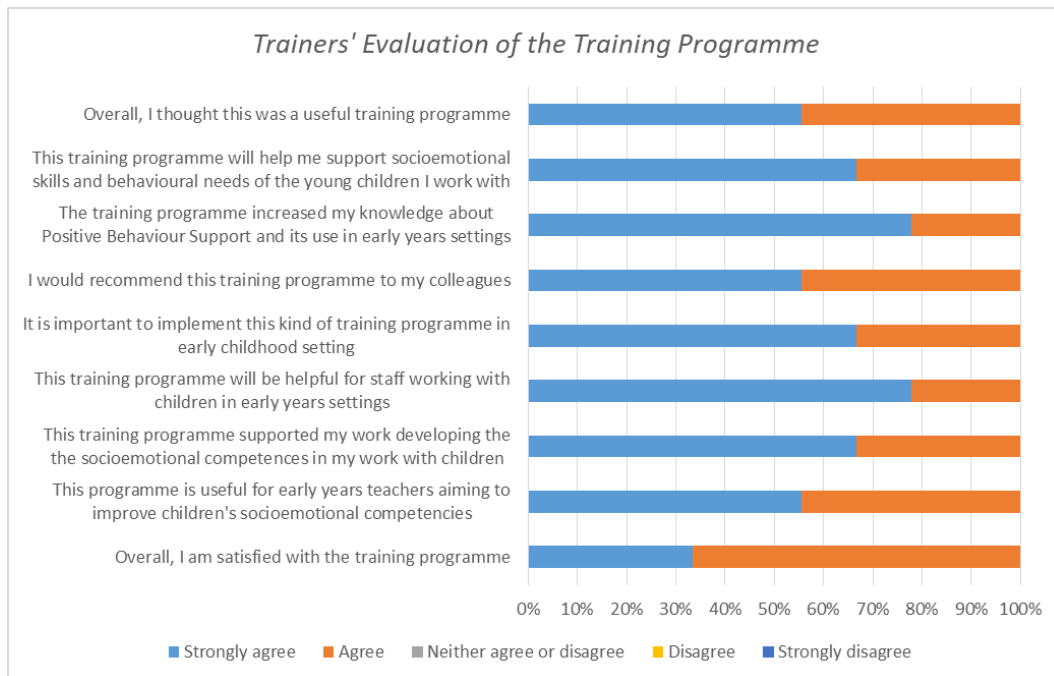
The trainers were then asked what they enjoyed most about the training programme and they highlighted the flexibility of the training programme ("the flexibility of the of asynchronous training", "the flexibility of the training programme"), the practical implications on their professional ("It presents crucial issues that are of great concern to all educators in their daily work") and the philosophy of the programme ("it is programme, which is based on the involvement and effective communication of all members of the preschool community, namely children, teachers, parents and the local community").

The trainers were also asked if there was anything that could be improved about the training programme and they provided responses such as: "longer duration to organise more meetings for training the ECEC teams by the trainers", "more time to implement the assessment tools for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of some practices", "more practical activities to implement with children", "more examples for toddlers". A participant also suggested that "it would be interesting if you included videos with applications from other countries". Lastly, the trainers were asked if they plan on implementing PBS in their professional practice in the ongoing school year. All trainers said 'yes'.

ECEC Teams' Evaluation of the Training Programme

The training programme was also positively evaluated by the ECEC teams (see Figure 15), with a significant majority finding the programme useful (42% agreed, 48% strongly agreed). Participants believed the programme would increase their knowledge of supporting children's socioemotional learning (52% agreed, 38% strongly agreed), their knowledge of PBS (52% agreed, 34% strongly agreed) and it would help them support socioemotional behavioural needs of children (67% agreed, 29% strongly agreed). When asked if they would recommend this type of training to their colleagues, 12 participants (57%) indicated they "agree", 8 participants (38%) indicated they "strongly agree".

The majority of ECEC team members showed support for implementing this programme in early years settings (67% agreed, 33% strongly agreed), believed that the programme would be beneficial for staff working with children (55% agreed, 35% strongly agreed) and that it supports their work in developing children's socioemotional skills (62% agreed and 38% strongly agreed) Moreover, 48% of participants agreed and 48% strongly agreed that the training was useful for early years teachers seeking to improve children's socioemotional competencies. Similarly to the trainers, the ECEC team members indicated high satisfaction with the training programme, as an overwhelming majority (71%) responded "agree" and strongly agree (19%) to the statement, "Overall, I am satisfied with the training programme".

Figure 15. *ECEC Team's Evaluation of the Training Programme*
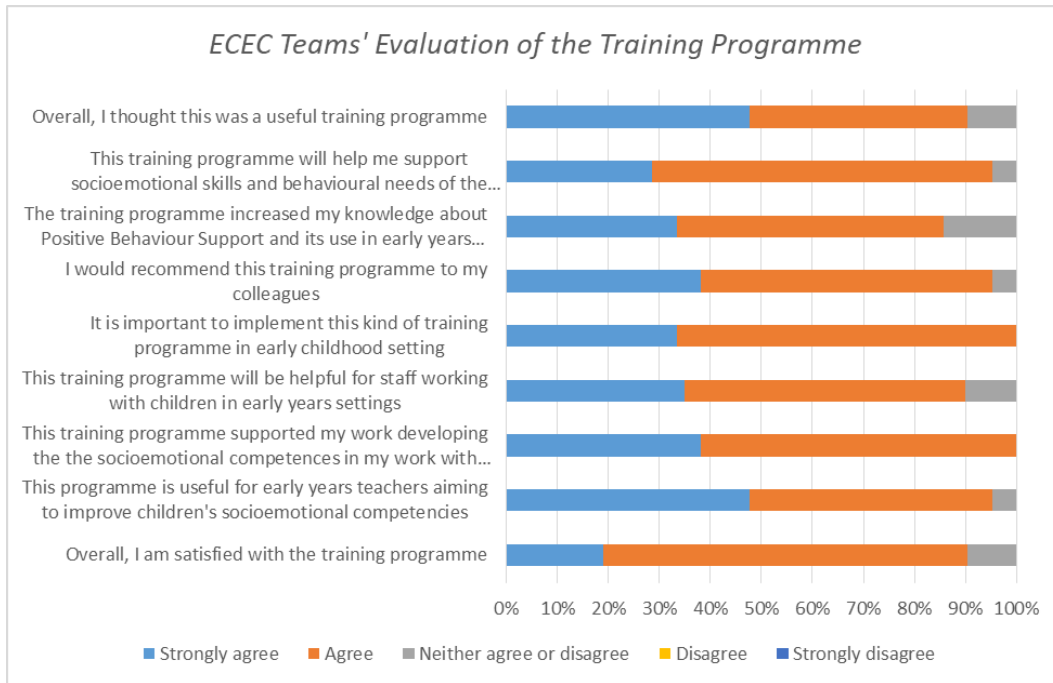
The ECEC teams also provided examples of things that they enjoyed about the training programme, including: "the training sessions. The meetings with trainers gave us the opportunity to express our concerns and thoughts and exchange ideas on how to promote socioemotional learning in our preschools", "the flexibility to implement the proposed activities and strategies", "we all already know that we have to promote positive behaviours at an early age, but the programme-wide approach of the training programme gave us all important knowledge, practical ideas and resources on how to do it", "the practical part, especially the activities that helped me to better understand the theoretical part".

The ECEC teams were also asked if there was anything that could be improved about the training programme and they provided responses such as: "to have feedback of the implementations in the other participating countries", "extend the implementation period. It was too short and not practical to start in the middle of the school year", "more examples concerning toddlers", "more activities for children, such as the voice meter". All participants indicated that they plan on implementing PBS in their work and again.

Trainers' Evaluation of the Training Facilitators/Training Organisers

The trainers believed that the training was well organised (33% agreed, 33% strongly agreed) and that the coaches explained everything clearly (67% strongly agreed, 33% agreed). All trainers indicated that the coaches were helpful in answering their questions (89% strongly agreed). The trainers indicated that they would be happy to contact their coaches again if they had further queries after the completion of the training programme (78% strongly agreed and 22% agreed).

ECEC Teams' Evaluation of the Training Facilitators/Training Organisers

The majority of ECEC team members indicated that the training was well organised (62% agreed, 19% strongly agreed, 19% neither agree nor disagree), and that their trainers explained everything clearly (43% agreed, 43% strongly agreed). The participants also indicated that the training trainers from their settings were helpful in answering their questions (52% strongly agreed, 48% agreed).

4.4. FINDINGS FROM QUESTIONNAIRE 3: FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONNAIRE

Despite the trainers' and the research team's efforts to encourage all ECEC teams to fill out Questionnaire 3 within the specified timeframe, 10 participants did not comply. The project findings presented below are based on the responses received from 9 trainers and 13 members of ECEC teams.

Trainers' Perceptions of the Training Programme

The majority of trainers reported that they were glad to have taken part in the programme (78% strongly agreed and 22% agreed), that it increased their knowledge of the importance of children's socioemotional learning (78% agreed and 22% strongly agreed), their knowledge of PBS (89% strongly agreed) and their skills in dealing with challenging behaviours and supporting socioemotional learning (78% agreed and 22% strongly agreed). The trainers reported that the programme encouraged them to learn more about socioemotional learning and positive discipline (67% agreed, 33% strongly agreed). All trainers indicated that they discussed the programme with their colleagues (44% agreed, 56% strongly agreed) and recommended it to their colleagues (56% agreed, 44% strongly agreed).

ECEC Teams' Perceptions of the Training Programme

Similar responses were provided by the ECEC teams, with the majority indicating that they were glad to have taken part in the programme (46% agreed, 54% strongly agreed). Again, the majority reported that that the programme increased their knowledge of the importance of children's socioemotional learning (54% agreed, 46% strongly agreed), their knowledge of PBS (46% strongly agreed, 54% agreed) and their competencies in dealing with challenging behaviours and supporting socioemotional learning in the classroom (69% agreed, 31% strongly agreed). Just as their trainers, the ECEC teams agreed that the programme encouraged them to learn more about socioemotional learning, challenging behaviours and positive discipline (77% agreed, 23% strongly agreed). All participants indicated that they have discussed the training programme with their colleagues (62% agreed, 38% strongly agreed) and recommended the programme to their colleagues (54% agreed, 46% strongly agreed).

Trainers' Implementation of PBS in the Preschool Classroom

All trainers indicated that they have implemented aspects of PBS in their classroom since taking part in the training programme. When asked what aspects of PBS they took on in their professional practice, three trainers indicated implementing "all aspects" form the course, two trainers responded "those that are related to classroom management, during daily routines", 3 trainers referred to the strategies for socioemotional learning ("strategies for learning to cooperate and be kind", "practical tips for promoting children's socioemotional development", "practical tips for teaching behaviours", "I tried to adapt my existing knowledge and activities that already used in my practice in the PW-PBS framework to enhance the development of positive behaviours and the development of self-awareness, self-control and recognition of emotions").

The trainers were then asked about the barriers to using PBS in their professional practice, with 78% indicating that they encountered barriers and 22% indicating that they did not. When asked what barriers they encountered, seven participants provided responses related to time ("no proper presentation of the staff programme due to lack of time", "We would implement more aspects of the programme such as the evaluation tools, if we had more time") and staff constraints ("lack of staff").

All trainers (100%) indicated that they encountered facilitators and resources that helped with PBS implementation, including the collaboration with colleagues and parents ("collaborating with colleagues", "assistance and collaboration with colleagues from other preschool centres of the directorate for early

childhood education and training", "cooperation with parents, and with colleagues", "collaboration among colleagues", help from my colleagues, cooperation with parents", "cooperation with colleagues", "meetings with colleagues among all preschools of our area"), the provided resources (working with colleagues and using the online platform", "books, resources and the material of the training programme". Finally, as expected from their role in this project activity, all trainers indicated that since taking part in the training programme, they have encouraged or trained their colleagues to use PBS.

ECEC Teams' Implementation of PBS in the Preschool Classroom

Again, all members of ECEC teams indicated that they have implemented aspects of PBS in their classroom since taking part in the training programme. When asked what aspects of PBS they took on, the participants provided responses such as the following: "practical strategies to promote cooperation, respect of each other, kindness and responsibility", "stating rules to promote positive behaviours", "establishing positive behaviours during routines for a good management of the classroom", "due to the programme's framework we organised meetings with school staff more frequently", " the Whole-classroom approach to PBS", "the voice meter, and other relevant activities that we found on internet", "we agreed that the preschool staff (educators, managers, care staff etc.) will demonstrate the positive behaviours we want children to have", "acknowledging and highlighting positive behaviours".

When asked about barriers to implementation, 62% of ECEC members reported encountering barriers, while 38% indicated that they did not. Similarly to their trainers, all members of the ECEC teams reported that the barriers related to time constraints ("limited time", "lack of time") and staff constraints ("lack of staff"). One participant noted that "it was difficult to adapt all aspects of the PW-PBS approach in toddlers". Interestingly, all ECEC team members indicated that they encountered facilitators and resources that helped with PBS implementation, including: "discussions with colleagues", "supporting material of the programme (online modules)", "the online platform", "searching in online resources", "cooperation with colleagues and parents", "active engagement of parents", "support from trainers", "frequent meeting with trainers", "the proposed activities". Finally, all participants indicated that since taking part in the training programme, they have encouraged or trained their colleagues to use PBS.

Trainers' Perceived Status of Children's Behavioural and Socioemotional Difficulties Post-training

The questionnaire's final section aimed to gather information on whether participants observed any changes in the socioemotional and behavioural needs of the children in their preschool settings. Despite the short implementation phase, the research team sought to gain insights into the participants' perspectives on even minor improvements.

Post-training, the majority of trainers reported that preschool children 'often' (44%) experience great difficulty in managing and expressing their emotions, 33% answered 'never' and 22% answered 'sometimes'. In addition, the trainers reported that preschool children 'sometimes' (44%) face challenges in social interactions with others, while 33% answered 'never' (22% answered 'often'). When asked whether the children in their classroom are prone to boredom, 44% trainers responded 'never' and 44% responded 'sometimes' (11% answered 'often'). A comparison of trainer's perceived status of children's behavioural and socioemotional difficulties pre- and post-training can be found in Figure 16 below.

Figure 16. *Comparison of Trainer's Perceived Status of Children's Behavioural and Socioemotional Difficulties Pre- and Post-training*
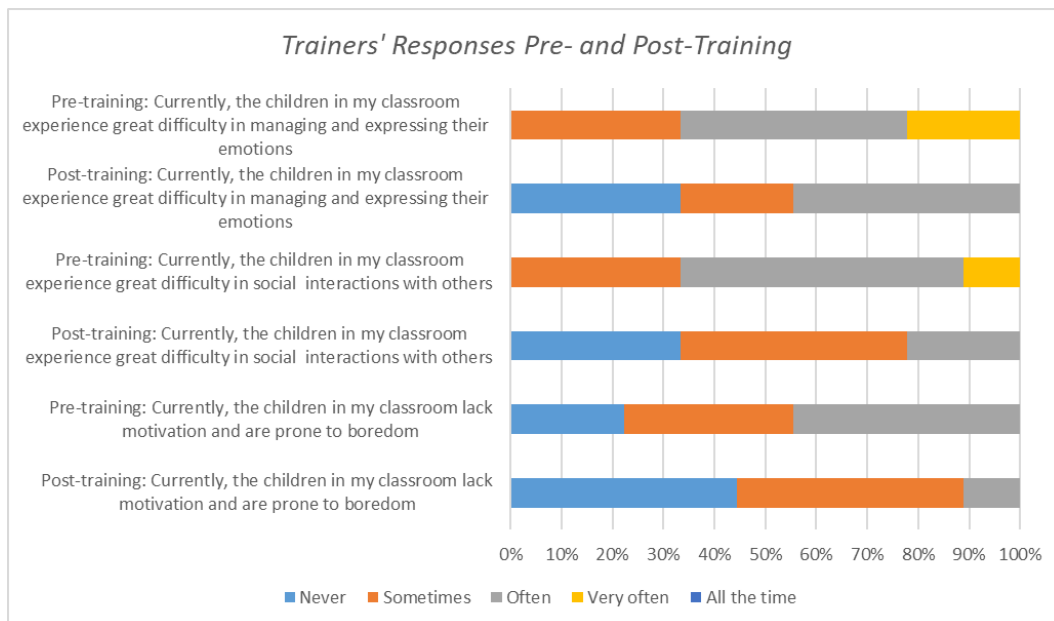
Regarding overall behaviour, 67% of trainers perceived that children in their classes 'misbehave occasionally', while 22% reported that children 'behave well' (11% responded that they misbehave frequently'). When assessing the socioemotional competencies of children, 78% of trainers considered them 'well developed', 22% considered them moderately developed.

Finally, the trainers were asked if they noticed improvements in the socioemotional learning of the children in their classroom since using PBS, with 56% of trainers responding 'very', 33% responding 'moderately' and 11% responding 'extremely'. The participants were also asked if they noticed a decrease in challenging behaviours of the children in their classroom since using PBS, with 44% responding 'slightly', 22% responding 'moderately', 22% responding 'very' and 11% responding 'extremely' (see Figure 17).

Figure 17. *Trainers' Perceived Changes in Children's Socioemotional Learning and Challenging Behaviours Post-training*
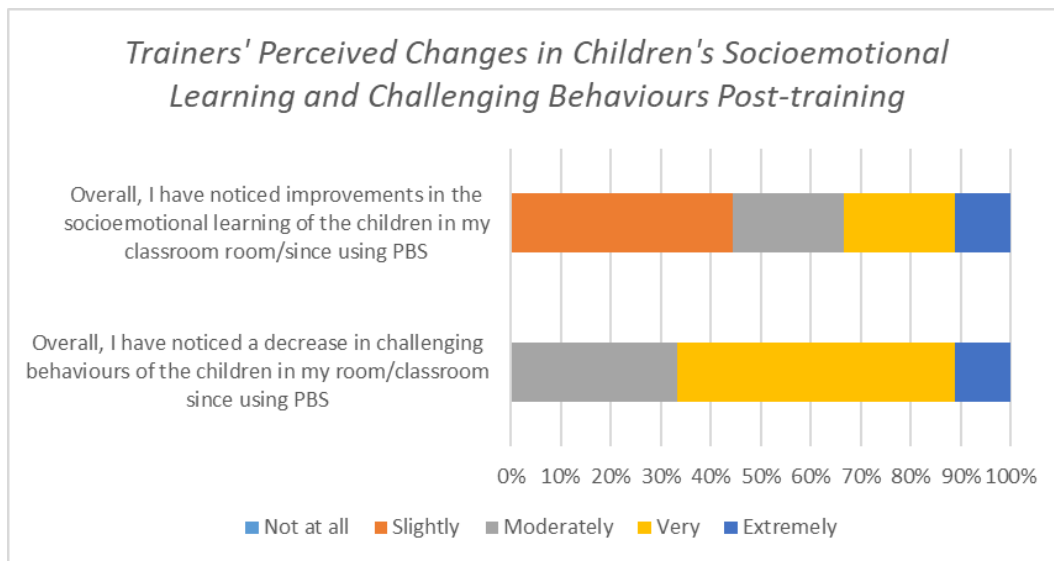
ECEC Teams' Perceived Status of Children's Behavioural and Socioemotional Difficulties Post-training

The majority of participants reported that preschool children 'sometimes' (46%) and 'never' (23%) experience great difficulty in managing and expressing their emotions (31% answered often). Almost half of the participants (46%) answered that preschool children 'sometimes' face challenges in social interactions with others, while 31% responded 'never' (23% answered often). When asked whether the

children in their classroom are prone to boredom, 46% responded 'never', 23% responded 'sometimes' and 31% responded 'often'. A comparison of ECEC team member's perceived status of children's behavioural and socioemotional difficulties pre- and post-training can be found in Figure 18 below

Figure 18. *Comparison of ECEC Team's Perceived Status of Children's Behavioural and Socioemotional Difficulties Pre- and Post-training*
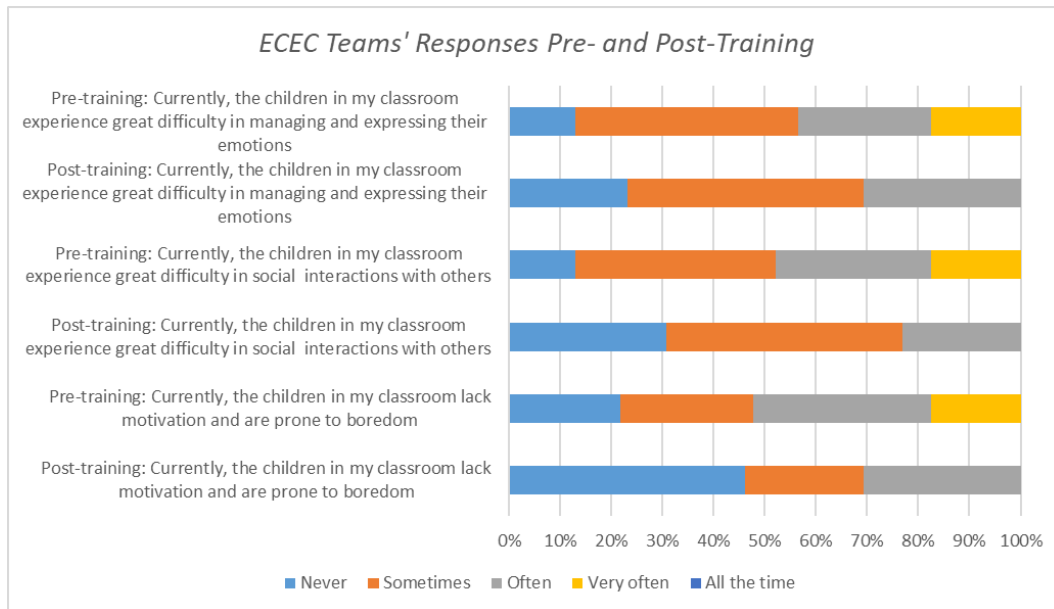
Regarding overall behaviour, 54% of participants perceived that children in their classes 'misbehave occasionally', while 23% reported that children 'behave well'. 8% answered that they 'behave very well'. When assessing the socioemotional competencies of children, 62% of participants considered them 'well developed', 31% considered them 'moderately developed', and 8% considered them 'very well developed'.

In terms of noticing improvements in the socioemotional learning of the children in their classroom since implementing PBS, 54% of participants responded 'very and 31% responded 'moderately'. The participants were also asked if they noticed a decrease in challenging behaviours of the children in their classroom since using PBS, with 46% responding 'very', 31% responding 'moderately' (see Figure 19).

Figure 19. *ECEC Teams' Perceived Changes in Children's Socioemotional Learning and Challenging Behaviours Post-training*
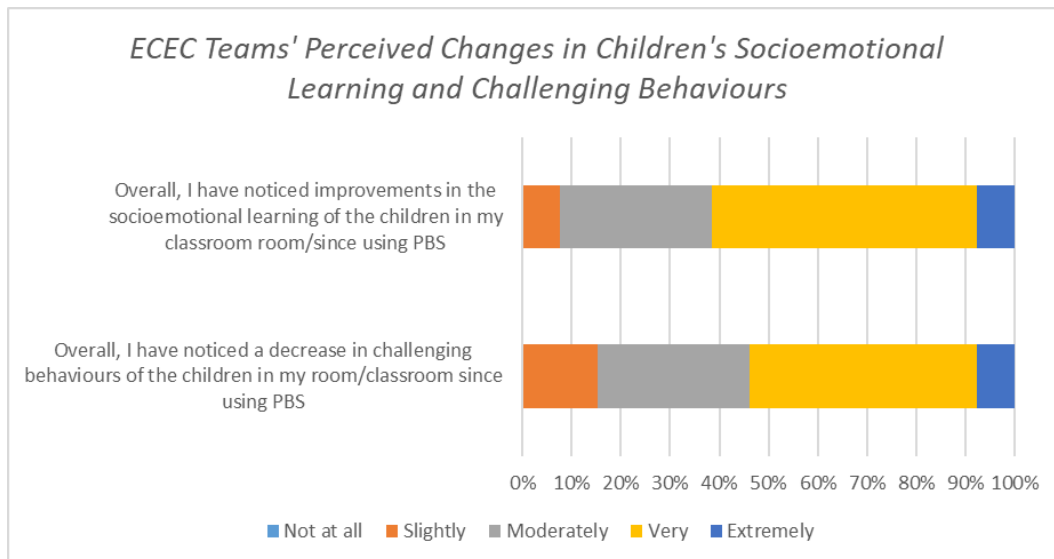
4.5. CONCLUSION OF THE IMPACT ASSESSMENT STUDY IN GREECE

The findings of the impact assessment study in Greece indicated the positive impact of the training on early childhood educators' professional development, especially in the use of the PW-PBS approach. Overall, the positive evaluations of the training programme and implementation phase by ECEC professionals highlighted the success of the training programme in achieving its goals and its potential for making a meaningful impact on the participants' work with children.

Training Assessment

Both trainers and ECEC teams expressed high levels of satisfaction with their participation in the training programme. The majority of participants not only reported being glad to have taken part in the programme but also acknowledged its significant impact on their professional development. They agreed that the training enhanced their understanding of the importance of children's socioemotional learning, as well as their knowledge of PBS and its application in preschool settings. Furthermore, participants agreed that the training programme improved their competencies in managing challenging behaviours and effectively supporting socioemotional learning in their classrooms. They also highlighted that the programme encouraged them to deepen their knowledge in areas related to socioemotional learning,

challenging behaviors, and positive discipline. All participants discussed the training programme with their colleagues and enthusiastically recommended it to their peers.

The majority of participants showed strong support for implementing the programme in early years settings and believed it would be beneficial for staff working with young children. They also recognised the impact of the training on developing children's socioemotional competencies. Trainers and ECEC team members also appreciated the training sessions and the opportunity to exchange ideas with coaches and trainers.

The online modules were generally well-received by both trainers and ECEC teams participants. Findings from the post-training questionnaire showed that they appreciated the flexibility of the asynchronous training, allowing them to engage with the content at their convenience. They valued the practical implications of the programme, addressing essential issues relevant to their daily work. Furthermore, they found the philosophy of the programme, which emphasises effective communication and involvement of all members of the preschool community, to be valuable.

The training materials' content received positive feedback for its clarity, relevance, and enjoyable presentation, meeting participants' expectations, while the practical activities and examples were noted as valuable for understanding and implementing the PW-PBS approach in classrooms. The participants highlighted several aspects of the learning content that they used in their daily work. These included practices for promoting positive behaviors, kindness, and responsibility, as well as the suggested practical activities. They also reported that they applied the proposed concepts of the PW-PBS approach with their colleagues to enhance their relationships and cooperation. Participants recognised the content's contribution to their professional development, especially in terms of learning new concepts and terminology, as well as understanding the broader theoretical background.

Overall, participants expressed satisfaction with the content's flexibility, as it allowed them to adapt the approach to the specific age range of the children they work with, making it more applicable in their daily interactions. While the majority of participants reported that there was nothing that needed to be included or excluded from the learning content, some suggested improvements were proposed. Participants expressed the need for more practical activities that can be directly applied in the classroom

with children, especially for different age groups. They also requested additional resources in Greek, such as suggested books and videos. Some participants recommended reducing repetitions in certain components of the content and adding more hands-on exercises for children.

In addition, the trainers expressed their satisfaction with the training organised by the coaches they interacted with during online sessions. Similarly, the ECEC teams provided positive evaluations of the trainers in their preschool settings.

Implementation Assessment

Prior to participation in the training programme, both trainers and ECEC teams reported that they did not have explicit written guidelines or specific behaviour management programs in place to handle behaviour difficulties in their preschools. A significant majority of trainers and ECEC team members were not aware of PBS before the study. After participating in the programme, both trainers and ECEC teams actively implemented aspects of PBS in their classrooms. This reflects a positive and meaningful impact of the training on their professional practices. Some participants reported implementing all aspects of the PBS course, while others focused on specific elements, such as those related to classroom management during daily routines or strategies for promoting socioemotional learning.

The most common challenges mentioned by trainers and ECEC team members during the implementation of PBS were related to time constraints and limited staff resources. On the positive side, all trainers acknowledged encountering facilitators and resources that supported them in implementing PBS. Collaborating with colleagues and parents was a significant source of assistance for trainers, along with the provided resources and the online platform. Members of the ECEC teams expressed that discussions with colleagues, support from trainers, and engagement with parents helped them with PBS implementation. The online platform and proposed activities were also instrumental in supporting their efforts. All trainers and members of the ECEC teams indicated that they have encouraged or trained their colleagues to use PBS since participating in the training programme. This highlights their commitment to sharing their knowledge from the training programme and fostering a collective effort to implement PBS practices throughout their educational community.

Although participants provided positive feedback, they also offered suggestions for improvement, such as extending the timeline in order to organise more training sessions for ECEC teams, implementing assessment tools for monitoring practices, including more practical activities for children, incorporating videos from other countries for additional perspectives or obtaining feedback from implementations in other participating countries.

While the implementation phase was relatively short, both trainers and ECEC team members reported positive observations in children's socioemotional competencies and a slightly decrease in challenging behaviours since incorporating PBS practices. Participants reported noticing improvements in the socioemotional learning of the children since using PBS, with a substantial percentage responding very positively. A slight shift in responses was observed between the responses provided in the first and last questionnaire regarding children's socioemotional and behavioural competencies. These findings highlight the potential impact of PBS practices in supporting children's socioemotional development and behaviour in early childhood education settings, emphasising the value of continued implementation beyond the project's completion. Despite the limitations of the short implementation phase, these positive outcomes encourage educators to further integrate PBS principles into their professional practice to enhance the wellbeing and socioemotional development of young learners.

5. CYPRUS

5.1. PRESCHOOL RECRUITMENT AND PROFILES

A number of activities were employed in the recruitment of participating preschools. The CARDET and IoD team contacted both public and private ECEC settings in Cyprus by email and phone. An invitation letter was sent to all settings. Additionally, CARDET and IOD team utilised social media platforms to disseminate information about the recruitment process. A press release was created as a requirement for the PBS-ECEC project, which also served to announce the recruitment. Each preschool was requested to nominate 1 or 2 trainers who would engage in online meetings with the coaches and receive training to subsequently support the rest of the preschool team in PW-PBS implementation.

Nine preschools were recruited for the training and implementation activity, with 18 trainers from all settings agreeing to train their staff or colleagues. The sample consisted of 2 public and 7 private settings serving children from 0-6 years old. Across the 9 preschools, 18 trainers successfully recruited 47 ECEC professionals to participate in this project activity and trained them in the utilisation of the PW-PBS approach. Information regarding each participating preschools can be found in Table 6 below.

Table 6

Information relating to participating preschools

Preschool	No. of trainers	No. of professionals (ECEC teams)	Sector
Preschool 1	2	10	Private
Preschool 2	2	7	Private
Preschool 3	2	5	Private
Preschool 4	2	4	Private
Preschool 5	2	5	Private
Preschool 6	2	6	Private
Preschool 7	2	3	Public
Preschool 8	2	4	Public
Preschool 9	2	2	Private

5.2. FINDINGS FROM QUESTIONNAIRE 1: PRE-TRAINING QUESTIONNAIRE

Trainers' Demographic Information

Eighteen trainers took part in this project activity, all of them female, with an average age of 37.6 (age range 23-50). 10 participants held a Bachelor's Degree (55.5%) and 8 participants held a Master's Degree (45.5%). Nine of the trainers described themselves as preschool leaders/managers/owners (50%) and 9 as preschool teachers (50%). Six of the participants reported working with children aged 0-3 years old (33.3%) and the rest of the participants with children aged 3-6 years old (66,6%). Four trainers reported working in a public (government-funded preschool) setting (22.2%) while 14 trainers were working in a private setting (77.7%). In terms of their work location, 4 trainers reported working in small towns (approximately 3,000-15,000 people) (22.2%), 10 reported working in towns (approximately 15,000-100,000 people) (55.5%) and 4 reported working in villages (less than 3,000 people) (22.2%).

ECEC Teams' Demographic Information

All participants of the ECEC teams were female (29 participants). Participant ages ranged from 23 to 50 years old, with an average age of 39.5. Seventeen participants held a Bachelor's Degree (58.6%) and 12 participants possessed a Master's Degree (41.4%). In terms of their professional roles, 31% were headteachers (n=9) and 69% (n=20) preschool teachers. The minority of participants worked with toddlers aged 1-3 years (6 participants, 20.7%), followed by those working with children aged 3-4 years (8 participants, 27.6%), and those working with children aged 4-6 years (15 participants, 51.7%). Six participants were employed in public (government-funded) preschool settings (20.7%) and the rest participants to private settings (79.35%). Six teachers reported working in small towns (20.7%), 15 reported working in towns (51.7%) and 8 teachers reported working in villages (27.5%).

Trainers' Perceived Status of Children's Behavioural and Socioemotional Difficulties

In this section, the focus was to investigate the general status of children's behavioural and socioemotional difficulties, as perceived by the participants of this study. The trainers reported that preschool children 'never' (38.9%), 'sometimes (38.9%), 'often' (33.3%) and 'very often' (27.7%) experience great difficulty in managing and expressing their emotions, and the majority reported that children 'sometimes' (72.2%) face challenges in social interactions with others. Most trainers (50%) reported that children in their classroom 'sometimes' lack motivation and are prone to boredom.

Most of the trainers (38.9%) reported that the children in their classroom 'behave well' while other (33.3%) noted that children 'misbehave occasionally' and a few (16.6%) trainers reported that children 'misbehave frequently'. As for their socioemotional competencies, the majority of trainers reported that children's socioemotional skills are 'poorly developed' (67%) and 'moderately developed' (33.35).

ECEC Teams' Perceived Status of Children's Behavioural and Socioemotional Difficulties

The majority of participants of ECEC teams (72.5%) reported that preschool children 'sometimes' experience great difficulty in managing and expressing their emotions. The majority also indicated that preschool children 'sometimes' (69%) face challenges in social interactions with others and that children in their classrooms 'never' (45%) or 'sometimes' (45%) lack motivation and are prone to boredom.

A significant number of participants (48%) perceived that the children in their classes 'behave well', 38% reported that children 'misbehave occasionally', while 7% reported that children 'misbehave frequently' and 7% that 'behave very well'. When assessing the socioemotional competencies of children, 52% of participants considered them 'well developed' and 48% considered them 'moderately developed'.

Trainers' Current Use of Behaviour Management Programmes and Knowledge of PBS

Regarding the current use of behaviour management programmes and their knowledge of PBS, all trainers indicated that their schools/preschools do not have explicit written guidelines to handle behaviour difficulties and all of them reported that do not follow any specific behaviour management programme. A large majority of trainers (56%) indicated they were not aware of PBS before the study. Likewise, the majority of trainers (59%) had not previously participated in a training programme focusing on the use of PBS to aid the socioemotional learning of preschool children.

ECEC Teams' Current Use of Behaviour Management Programmes and Knowledge of PBS

Again, all participants indicated that their schools/preschools do not have explicit written guidelines to handle behaviour difficulties and all of them reported that do not follow any specific behaviour management programme. As was the case with the trainers, the significant majority of ECEC team members (76%) were unaware of PBS as an evidence-based, tiered framework designed to support children's behavioural, academic, social, emotional, and mental health, prior to the research. Likewise,

the majority of participants (90%) of the ECEC teams indicated that they had not previously participated in a training programme focusing on the use of PBS to aid the socioemotional learning of preschool children.

5.3. FINDINGS FROM QUESTIONNAIRE 2: POST-TRAINING QUESTIONNAIRE

Despite the research team's and the trainer's efforts to encourage all ECEC teams to fill out Questionnaire 2 within the specified timeframe, 9 participants of the ECEC teams did not comply. However, these individuals reportedly still participated fully in the activity. As such, the project findings presented below are based on the responses received from 38 participants (18 trainers and 20 ECEC professionals).

Trainers' and ECEC Teams' Evaluation of the Online Modules

Learning Objectives

The majority of the trainers and ECEC teachers found the learning objectives of the online modules easy to understand (58.1% agreed, 41.9% strongly agreed) and the picture was found to be similar when collecting relevant data from the teachers' perceptive (54.4% agreed, 55.6% strongly agreed).. Additionally, most trainers and teachers considered them relevant to their professional practice (54.8% agreed, 45.2% strongly agreed).

Learning Content

Participants generally expressed satisfaction with the learning content. The majority of trainers agreed that it met their expectations (62.6% agreed, 37.4% totally agreed) was relevant to their daily work (60.2% agreed, 39.8% strongly agreed) and was enjoyable to read (50.8% agreed, 49.2% strongly agreed).

Similarly, the majority of teachers agreed that it met their expectations (48.4% agreed, 41.9% strongly agreed, 6.5% neither agree nor disagree, 3.2% totally disagree), was relevant to their daily work (51.6% agreed, 48.4% strongly agreed) and was enjoyable to read (48.4% agreed, 48.4% strongly agreed).

When asked "What aspects of the learning content will you use in your daily work?", the trainers and ECEC team participants provided the responses such as: "practices for promoting positive behaviours", "more evaluation", "we will try to apply the proposed concepts of the PW-PBS approach with my colleagues to enhance our relations", "practical tips for giving reward", "all practices showed in the training", "strategies

to better classroom management", "all aspects that were provided correspond to our work", "methods of promoting positive behaviour", "activities for respect".

The participants were also asked what they enjoyed most about the learning content. Their responses highlighted the easy-to-follow content and material provided ("practical examples were very helpful", "the structure"), that the practices showed were detailed and well-designed ("the given examples of practices were very comprehensive and easily applicable"), that the practices helped them in their daily practice ("what was mentioned in the learning environment can be easily transferred and applied to the learning environment"), and that the approach was in line with their vision and the national curriculum guidelines ("the way of approaching children was the proper one", "the objectives and procedures used were in line to their curricula", "I liked the examples of how children will show their feelings"), the material provided was easily accessible and synchronous ("the videos we saw", "the examples").

The participants were then asked "Is there something that should be included in the learning content? If yes, what is it?". This was a required question. The majority of participants (all trainers and members of the ECEC teams) reported that that there is nothing that should be included in the learning content ("I think it is already comprehensive enough", "Everything is as it should be", "the learning content is relatively good", "It was complete, both in theory and in practice"). However, there were a few comments about more practical examples of managing challenging behaviours and promoting positive behaviour for children with demanding challenging behaviours.

The participants were asked "Do you think that any aspects of the learning content should be left out? If yes, what are they?". Again, almost all participants indicated that there is nothing to exclude. The remaining participants noted that "some components are repeated, and these parts could be reduced especially in theory", "the theoretical part could be reduced, and more practical activities would be added".

Learning Activities

The participants reported positive experiences with the activities. A significant portion of participants the trainers agreed that they were able to complete the activities within the modules (54.8% trainers agreed,

22.6% strongly agreed). Likewise, the majority of ECEC team members agreed that they were able to complete the activities within the modules (61.3% ECEC team members agreed, 22.6% strongly agreed).
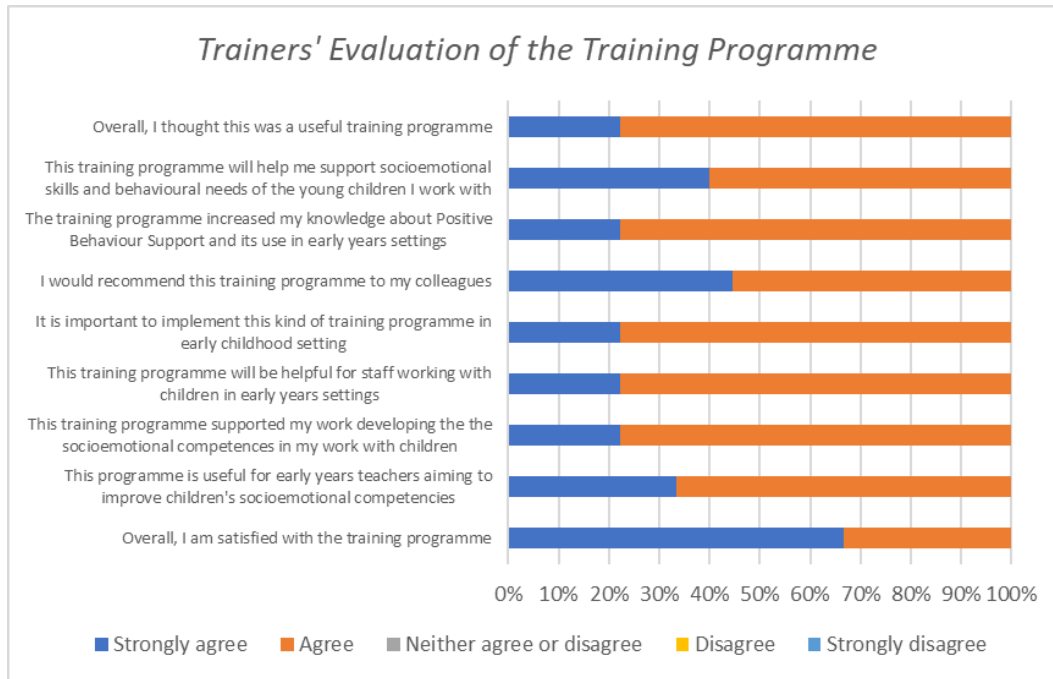
Additional Materials

All trainers found the materials and resources in the learning modules to be relevant to the training programme (67.7% trainers agreed, 32.3% strongly agreed) and they reported that they enjoyed exploring them (54.8% trainers agreed, 19.4% strongly agreed and 25.8% neither agree nor disagree). From the teachers' perspective, 69 .2% of teachers agreed that the materials and resources were relevant to the training programme and 30.8% strongly agreed and they also reported that they enjoyed exploring them (52.2% teachers agreed, 28.6% strongly agreed and 19.2% neither agree nor disagree).

Trainers' Evaluation of the Training Programme

The trainers evaluated the programme positively (see Figure 20), indicating that they found the programme useful (77.8% agreed, 22.2% strongly agreed), that it increased their knowledge on the importance of supporting children's socioemotional learning (44.4% agreed, 66.6% strongly agreed), that it increased their knowledge of PBS (22.2% strongly agreed, 77.8% agreed) and that it will help them support socioemotional skills and behavioural needs of children in their work with (55.5% strongly agreed, 44.5% agreed). Most trainers indicated that they would recommend this type of training programme to their colleagues (44.5% strongly agreed, 55.5% agreed).

Most trainers believed that it is important to implement this kind of training programme in early childhood settings (22.2% strongly agreed and 77.8% agreed) and believed that this training programme will be helpful for staff working with children in early years settings (22.2% strongly agreed and 77.8% agreed). The trainers responded positively when asked whether the programme supported their work in developing the socioemotional competencies of children (22.2% strongly agreed, 77.8% agreed). Trainers, also, believed that this programme is useful for early years teachers aiming to improve children's socioemotional competencies (33.3% strongly agreed and 66.7% agreed). To the statement "Overall, I am satisfied with the training programme", most participants responded 'agree' (33.3%) and 'strongly agree' (66.7%).

Figure 20. *Trainers' Evaluation of the Training Programme*

Trainers' Evaluation of the Training Programme

Categories (top to bottom):
- Overall, I thought this was a useful training programme
- This training programme will help me support socioemotional skills and behavioural needs of the young children I work with
- The training programme increased my knowledge about Positive Behaviour Support and its use in early years settings
- I would recommend this training programme to my colleagues
- It is important to implement this kind of training programme in early childhood setting
- This training programme will be helpful for staff working with children in early years settings
- This training programme supported my work developing the the socioemotional competences in my work with children
- This programme is useful for early years teachers aiming to improve children's socioemotional competencies
- Overall, I am satisfied with the training programme

Legend: ■ Strongly agree ■ Agree ■ Neither agree or disagree ■ Disagree ■ Strongly disagree

During the training programme, the trainers were asked if there were any areas for improvement. They provided feedback, suggesting the need for a longer duration to arrange additional training sessions for the ECEC teams, more time to implement assessment tools for monitoring and evaluating certain practices, more practical activities to engage children, and more examples for toddlers. Additionally, a participant suggested including videos showcasing applications from other countries. The trainers were then asked if they plan on implementing PBS in their professional practice in the ongoing school year. All trainers said 'yes'.

ECEC Teams' Evaluation of the Training Programme

The ECEC teams evaluated the programme positively (see Figure 21), indicating that they found the programme useful (54.8% agreed, 45.2% strongly agreed), that it increased their knowledge on the importance of supporting children's socioemotional learning (51.6% agreed, 48.4% strongly agreed), that it increased their knowledge of PBS (51.6% strongly agreed, 45.2% agreed, 3.25 neither agree nor disagree) and that it will help them support socioemotional skills and behavioural needs of children in their work with (45.2% strongly agreed, 54.8% agreed). Most teachers indicated that they would recommend this type of training programme to their colleagues (48.4% strongly agreed, 51.6% agreed).

Most teachers believed that it is important to implement this kind of programme in ECEC settings (41.9% strongly agreed and 54.8% agreed) and that this programme will be helpful for staff working with children in early years settings (51.6% strongly agreed and 45.4% agreed). The teachers responded positively when asked whether the programme supported their work in developing the socioemotional competencies of children (45.2% strongly agreed, 54.8% agreed). Teachers, also, believed that this programme is useful for early years teachers aiming to improve children's socioemotional competencies (48.4% strongly agreed and 51.6% agreed). To the statement "Overall, I am satisfied with the training programme", most participants responded 'agree' (51.6%) and 'strongly agree' (48.4%).

Figure 21. *ECEC teams' Evaluation of the Training Programme*
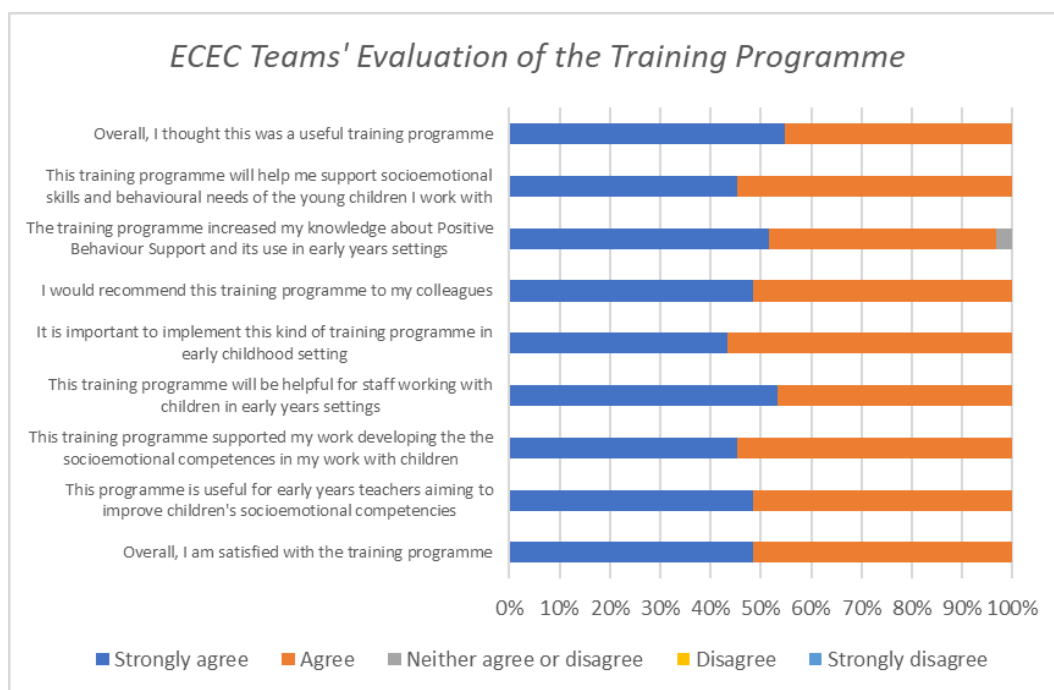
Similarly to the trainers, the ECEC teams also provided examples of things that they enjoyed about the training programme, including: "the practices", "the analysis of the stages of socioemotional empowerment of infants", "The fact that through the project we set a common goal, a common philosophy for solving problem behaviours in our school", "Everything about this project", "the aim of the programme", "The positive attitude and approach we create in children", "the examples and presentations given", "The way we approach children", "The examples given", "That I gained knowledge

relevant to supporting positive behaviour", "The knowledge gained, the approach", "It was all useful and understandable", "The supervisory material", "That each school unit will have its own school assistant", "The detailed explanation of the learning process/stages and the collaboration with the trainer to follow", "I liked that it has to do with the social emotional development of the child", "I liked the interaction that the trainers had with us during the program", "I liked most that through many activities we can help the children to externalize their emotions and at the same time control them", "the wealth of information", "the scientific context of what was presented", "I liked the interaction between the people", "The theoretical background that then supported the actions in practice. The guidance from the supervisor was important", "The ideas and the opportunities we were given to implement them". The trainers were also asked if there was anything that could be improved about the training programme and provided suggestions relating to content and delivery ("Provide practical examples and solutions", "Some language was difficult to understand", "More interactive activities and maybe something to self-reflect") and the relevance and appropriateness of the content ("some videos of are only in English). The trainers were then asked if they plan on implementing PBS in their professional practice in the ongoing school year. 14 trainers said 'yes' and the remaining 4 trainers indicated that they have already begun implementing PBS in their work and that they have already been implementing most of the aspects of PBS mentioned in the course.

Trainers' Evaluation of the Training Facilitators/Training Organisers

The trainers believed that the training was well organised (68% agreed, 32% strongly agreed) and that the coaches of the training programme explained everything clearly (77% strongly agreed, 23% agreed). All trainers indicated that the coaches were helpful in answering their questions (89% strongly agreed and 11% agreed). The trainers indicated that they would be happy to contact their coaches again if they had further queries after the completion of the training programme (74% strongly agreed and 26% agreed).

ECEC Teams' Evaluation of the Training Facilitators/Training Organisers

The majority of ECEC team members indicated that the training was well organised (51.6% agreed, 45.2% strongly agreed), and that their trainers explained everything clearly (48.4% agreed, 51.6% strongly agreed). The participants also indicated that the trainers from their settings were helpful in answering their questions (61.3% strongly agreed, 38.7% agreed).

5.4. FINDINGS FROM QUESTIONNAIRE 3: FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONNAIRE

Again, despite the trainers' and the research team's efforts to encourage all teacher teams to fill out Questionnaire 3 within the specified timeframe, 10 participants of the ECEC teams did not comply. Therefore, the project findings presented below are based on the responses received from 18 trainers and 19 members of ECEC teams.

Trainers' Perceptions of the Training Programme

The majority of trainers reported that they were glad to have taken part in the programme (88.9% agreed and 11.1% strongly agreed), and they agreed that the training programme increased their knowledge of the importance of children's socioemotional learning (88.9% strongly agreed and 11.1% agreed), their knowledge of PBS and its use in preschool settings (94.5% strongly agreed) and their competencies in dealing with challenging behaviours and supporting socioemotional learning in the classroom (94.5% strongly agreed). The trainers also agreed that the training programme encouraged them to learn more about socioemotional learning, challenging behaviours and positive discipline (88.9% strongly agreed). All trainers indicated that they have discussed the training programme with their colleagues and recommended the programme to their colleagues.

ECEC Teams' Perceptions of the Training Programme

Similar responses were provided by the ECEC teams. The majority of teachers reported that they were glad to have taken part in the training programme (68.4% strongly agreed and 31.6% agreed), and they agreed that the programme increased their knowledge of the importance of children's socioemotional learning (42.1% agreed and 57.9% strongly agreed), their knowledge of PBS and its use in preschool settings (52.6% strongly agreed and 47.4% agreed) and their competencies in dealing with challenging behaviours and supporting socioemotional learning in the classroom (63.2% agreed and 36.8% strongly agreed). The teachers also agreed that the programme encouraged them to learn more about socioemotional learning and challenging behaviours (42.1% agreed, 57.9% strongly agreed). As expected, all trainers indicated that they have discussed the training programme with their colleagues (94.7% yes, 5.3% no) and recommended the programme to their colleagues (78.9% yes, 21.1% no).

Trainers' Implementation of PBS in the Preschool Classroom

All trainers indicated that they have implemented aspects of PBS in their classroom since taking part in the training programme. When asked about their use of PBS in their professional practice, eleven trainers stated that they implement all aspects of the course. Three trainers indicated that they focus on aspects related to classroom management during daily routines. Five trainers referred to strategies for socioemotional learning, such as promoting cooperation, kindness, and positive behaviours, as well as teaching self-awareness, self-control, and emotion recognition.

The majority of the trainers (70%) reported encountering barriers to using PBS in their professional practice, while the remaining 30% did not. When asked about these barriers, seven participants mentioned time-related issues ("insufficient time for staff presentation", "time constraints", "time limitations", "primarily lack of time", "limited time for implementing program aspects like evaluation tools", "time shortage", "time constraints"), and one participant mentioned staff constraint.

All trainers stated that they encountered helpful facilitators and resources for PBS implementation, including collaboration with colleagues and parents and the provided resources ("working with colleagues and using the online platform", "books, resources and the material of the training programme"). Finally, as expected from their role in this project activity, all trainers indicated that since taking part in the training programme, they have encouraged or trained their colleagues to use PBS.

ECEC Teams' Implementation of PBS in the Preschool Classroom

Again, all members of ECEC teams indicated that they have implemented aspects of PBS in their classroom since taking part in the training programme. When asked what aspects of PBS they took on in their professional practice, the participants provided responses such as the following: "Reward", "Respect, patience and safety practices", "Love, respect and cooperation activities", "Phonometer", "All mostly I liked and implemented the idea of coupons", "Give reasons when I say "thumbs up"", "social and emotional development, building relationships and working with others", "Respect, Patience, Safety", "Cooperation, Respect, Gratitude".

73.7% of ECEC members reported encountering barriers to implementation, while 26.3% indicated that they did not. Similarly, to their trainers, all members of the ECEC teams reported that the barriers related

to time constraints and staff constraints. One participant noted that "it was difficult to adapt all aspects of the PW-PBS approach in toddlers".

All ECEC team members stated that they came across helpers and tools that aided in PBS implementation, such as: "conversations with coworkers", "programme's supportive material (online modules)", "the online platform", "exploring online resources", "collaboration with coworkers and parents", "parents' active involvement", "assistance from trainers", "regular sessions with trainers", and "the suggested activities". Finally, 78.9% of participants indicated that since taking part in the training programme, they have encouraged or trained their colleagues to use PBS.

Trainers' Perceived Status of Children's Behavioural and Socioemotional Difficulties Post-training

Post-training, most trainers reported that preschool children 'sometimes' (61.1%) experience great difficulty in managing and expressing their emotions and 38.9% answered 'often'. In addition, the trainers reported that preschool children 'sometimes' (44%) face challenges in social interactions with others, while 28% answered 'never' and 28% answered 'often'. When asked whether the children in their classroom are prone to boredom, 66.7% trainers responded 'never' and 33.3% responded 'sometimes'. A comparison of trainer's perceived status of children's behavioural and socioemotional difficulties pre- and post-training can be found in Figure 22 below.

Figure 22. *Comparison of Trainers' Perceived Status of Children's Behavioural and Socioemotional Difficulties Pre- and Post-training*
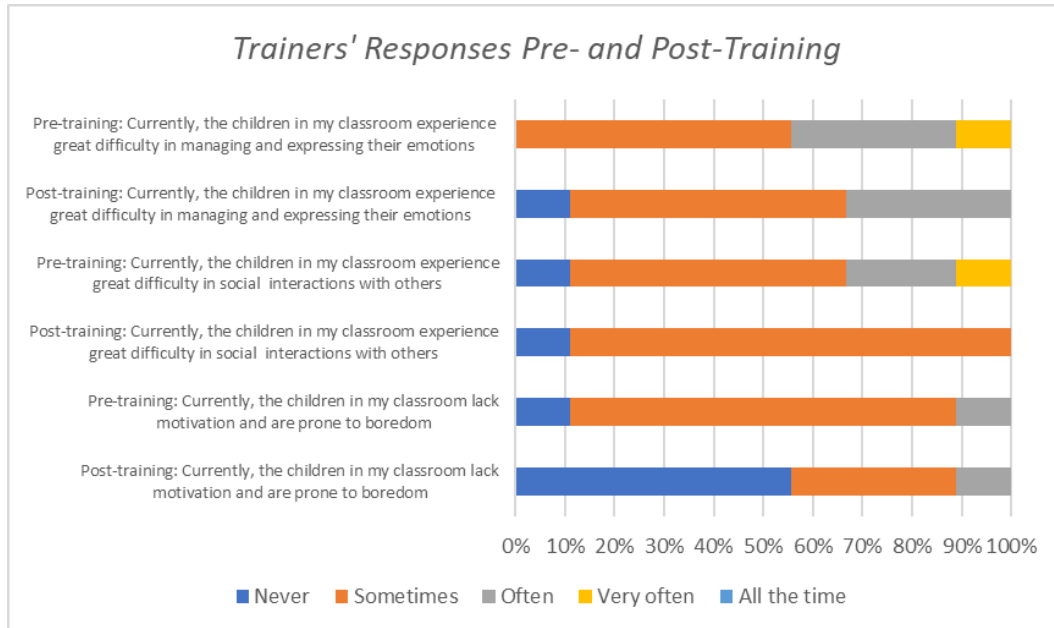
Regarding overall behaviour, 44.5% of trainers perceived that children in their classes 'misbehave occasionally', while 31.5% reported that children 'behave well', and 24% responded that they misbehave frequently'. When assessing the socioemotional competencies of children, 76% of trainers considered them 'well developed', 24% considered them moderately developed.

The trainers were asked if they noticed improvements in the socioemotional learning of the children in their classroom since using PBS, with 44.5% of trainers responding 'very', 33.3% responding 'moderately' and 22.2% responding 'extremely'. The participants were also asked if they noticed a decrease in challenging behaviours of the children in their classroom since using PBS, with 33.3% responding 'moderately', 38.9% responding 'very' and 27.8% responding 'extremely' (see Figure 23).

Figure 23. *Trainers' Perceived Changes in Children's Socioemotional Learning and Challenging Behaviours Post-training*
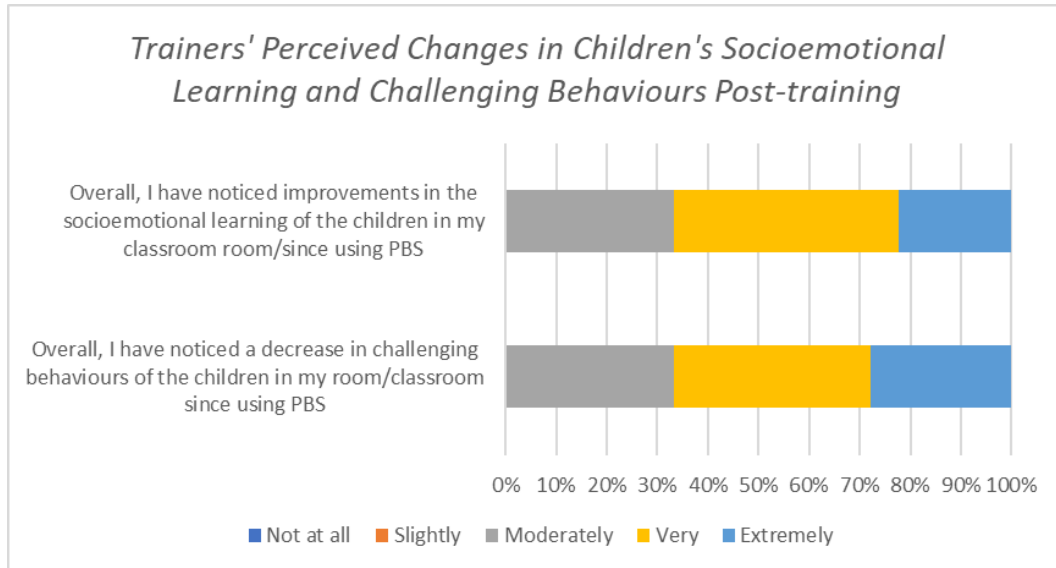
ECEC Teams' Perceived Status of Children's Behavioural and Socioemotional Difficulties Post-training

The majority of ECEC team members reporting that preschool children 'sometimes' (63.2%) and 'often' (36.8%) experience great difficulty in managing and expressing their emotions. The majority of the participants (67.9%) answered that preschool children 'sometimes' face challenges in social interactions with others, while 21.1% responded 'never' and 21.1% responded 'often'. When asked whether the children in their classroom are prone to boredom, 47.46% responded 'never', 47.4% responded 'sometimes' and 5.3% responded 'very often'. A comparison of ECEC team member's perceived status of children's behavioural and socioemotional difficulties pre- and post-training can be found in Figure 24 below.

Figure 24. *Comparison of ECEC Team's Perceived Status of Children's Behavioural and Socioemotional Difficulties Pre- and Post-training*
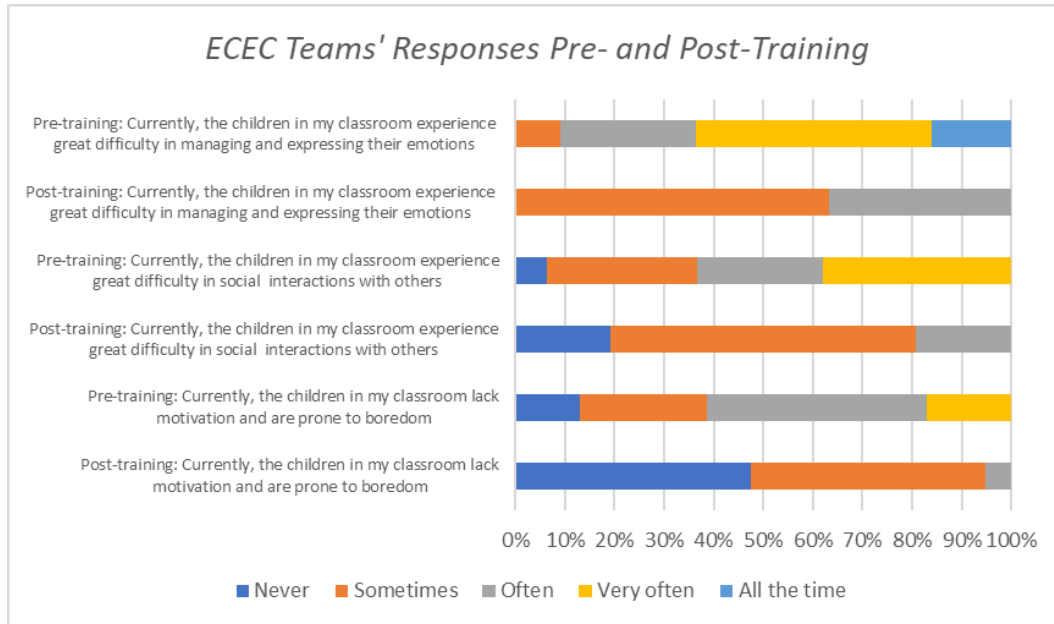
Regarding overall behaviour, 47.4% of participants perceived that children in their classes 'behave well', while 26.3% reported that children 'behave very well'. 26.3% answered that they 'misbehave occasionally'. When assessing the socioemotional competencies of children, 68.4% of participants considered them 'well developed', 21.1% considered them 'very well developed'. In terms of noticing improvements in the socioemotional learning of the children in their classroom since implementing PBS, 57.9% of participants responded 'very and 15.8% responded 'extremely'. The participants were also asked if they noticed a decrease in challenging behaviours of the children in their classroom since using PBS, with 42.1% responding 'extremely', 26.3% responding 'very', 10.5% responding 'moderately' (see Figure 25).

Figure 25. *ECEC Team's Perceived Changes in Children's Socioemotional Learning and Challenging Behaviours Post-training*
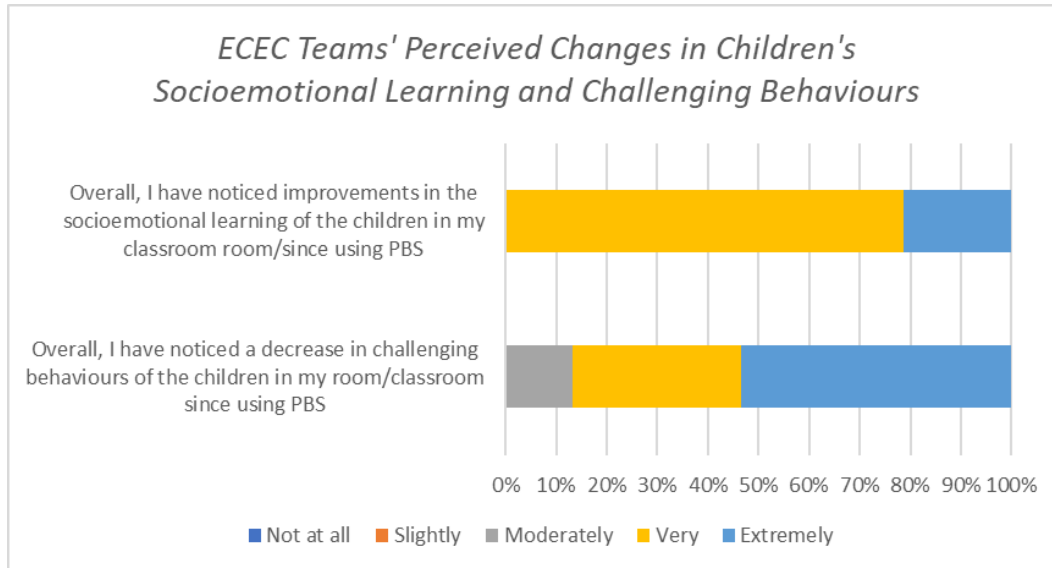
5.5. CONCLUSION OF THE IMPACT ASSESSMENT STUDY IN CYPRUS

The impact assessment study conducted in Cyprus revealed that the training had a positive effect on the professional development of ECEC educators, particularly in utilising the PW-PBS approach. The evaluations from ECEC professionals emphasised the programme's success in achieving its objectives and its potential to bring meaningful improvements in their work with children.

Training Assessment

Both trainers and ECEC teams positively evaluated the training programme. The majority of participants were glad to have taken part in the programme and recognised its positive impact on their professional growth. They agreed that the training programme enhanced their understanding of the significance of children's socioemotional learning and improved their knowledge of Positive Behaviour Support and its relevance in preschool settings. Participants also reported increased competencies in managing challenging behaviours and effectively supporting socioemotional learning in their classrooms, which motivated them to pursue further learning in these areas. Both trainers and ECEC team members appreciated the training sessions and valued the opportunity to exchange ideas with coaches and trainers.

The online modules received positive feedback from both trainers and ECEC team participants. The post-training questionnaire findings indicated that they appreciated the flexibility of the asynchronous training, as it allowed them to engage with the content at their convenience. They found the practical implications of the programme relevant to their daily work and valued its philosophy, which emphasises effective communication and involvement of all members of the preschool community.

The participants positively evaluated the learning content of the training materials, finding it clear, relevant to their daily work, and presented in an enjoyable manner. Most participants expressed satisfaction with the content's clarity, usefulness, and its alignment with their expectations. The activities and examples provided in the modules were particularly helpful and valuable in understanding the theoretical background of the PW-PBS approach and its implementation in their classrooms.

Participants highlighted various aspects of the learning content that they applied to their daily work, including practices for promoting positive behaviours, kindness, and responsibility. They reported using the proposed concepts of the PW-PBS approach with their colleagues to enhance their relationships and cooperation. Participants praised the modules' easy-to-follow structure, stating that it was well-organised and conducive to their study. The content was considered to contribute significantly to their professional development, introducing them to new concepts and terminology and providing a deeper understanding of the broader theoretical background.

Overall, participants expressed satisfaction with the content's flexibility, as it allowed them to adapt the approach to the specific age range of the children they work with, making it more applicable in their daily interactions. While most participants felt the learning content was comprehensive, some suggested improvements were proposed, including the need for more practical activities directly applicable in the classroom for different age groups and additional resources in Greek, such as suggested books and videos. Some participants recommended reducing repetitions in certain components of the content and adding more hands-on exercises for children.

Regarding the trainers' performance, they expressed satisfaction with the training organised by the coaches during online sessions. Trainers found the explanations provided by the coaches to be clear and comprehensive, and the coaches were helpful in addressing their inquiries. The majority of trainers

expressed a willingness to remain in contact with their coaches for any further queries after completing the training programme. Similarly, the ECEC teams provided positive evaluations of their trainers in the preschool settings, finding the training well-organised, and the trainers effectively explained the content in a clear manner. The trainers were also helpful in responding to the participants' questions, and the ECEC teams appreciated their support.

Implementation Assessment

Findings from the follow-up questionnaire showed that while the implementation phase was relatively short, both trainers and ECEC team members reported positive observations in children's socioemotional competencies and a slightly decrease in challenging behaviours since incorporating PBS practices. Participants reported noticing improvements in the socioemotional learning of the children since using PBS, with a substantial percentage responding very positively. These findings highlight the potential impact of PBS practices in supporting children's socioemotional development and behaviour in early childhood education settings, emphasizing the value of continued implementation beyond the project's completion. Despite the limitations of the short implementation phase, these positive outcomes encourage educators to further integrate PBS principles into their professional practice to enhance the well-being and social-emotional development of young learners.

Trainers and ECEC team members faced common challenges during PBS implementation, primarily related to time constraints and limited staff resources. On a positive note, all trainers acknowledged receiving support from facilitators and resources that aided them in implementing PBS. Collaboration with colleagues and parents was reported as a significant source of assistance for trainers, along with the resources provided and the online platform. ECEC team members found discussions with colleagues, support from trainers, and engagement with parents to be helpful in their PBS implementation efforts. The online platform and proposed activities also played an instrumental role in supporting their endeavors. Notably, all trainers and ECEC team members indicated that they have encouraged or trained their colleagues to use PBS since participating in the training. This reflects their dedication to sharing knowledge and collectively implementing PBS practices within their educational community.

While trainers provided positive feedback, they also offered suggestions for improvement. These included extending the timeline to organise more training sessions for ECEC teams, implementing assessment tools

for monitoring practices, and incorporating more practical activities for children. Some trainers suggested including videos from other countries to provide additional perspectives. ECEC teams also had suggestions for improvement, such as obtaining feedback from implementations in other participating countries, extending the implementation period, and including more practical examples and activities tailored for toddlers, like the voice meter. Nonetheless, all trainers and ECEC team participants expressed their commitment to implementing the PW-PBS approach in their professional practice throughout the ongoing school year.

Both trainers and ECEC teams derived significant benefits from the training, as it effectively enhanced their knowledge, skills, and confidence in promoting socioemotional learning and implementing Positive Behaviour Support strategies in preschool settings. While the perceived improvements in children's socioemotional and behavioural needs were not uniform and cannot be generalized, the study indicated the potential of PBS to positively impact children's socioemotional development and behaviour in early childhood education settings.

6. CONCLUSION

The data collected and analysed in this report provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of the training and the implementation of PW-PBS practices in Ireland, Portugal, Greece and Cyprus. Across all four countries, the impact of the PW-PBS training programmes on early childhood educators' professional development was notably positive. Educators reported heightened awareness of the importance of children's socioemotional learning and an improved understanding of PBS as an evidence-based approach. This translated into enhanced competencies in managing challenging behaviours and effectively supporting socioemotional development. Importantly, the training was universally well-received, with participants expressing satisfaction and appreciation for its content and structure.

This report suggests that the implementation of PBS using the materials of the PBS-ECEC project can effectively respond to the needs and challenges outlined in the needs assessment report conducted as part of Result 1 (PBS, 2023). The promotion of professional development in the area of socioemotional learning, adaptations of behaviour strategies according to cultural and contextual differences and the promotion of evidence-based approaches to positive behaviour support are just some of the ways in which this study addressed the needs identified in Result 1. Participant feedback suggests that PBS can serve as a valuable tool for early childhood educators across various national contexts, fostering positive outcomes for both ECEC professionals and young learners, regardless of unique cultural and educational contexts. This directly supports the needs associated with socioemotional difficulties and challenging behaviours of young children identified by professionals in all partner countries in Result 1.

In relation to feedback provided about the training and implementation phases, the online training format was a common facilitator in all countries. Educators valued the flexibility it offered, enabling them to engage with the material at their own pace and convenience. Clear explanations, engaging content, and interactive elements were consistently praised across the board. Furthermore, participants in all countries faced similar challenges during PBS implementation, primarily related to time constraints and limited staff resources. Note that some ECEC settings have deliberately decided to postpone the implementation of the programme in order to have more time and to include this planning in the preparation for the following school year. However, the reports also highlighted the critical role of collaboration with colleagues and parents as a significant source of support in overcoming the challenges.

Perhaps the most encouraging commonality was the observed positive outcomes in children's socioemotional development and behaviour following PBS implementation. Despite the relatively short duration of the implementation phase, educators across all countries reported small improvements in classroom environments and children's wellbeing, affirming the potential of PBS to make a meaningful impact.

As reported in the transnational report of Result 1, there are considerable differences in educational context and cultures in partner countries. Therefore, the level of similarities between the four partner countries are an interesting observation. This suggests that PBS can serve as a valuable tool for early childhood educators across various national contexts, fostering positive outcomes for both educators and young learners, regardless of the unique cultural and educational contexts in which it is applied.

Among the findings from the four countries, there are also subtle differences worth noting. In terms of the training approach, Ireland and Portugal highlighted the effectiveness of comprehensive, flexible online training programmes, emphasising the convenience and self-paced nature of online learning. In contrast, Greece and Cyprus, while acknowledging the value of online modules, placed strong emphasis on in-person support during the training. They valued the opportunity to exchange ideas with coaches and trainers, reflecting a preference for a more collaborative training approach.

Additionally, educators in Ireland and Portugal recommended improvements in the training content itself, such as more country-specific examples and downloadable materials. In contrast, Greece and Cyprus suggested extending the training timeline for additional sessions and implementing assessment tools for practice monitoring. Note that, in Portugal, the implementation already included extra sessions. These distinctions highlight the need for adaptable approaches, considering the unique characteristics of each national context, to ensure the successful integration of PBS in early childhood education settings.

While this study has contributed valuable insights into the effectiveness of PW-PBS training and implementation in ECEC settings across the four partner countries, it is important to acknowledge and address its inherent limitations. Firstly, the reliance on self-report measures may introduce response bias and social desirability effects, potentially impacting the accuracy of the collected data. Additionally, the

absence of independent observations to validate reported behaviours or outcomes may limit the study's ability to provide a comprehensive understanding of the impact of the training and implementation. Moreover, dropout levels among participants who did not complete all questionnaires during the course of the study raised concerns regarding the completeness of the available data. It is crucial to interpret the study's results within the context of these limitations, and future research endeavours should consider mitigating these issues for a more robust investigation.

Despite these acknowledged limitations, the findings do provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of PW-PBS training in ECEC settings, aligned with previous literature. The results suggest that to ensure the widespread adoption of PW-PBS in early childhood settings, it is essential to invest in comprehensive and ongoing training programmes that address the specific needs and challenges faced by educators (Schachter, 2015; Snyder et al., 2015). Comprehensive training programmes should provide educators with a solid foundation in the theoretical framework of PW-PBS, including its underlying principles, research-based strategies, and the multi-tiered system of support. ECEC professionals need to grasp the importance of promoting positive behaviour, fostering social-emotional development, and creating supportive learning environments (Ferreira et al., 2020). Furthermore, they should be empowered with practical skills to identify and address challenging behaviours, differentiate instruction to meet individual needs, and collaborate with families and other professionals to support children holistically.

It is essential for training programmes to recognise and address the specific needs and challenges faced by educators in early childhood settings. These challenges may include managing diverse classroom dynamics, supporting children with varying developmental levels and abilities, addressing cultural and linguistic diversity, and dealing with limited resources and staffing. Effective training programmes should provide educators with strategies and resources tailored to these contexts, offering practical guidance on adapting PW-PBS to meet the unique needs of young learners.

Furthermore, ongoing training programmes are crucial to ensure the sustainability and continuous improvement of PW-PBS implementation. Early childhood educators operate in dynamic and evolving educational landscapes, and their professional development should reflect this reality. Ongoing training programmes can provide educators with opportunities for reflection, feedback, and continuous learning.

They should include follow-up sessions, coaching or mentoring components, and access to a network of support where educators can seek guidance and share experiences.

The availability of online training programmes, with their flexibility and accessibility, presents a valuable resource for educators seeking continuous professional development and the opportunity to implement evidence-based practices that positively impact young learners (Yurkofsky et al., 2019). This flexibility is particularly beneficial for early childhood educators who often face time constraints due to their demanding roles and responsibilities. Moreover, online training programmes break down geographical barriers and provide opportunities for educators from diverse backgrounds and locations to access high-quality professional development. This inclusivity ensures that educators in remote or underserved areas have equal access to training opportunities and can benefit from the latest research and practices in early childhood education.

Based on these findings, practice recommendations have been formulated to guide future initiatives and enhance the promotion of socioemotional competence in early childhood education. Moving forward, it is hoped that the lessons learned from this project will contribute to the broader implementation of PW-PBS strategies in ECEC settings throughout Europe, ultimately creating socially inclusive environments and addressing behaviour problems from the early years of children's education.

7. PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the training of preschool educators and their subsequent implementation of PW-PBS practices in their work, the team at ICEP Europe have developed a number of practice recommendations for early years settings wishing to implement PW-PBS using the training materials of the PBS-ECEC project.

Value professional development and provide training opportunities for ECEC professionals on the promotion of children's socioemotional development

Professional development holds an integral role in enhancing quality within early childhood education and care (Siraj et al., 2019). Participants expressed high levels of satisfaction with the PW-PBS training, which contributed to changes in their pedagogical perspectives and enhanced their knowledge of socioemotional learning and Positive Behaviour Support. This highlights the need for continuous training in evidence-based frameworks such as PW-PBS in ECEC, empowering professionals to build positive inclusive environments and support children's socioemotional learning and development. To ensure widespread adoption of the PW-PBS in ECEC settings, it is thus essential to provide comprehensive and ongoing training programmes for all professionals working in ECEC (teachers, assistants, directors/coordinators, and others). These programmes should cover the theoretical framework of the PBS with a focus on its components, children's socioemotional learning, the multi-tier support system, but should also emphasize practical skills and specific strategies. These strategies may cover topics such as teamwork and leadership, how to identify and address challenging behaviours, using diverse pedagogical practices to meet individual needs, collaborate with families and other professionals to support children, etc.

Foster a collaborative approach

Creating a supportive system that promotes collaboration among educators, provides adequate resources, and encourages a whole-school approach can facilitate successful PBS implementation (Evan & Weiss, 2014). Encourage open communication and collaboration among all stakeholders, including teachers, staff, parents, and therapists. Regularly share information, strategies, and progress updates to ensure a consistent approach across settings. When educators work together as a team, they are better equipped to address challenging behaviours and create consistent behaviour support plans across various

classroom settings. Collaborative problem-solving and the sharing of resources and expertise results in a more cohesive and unified approach to behaviour support.

A continuous assessment of implementation and data-driven decision-making is essential

In the implementation of PW-PBS, there should be a comprehensive planning of the work to be developed, and constant evaluation and monitoring. It is worthwhile to use appropriate tools to describe children's socioemotional skills and, if applicable, their challenging behaviours, to better plan the intervention, according to a baseline when possible (Pringle et al., 2018), and to understand the progress. Continuous data collection and monitoring helps to improve interventions. Besides documenting challenging behaviours and children's socioemotional learning, evaluation tools should be used to assess the fidelity of programme implementation (Center on PBIS, 2020) and also to guide practices.

Promote PBS within an inclusive education framework, which follows the multi-tier approach

PW-PBS is a multi-tiered support system, that benefits from the design and implementation of high-quality practices in the universal tier (1st tier). Nevertheless, supports for the selective level (2nd tier) and the additional level (3rd tier) must also be designed and implemented. This has been considered as a good practice in the preschools where such systems were already present and robust, and a problem area where they didn't exist or were not functioning properly. The implementation of second and third tier supports require the existence of assessment instruments that allow an early identification of children that require additional supports, selecting and implementing evidence-based interventions, and engaging families and external specialists in the areas of intervention.

Recognise implementation barriers and work towards mitigating them

Recognising and addressing barriers to PBS implementation in ECEC settings is essential for creating an effective and nurturing learning environment. These barriers can take various forms, such as limitations imposed by small preschool settings, including the lack of staff resources for a dedicated leadership team and time constraints. To overcome these issues, it's crucial to designate at least one or two staff members as responsible educators for overseeing PBS implementation, even in smaller settings, and provide flexibility to educators managing busy schedules. Furthermore, challenges associated with creating positive family-ECEC partnerships can be mitigated by establishing appropriate communication channels and organising regular meetings to actively involve families in the PBS implementation process.

Additionally, addressing barriers like limited specialised support for children with developmental difficulties and challenges related to data recording and analysis can be achieved through mentorship programmes, training for educators, and the development of user-friendly systems for data collection. By acknowledging and proactively addressing these barriers, preschool settings can promote a more inclusive and supportive atmosphere, ultimately fostering positive socioemotional development and behaviour among children.

Create a supportive learning environment

The implementation of the PW-PBS involves the preschool teams in processes of observation and reflection about the learning environment, that constitutes the basis for introducing changes to pedagogical practices. These implemented changes are quite relevant because of their impact in the system that is directly experienced by children and that exerts a major influence on their well-being, learning and development. An emphasis should be given to building quality interactions with children through more individualised attention, more respect for their pace of growth, by creating more possibilities for children's choices and, importantly, by respecting their emotions and taking them into account. Further strategies encompass: providing positive feedback to children and recognising their efforts and appropriate behaviours and establishing clear and consistent rules and expectations with the participation of children. Active supervision constitutes another core pedagogical strategy, consisting of closely monitoring and guiding children's behaviour throughout various activities, which was particularly beneficial for children experiencing behavioural problems.

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ANNEX I

Consent Form for Activity Leaders/Trainers

This training programme was designed as part of the Erasmus+ funded project Implementing Positive Behaviour Support in Early Childhood Education and Care (PBS-ECEC). Throughout your participation in this training programme, you will be asked to:

- Take part in online training sessions with members of the PBS-ECEC research team.

- Take part in online training comprised of five learning modules.

- Form a Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) team in your preschool. Share the online training package with the team members. Train the team members to implement PBS practices in their work.

- Implement aspects of PBS in your professional practice and encourage your team members to do the same.

- Take part in three questionnaires: before taking part in the training, after taking part in the training and approximately eight weeks after completing the training.

GDPR: All data gathered through your participation in the training programme will be strictly used for this research only. Your survey responses will be completely anonymous and will be handled in a discreet manner. The answers will be saved in a properly secured place, with no authorisation to anyone apart from the research team. Our consortium complies with the GDPR regulation and the protection and processing of personal data. Please note: You can withdraw from this training programme at any point.

For more information about the PBS-ECEC project, please visit our website (pbs-ecec.eu) and our Facebook page (https://www.facebook.com/pbsecec). If you have any questions, please contact our research team at a.szproch@icepe.eu.

Do you consent to taking part in this project?
- Yes
- No

What is your name?
_____
What is the name of your preschool?
_____

ANNEX II

Consent Form for Early Years Educators

This training programme was designed as part of the Erasmus+ funded project Implementing Positive Behaviour Support in Early Childhood Education and Care (PBS-ECEC).

Throughout your participation in this training programme, you will be asked to:

- Join the Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) team in your preschool and take part in the training organised by the team leaders.

- Take part in online training comprised of five learning modules.

- Implement aspects of PBS in your professional practice.

- Take part in three questionnaires: before taking part in the training, after taking part in the training and approximately eight weeks after completing the training.

GDPR: All data gathered through your participation in the training programme will be strictly used for this research only. Your survey responses will be completely anonymous and will be handled in a discreet manner. The answers will be saved in a properly secured place, with no authorisation to anyone apart from the research team. Our consortium complies with the GDPR regulation and the protection and processing of personal data. Please note: You can withdraw from this training programme at any point.

For more information about the PBS-ECEC project, please visit our website (pbs-ecec.eu) and our Facebook page (https://www.facebook.com/pbsecec). If you have any questions, please contact our research team at a.szproch@icepe.eu.

Do you consent to taking part in this project?

- Yes
- No

What is your name?

_____

What is the name of the early years facility you work for?

_____

Annex III

PBS-ECEC Project - Pre-training Questionnaire

Thank you for agreeing to take part in the Erasmus+ funded project Implementing Positive Behaviour Support in Early Childhood Education and Care (PBS-ECEC) (2021-1-PT01-KA220-SCH-000034367). Before the training begins, please complete this questionnaire.

This survey aims to gather your thoughts and opinions on the socioemotional and behavioural needs of preschool children, information about your current use of behaviour management programmes and your knowledge of Positive Behaviour Support (PBS).

GDPR: All data gathered through this survey will be strictly used for this research. The responses are completely anonymous and will be handled in a discreet manner. The answers will be saved in a properly secured place, with no authorization to anyone apart from the research team. Our consortium complies with the GDPR regulation and the protection and processing of personal data.

You can withdraw from this study and/or stop responding to this survey at any time.

Visit and like our page to find out more about the PBS-ECEC project: https://www.facebook.com/pbsecec

You can also explore our website here: pbs-ecec.eu

You can contact the research team using the email provided below for any assistance and further information.

Contact email: a.szproch@icepe.eu

The PBS-ECEC Consortium

Consent

By clicking the "Agree" button, you indicate that: you are at least 18 years old, you have read all the information above, you understand the privacy policy and you agree to participate voluntarily. If you do not wish to participate in this survey, please click the "disagree" button.

- Agree
- Disagree

Demographic Information

Please state your gender.

- Female
- Male
- Other

- Prefer not to say

How old are you?

_____

What is the HIGHEST level of education you have completed?

- Leaving Certificate
- Advanced Certificate/Higher Certificate
- Bachelor Degree
- Masters Degree
- Doctoral Degree

What is your professional background?

- Preschool care staff
- Preschool teacher
- Preschool leader/manager/owner
- Primary school teacher
- Other

How many children are there in your classroom?

_____

What age group do you primarily work with?

- Toddlers (approximately 1-3 years)
- Children aged 3-4
- Children aged 4-5
- Children aged 5-6
- Other

In what type of setting do you work?

- Public setting (government funded school community childcare or preschool)
- Private setting (private school or creche)

Which of the following best describes the community in which your job is located?

- Village or rural area (fewer than 3 000 people)
- Small town (3 000 to about 15 000 people)
- Town (15 000 to about 100 000 people)
- City (100 000 to about 1 000 000 people)
- Large city with over 1 000 000 people

Are you acting as a trainer/leader for the purpose of the PBS-ECEC project (i.e., are you training your colleagues to implement PBS practices in their work)?

- Yes
- No

Children's Socioemotional and Behavioural Needs

Currently, the children in my classroom experience great difficulty in managing and expressing their emotions.

- Never
- Sometimes
- Often
- Very often
- All the time

Currently, the children in my classroom experience great difficulty in social interactions with others.

- Never
- Sometimes
- Often
- Very often
- All the time

Currently, the children in my classroom lack motivation and are prone to boredom.

- Never
- Sometimes
- Often
- Very often
- All the time

At this point in the school/preschool year, how would you rate the behaviour of children in your class?

- Behave very well
- Behave well

- Misbehave occasionally
- Misbehave frequently
- Misbehave very frequently

At this point in the school/preschool year, how would you rate the status of socioemotional competencies of children in your class?

- Very well developed
- Well developed
- Moderately developed
- Poorly developed
- Very poorly developed

Current Use of Behaviour Management Programmes and Knowledge of PBS

Does your school/preschool have an explicit set of written guidelines to handle behaviour difficulties?

- Yes
- No

Does your institution follow any specific behaviour management programme?

- Yes
- No

If yes, what is it (e.g., Triple-P; PBS)?

_____

If yes, to what extent are the guidelines/programmes effective in reducing children's challenging behaviours?

- Not at all
- Slightly
- Moderately
- Very
- Extremely

If yes, to what extent are the guidelines/programmes effective in supporting children's socioemotional and behavioural needs?

- Not at all
- Slightly
- Moderately
- Very
- Extremely

Before today, were you aware of Positive Behaviour Supports (PBS) as an evidence-based, tiered framework for supporting students' behavioural, academic, social, emotional, and mental health?

- Yes
- No

Have you ever taken part in a training programme focusing on the use of Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) in aiding socioemotional learning of preschool children?

- Yes
- No

If yes, can you tell us more about it?

_____

Thank you for completing this survey and for agreeing to take part in our project!

Visit and like our page to find out more about the PBS-ECEC project:

https://www.facebook.com/pbsecec

We remain at your disposal if you have any queries or questions.

The PBS-ECEC Consortium

ANNEX IV

PBS-ECEC Post-training Questionnaire

Thank you for taking part in the training programme organised as part of the Erasmus+ funded project Implementing Positive Behaviour Support in Early Childhood Education and Care (PBS-ECEC) (2021-1-PT01-KA220-SCH-000034367). Please fill out this questionnaire to let us know your thoughts on the training programme that you took part in.

GDPR: All data gathered through this survey will be strictly used for this research. The responses are completely anonymous and will be handled in a discreet manner. The answers will be saved in a properly secured place, with no authorization to anyone apart from the research team. Our consortium complies with the GDPR regulation and the protection and processing of personal data.

You can withdraw from this study and/or stop responding to this survey at any time.

Visit and like our page to find out more about the PBS-ECEC project: https://www.facebook.com/pbsecec. You can also explore our website here: pbs-ecec.eu

You can contact the research team using the email provided below for any assistance and further information. Contact email: a.szproch@icepe.eu

The PBS-ECEC Consortium

Consent

By clicking the "Agree" button, you indicate that: you are at least 18 years old, you have read all the information above, you understand the privacy policy and you agree to participate voluntarily. If you do not wish to participate in this survey, please click the "disagree" button.

- Agree
- Disagree

Evaluation of the Online Modules

Learning Objectives

The learning objectives of the online modules were easy to understand.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

The learning objectives of the online modules were relevant to my professional practice.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Learning Content

The learning content of the online modules met my expectations.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

The learning content of the online modules was easy to understand.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

The learning content of the online modules was relevant to my daily work.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

What aspects of the learning content will you use in your daily work?

_____

I enjoyed reading the learning content of the online modules.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree

- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

What did you enjoy about the learning content?

_____

Is there something that should be included in the learning content? If yes, what is it?

_____

Do you think that any aspects of the learning content should be left out? If yes, what are they?

_____

Learning Activities

I was able to complete the learning activities within the online modules.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

I enjoyed completing the learning activities within the online modules.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Additional Materials and Resources

The additional materials and resources provided in the online modules were relevant to the training programme.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

I enjoyed exploring the additional materials and resources provided in the online modules.

- Strongly Agree

- Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Evaluation of the Training Programme

Overall, I thought this was a useful training programme.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

The training programme increased my knowledge of supporting children's socioemotional learning.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

The training programme increased my knowledge about Positive Behaviour Support and its use in early years settings.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

This training programme will help me support socioemotional skills and behavioural needs of the young children I work with.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

I would recommend this training programme to my colleagues.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree

- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

It is important to implement this kind of training programme in early childhood settings.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

This training programme will be helpful for staff working with children in early years settings.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

This training programme supported my work developing the socioemotional competences in my work with children.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

This programme is useful for early years teachers aiming to improve children's socioemotional competencies.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Overall, I am satisfied with the training programme.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

What did you enjoy most about this training programme?

_____

Is there something that we could improve about the training programme?

_____

In the ongoing school year, how many preschool educators are you planning to train in the use of PW-PBS, using the materials presented during this training programme?

_____

In the ongoing school years, do you plan on implementing PBS in your own professional practice?

_____

Evaluation of the Training Facilitators/Training Organisers

The training programme was well organised.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

The facilitators (trainers/leaders) of the training programme explained everything clearly.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

The facilitators (trainers/leaders) of the training programme were helpful in answering my questions and queries.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

I would be happy to contact the facilitators of the training programme if I have further queries after the training programme ends.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree

- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Thank you for completing this survey and for agreeing to take part in our project!

Visit and like our page to find out more about the PBS-ECEC project:

https://www.facebook.com/pbsecec

We remain at your disposal if you have any queries or questions.

PBS-ECEC Consortium

ANNEX V

PBS-ECEC Follow-up Questionnaire

Thank you for taking part in the Erasmus+ funded project Implementing Positive Behaviour Support in Early Childhood Education and Care (PBS-ECEC) (2021-1-PT01-KA220-SCH-000034367). We loved having you onboard for the last few months! Please fill out this survey to let us know your thoughts on the training programme that you took part in, and how it affected your professional practice.

GDPR: All data gathered through this survey will be strictly used for this research. The responses are completely anonymous and will be handled in a discreet manner. The answers will be saved in a properly secured place, with no authorization to anyone apart from the research team. Our consortium complies with the GDPR regulation and the protection and processing of personal data.

You can withdraw from this study and/or stop responding to this survey at any time.

Visit and like our page to find out more about the PBS-ECEC project: https://www.facebook.com/pbsecec

You can also explore our website here: pbs-ecec.eu

You can contact the research team using the email provided below for any assistance and further information.

Contact email: a.szproch@icepe.eu

The PBS-ECEC Consortium

Consent

By clicking the "Agree" button, you indicate that: you are at least 18 years old, you have read all the information above, you understand the privacy policy and you agree to participate voluntarily. If you do not wish to participate in this survey, please click the "disagree" button.

- Agree
- Disagree

Perceptions of the Training Programme

I am glad that I took part in the training programme.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

The training programme increased my knowledge of the importance of children's socioemotional learning.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

The training programme increased my knowledge of Positive Behaviour Support and its use in preschool settings.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

The training programme increased my competencies in dealing with challenging behaviours and supporting socioemotional learning in the classroom.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

The training programme encouraged me to learn more about socioemotional learning, challenging behaviours and positive discipline.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

I have discussed the training programme with my colleagues.

- Yes
- No

I have recommended the training programme to my colleagues.

- Yes
- No

Implementation of PBS in the Preschool Classroom

Since taking part in the training programme, I have decided to implement aspects of PBS in my classroom.

- Yes
- No

If yes, what aspects of PBS did you implement in your professional practice?

_____

I encountered barriers to using PBS in my professional practice. (e.g., lack of time, lack of resources, insufficient knowledge, etc.)

- Yes
- No

If yes, what were the barriers you encountered?

_____

I encountered facilitators and resources that helped me to use PBS in my classroom. (e.g., help from colleagues, the involvement of parents, useful online resources, etc.)

- Yes
- No

If yes, please tell us more about what helped you while using PBS.

_____

Since taking part in the training programme, I have encouraged/trained my colleagues to use PBS.

- Yes
- No

Children's Socioemotional and Behaviour Needs Post-training

Currently, the children in my room/classroom experience great difficulty in managing and expressing their emotions.

- Never

Co-funded by the European Union

- Sometimes
- Often
- Very often
- All the time

Currently, the children in my classroom experience great difficulty in social interactions with others.

- Never
- Sometimes
- Often
- Very often
- All the time

Currently, the children in my classroom lack motivation and are prone to boredom.

- Never
- Sometimes
- Often
- Very often
- All the time

At this point in the school/preschool year, how would you rate the behaviour of children in your class?

- Behave very well
- Behave well
- Misbehave occasionally
- Misbehave frequently
- Misbehave very frequently

At this point in the school/preschool year, how would you rate the status of socioemotional competencies of children in your room/ classroom?

- Very well developed
- Well developed
- Moderately developed
- Poorly developed
- Very poorly developed

Overall, I have noticed improvements in the socioemotional learning of the children in my classroom room/since using PBS.

- Not at all
- Slightly
- Moderately
- Very
- Extremely

Overall, I have noticed a decrease in challenging behaviours of the children in my room/classroom since using PBS.

- Not at all
- Slightly
- Moderately
- Very
- Extremely

Thank you for completing this survey and for taking part in our project!

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We remain at your disposal if you have any queries or questions.

PBS-ECEC Consortium