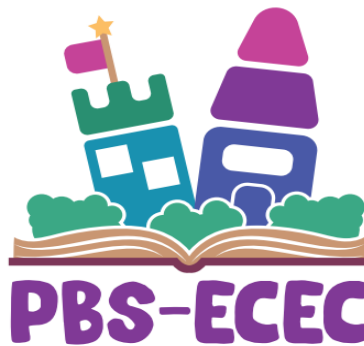**Implementing Positive Behaviour Support in Early Childhood Education and Care**

PBS-ECEC

Erasmus+

The PBS-ECEC Report on the Policy and Strategy Toolkit for Implementing a Program-Wide Positive Behaviour Support Approach in ECEC

PBS-ECEC

Sílvia Barros, Vitor Oliveira, Sara Araújo

and Miguel Santos

P.PORTO · ESCOLA SUPERIOR DE EDUCAÇÃO POLITÉCNICO DO PORTO · CARDET · ICEP europe · INSTITUTE for DEVELOPMENT

PROJECT INFORMATION

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DOCUMENT AUTHORS

PORTUGAL	Sílvia Barros (IPP), Sara Araújo (IPP), Miguel Santos (IPP), Vitor Oliveira (IPP)
IRELAND	Aleksandra Szproch (ICEPE), Moya O'Brien (ICEPE)
CYPRUS	Victoria Michaelidou (CARDET), Andri Agathokleous (IoD)
GREECE	Katerina Krousorati (IHU), Vasilis Grammatikopoulos (IHU)

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

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1	07/11/2023	Draft 1
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The present report was 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 programme (project number: 2021-1-PT01-KA220-SCH-000034367). This report focuses on the construction of the *Policy and Strategy Toolkit*, **the fourth set of resources (i.e., "Result") produced during the PBS-ECEC Project**. The *Policy and Strategy Toolkit* involves producing a set of recommendations for PW-PBS implementation in ECEC settings and systems, including lessons learned, promising practices, policy recommendations, and user-friendly tools for professionals and policymakers. The *Toolkit* will directly target ECEC policymakers (e.g., national, regional, and local government) and educational leaders [e.g., directors of a school cluster (organisation-level); pedagogical coordinators (school-level), preschool teachers (classroom-level)] to make effective use of the recommendations and act accordingly. To achieve this, several stages of development were followed by the consortium, aiming to extract and deliver a concise number of Recommendations encompassing relevant Strategies and Actions that could be expanded into different levels of strategic specificity.

Regarding the methods, the consortium started by collecting a set of *Key Ideas* derived from mapping and implementation experiences during R1, R2, and R3 (Stage 1). Next, in line with the previous results, each partner conducted focus group interviews in their respective country to validate the *Key Ideas* and *Preliminary Recommendations* arising from the previous stage and to reflect on the best way to disseminate the project´s findings sustainably (Stage 2). Specialists/professionals with different roles in ECEC and ECEC policies participated in the four countries, with a total of 34 participants. During Stage 3, an iterative and reflexive integration of the previous findings from Stages 1 and 2 was conducted, involving all teams, resulting in a final set of seven *Recommendations*. These were further revised by an external evaluator, by the participants at a PBS-ECEC LTTA course, and by one specialist in each country (specifically, the online version). Refinements and adjustments were made as a result of this revision.

The *Recommendations* include the following:

- To implement PW-PBS, it is fundamental to promote continuous professional development.

- As a whole-school approach, PW–PBS implementation requires a sustainable, long-term process.

- Implementing PW-PBS in ECEC settings requires involving parents as a part of the educational team.

- The implementation of PW–PBS is based on the development of collaborative practices and partnerships, at multiple levels, among educational stakeholders.

- Promote an inclusive approach based on multi-tiered systems of support at all levels (centre-level, local, national).

- Leadership teams play a central role in coordinating, guiding and supporting the ECEC setting teams throughout all phases of the PW–PBS implementation.

- The promotion of children's SEL should be clearly emphasised in ECEC national curricula and guidelines, as well as ECEC centres´ educational projects.

The **Toolkit**, which comprises *Recommendations*, *Strategies* and *Actions*, aims to engage and guide policymakers and professional teams in the successful implementation of the PW-PBS approach in ECEC settings across Europe. This set of *Recommendations* thus constitutes a pathway of essential strategies and actions that support school districts, school clusters, and ECEC centres to effectively and sustainably implement PW-PBS in the future.

1. INTRODUCTION

The present report was 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 programme (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), with a duration of 24 months (01/01/2022 – 01/01/2024).

Through collaboration between ECEC centres and academic institutions, 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 across Europe. Key project activities include supporting educators´ professional development and coaching for effective classroom management, socioemotional learning, and behaviour assessment. Specifically, the PBS-ECEC project focused on applying a programme-wide approach to build children's socioemotional competence and learning in a socially inclusive environment and preventing challenging behaviours in the early years.

The main goals include:

- developing training resources on evidence-based practices for the development of socioemotional competence and addressing challenging behaviours;
- training centre-based teams to deliver elements of PW-PBS to other professionals in ECEC centres;
- creating a web-based space to disseminate PBS-ECEC resources, outputs, and activities.

To achieve these goals, the PBS-ECEC project developed the following results (i.e., outputs):

1 – *Guide on Positive Behaviour Support in Early Childhood and Care*: a planning tool for professionals in ECEC settings to create a high-quality environment that promotes PBS (https://pbs-ecec.eu/wp-content/uploads/outputs/PBS-ECEC_Guide_EN.pdf).

2 – *Online Modules of PW-PBS Instructional Practices in ECEC Settings*: online learning modules and Open Educational Resources (OER) to support the delivery of the curriculum and workshops for ECEC professionals/teams and other stakeholders (https://pbs-ecec.ese.ipp.pt/login/index.php).

3 – *Impact Assessment Study and Practice Recommendations*: training ECEC professionals and teams from all partner countries in the use and implementation of PW-PBS strategies and practices and assessing its impact (https://pbs-ecec.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/PBS-ECEC_R3_Consolidated-Report-Final.pdf).

4 – *Policy and Strategy Toolkit*: producing a set of recommendations for PW-PBS implementation in ECEC settings and systems, including lessons learned, promising practices, policy recommendations, and user-friendly tools for professionals and policymakers.

Result 4 focuses on building and making accessible a ***Policy and Strategy Toolkit*** for multiple educational stakeholders, including a collection of lessons learned, voices from professionals on the implementation process, promising practices and practical examples, and policy recommendations with easy-to-use tools and resources. Thus, it aims to engage and guide policymakers and professional teams in the successful implementation of the PW-PBS approach in European ECEC settings. This set of *Recommendations* constitutes a pathway of essential strategies and actions that support school districts, school clusters, or centres to effectively and sustainably implement PW-PBS. Thus, this report focuses on the steps undertaken to deliver R4 based on the experience and expertise of the PBS-ECEC consortium teams, thereby informing the construction of the ***Policy and Strategy Toolkit***.

It must be stressed that the issues and policy guidelines on building socioemotional competences are likely to remain at the forefront of EU policy for the foreseeable future (please see Caena, 2019; Sala et al., 2020). The ***Toolkit***, the central and final output of Result 4, is structured to include different levels of governance, from distal to proximal levels of policy and service delivery. However, to achieve these goals, several stages of development were followed (see Figure 1) by the consortium, aiming to extract and deliver a concise number of *Recommendations* encompassing relevant *Strategies* and *Actions* that could be expanded into different levels of useful resources and strategic specificity.

Additionally, the innovation of the ***Toolkit*** is highlighted by the fact that it intends to directly target ECEC policymakers (e.g., national, regional, and local government) and educational leaders [e.g., directors of a school cluster (organisation-level); pedagogical coordinators (school-level), and preschool teachers (classroom-level)] to make effective use of the recommendations and act accordingly. At a more distal system level, these guidelines will be a practical tool for policymakers to decide how to integrate PW-PBS as a key driver for high-quality, socially inclusive ECEC environments. This international report will,

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therefore, address the significant policy and practice issues and topics of integrating PW-PBS, all aligned with EU policies and needs for social equity. At the proximal system level, the successful use of these guidelines creates opportunities for ECEC providers and their staff to develop strategies and make decisions regarding the effective implementation of PW-PBS in ECEC settings, thus multiplying the impact of the project and contributing to a continued impact in the future. Additionally, the conclusions and implications of the project can be mobilized and included in (pre-service) teacher education, training, and master programs.

The *Toolkit*, supported by this report, was initially developed, reviewed, and validated in each partner country, involving policymakers and professionals with various roles in the educational system. Then, the *Toolkit* was revised by an external evaluator and adjusted accordingly through discussions among the partners. Finally, the final version was discussed by professionals and master's students during a PBS-ECEC LTTA course and analysed by one specialist in each country (specifically, the final online version). Demonstrating the adaptability of the report in this manner emphasizes the potential for further autonomous exploration within partner countries as well as beyond.

2. METHOD

To develop the set of *Recommendations* and its *Strategies* and *Actions*, as well as its supporting evidence and resources, all the partners in the consortium started by **collecting a set of *Key Ideas*** (Annex 1) derived from the mapping and implementation experiences during R1, R2, and R3 (see Stage *1* in Figure 1) in the four countries, from which a set of *Preliminary Recommendations* was extracted and developed by the IPP team using a content analysis approach (see Figure 2 and Annex 2). Next, in line with the previous results and following the guidelines provided by the IPP team, each partner implemented **focus group interviews (FGI)** in their respective countries (see *Stage 2* in Figure 1). FGI were essential to validate the *Key Ideas* and *Preliminary Recommendations* arising from the previous stage and to reflect on the best way to disseminate the project´s findings in a sustainable way. During Stage 3, an iterative and reflexive integration of the previous findings from Stages 1 and 2 was conducted, involving all teams, resulting in a final set of *Recommendations* (see *Stage 3* in Figure 1). All stages of development involved an iterative, multistep, reflexive process involving team members, key stakeholders, and experts.

Table 1. Stages of Development of the Policy and Strategy Toolkit during Result 4

Stage 1 **Collection of Key Ideas**	**Collect and Integrate Key Ideas Emerging from Results 1, 2 and 3** Key Ideas derived from mapping and implementation in Results 1, 2 and 3 constitute the central elements that informed the FGI discussions and, ultimately, the organisation of the Toolkit
Stage 2 **Focus Group Interviews Validation**	**Assert the Validity of Key Ideas/ Preliminary Recommendations and the Sustainable Dissemination of Findings from the Project** Preliminary Recommendations were validated, and new additional strategies provided by participants/experts were integrated
Stage 3 **Development of Recommendations for the Toolkit**	**Integrate Previous Results into a Structured Set of Recommendations** Partners synthesised previous findings into relevant recommendations, strategies and actions for decision-makers and educational stakeholders to take effective action
External Revisions and Validation	**Recommendations, Strategies and Actions** were revised by an external evaluator, and adjusted accordingly through discussions among the partners, and a final version was discussed by professionals/students during an international LTTA and by one specialist in each partner country

Next, we will describe each of the stages of development of the ***Toolkit***.

STAGE 1. COLLECTION OF KEY IDEAS

In the first stage, teams in each country reflectively collected a set of *Key Ideas* (see the Results section and Annex 1) that cut across each analytical dimension of lessons learned and challenges, promising practices, and policy recommendations. Each *Key Idea* integrates these three dimensions in a way that builds on proximal systems into policy recommendations. These *Key Ideas* were derived from a diversity of informational sources, such as data and field notes, reports, experiences during implementation, team reflections and meetings, and supporting literature from the mapping and implementation processes during Results 1, 2, and 3 (R1, R2, and R3). Therefore, this process results from each team's experience and expertise, as well as the characteristics of each country.

Lessons learned and challenges included the identification of useful information from varied sources that reflected both the positive and negative experiences that occurred during the project and the opportunities and solutions that these experiences provided for overall programme improvement. *Promising practices* include interventions, strategies, materials, or activities with the potential to bring

about actionable data and practice to scale (or generalise to diverse groups and settings). They include both theoretical and practical examples of PW-PBS related practices that significantly augment the effectiveness and sustainability of this approach in varied ECEC settings. These practices include examples that show potential, are innovative and effective, and can be transformed into best practices in the future. Finally, *policy recommendations* include suggestions for policy options that are evidence-based, robust, and effective, and are intended to provide support and advice to decision-makers at different levels of governance and service delivery. Each partner collected and described the actions that policymakers and other educational stakeholders must take to implement a PW-PBS approach in ECEC settings/systems that positively impact children´s socioemotional learning, prevent challenging behaviour, create a positive learning environment in ECEC settings, and enhance the overall well-being of the school community. These policies were also based on the experiences and outputs of previous project outcomes (R1, R2, and R3).

An iterative process was set up for each team. Data analysis incorporated both qualitative and quantitative techniques to ensure a thorough understanding of the information gathered from R1. R2, and R3. The teams conducted a reflective thinking and discussion process to interpret the findings, share insights, and collaboratively generate new ideas. Each team employed various methods and procedures for data collection and analysis, collaboration, and individual contribution. All collected data were thoroughly examined by comparing the different sources of information. This approach enables a comprehensive understanding of the perspectives and feedback from various stakeholders. The teams actively engaged in reflective thinking and discussions as a collaborative effort to critically analyse the findings and interpretations gathered from the stakeholders and participants involved. These reflective sessions included brainstorming, debating ideas, and identifying key themes that emerged from the collected data. This holistic methodology aims to ensure the thoroughness and reliability of the information gathered, enabling researchers to draw conclusions regarding the *lessons learned, challenges, promising practices, and evidence-based policy recommendations*. Next, using a content analysis approach, the IPP team analysed the content of all the *Key Ideas* produced by the consortium and iteratively and systematically extracted and organised them under larger categories and/or themes with the objectives of avoiding redundancy and synthesising shared recommendations, strategies and actions. This process resulted in the creation of a set of *Preliminary Recommendations* (see Figure 2) that informed Stage 2.

Figure 2. Integration of Key Ideas into a Set of Preliminary Recommendations for the FGI

Selection of Key Ideas Cyprus, Greece, Ireland, Portugal*	Preliminary Recommendations (FGI discussion topics)
Teachers' Professional Development and Career / Bottom-up Training Programmes for ECEC Teachers Promoting Continuous Professional Development	A) *To implement PW-PBS, it is fundamental to promote continuous professional development and training*
Duration of PW-PBS Implementation / Implementing the PW-PBS for More than One Schoolyear Mitigating Time Constraints / Online Training of PBS-ECEC Project Participants Allowing for More Flexibility Time of Implementing PW-PBS framework for Sustainable Impact / Extending Implementation Time for Sustainable Impact	B) *PW-PBS implementation requires a long-term process*
Parent's Collaboration during PW-PBS / Parent's Training on Promoting Socioemotional Development at Home Family-ECEC Partnerships / Sharing PW-PBS Practices and Involving parents in the Generalization to Children´s Daily Life Contexts	C) *Implementing PW-PBS in preschools requires involving parents as part of the educational team*
Collaboration between ECEC teachers and mental health professionals / Promote collaboration between educators and mental health professionals Team Collaboration / Effective team collaboration around a shared purpose. Good practice for promoting collaboration among peers	D) *The implementation of PW-PBS is based on the development of collaborative practices and partnerships*
Inclusive Education / The inclusion of one child involves the whole school	E) *PW-PBS systems should include multi-tiered supports, to answer the needs of all children*
Pedagogical Leadership / Leadership data-driven decision-making Highlighting the importance of leadership / Forming smaller leadership teams	F) *Leadership teams play a central role in coordinating, guiding and supporting the preschool teams throughout all phases of the implementation of PW-PBS*
The promotion of positive behaviour in the Greek Curriculum for Early Childhood Education / Focusing on the evaluation of the impact of PW-PBS practices on children's socioemotional development and behaviours Creating Continuity and Promoting Communication Between Early Years Settings and Primary Schools in Ireland / Efforts made by Irish preschools to communicate and collaborate with primary schools	G) *The promotion of children's socioemotional learning should be clearly emphasised in ECEC national curricula and institution educational projects*

*Note. The coloured text refers to the contributions (Key Ideas) of each country team.

STAGE 2. FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS – VALIDATION OF PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS

The goal of this stage was to assert the validity of the *Preliminary Recommendations* (*Key Ideas*) emerging from Stage 1, explore approaches for the sustainable dissemination of findings from the project, and identify further strategies proposed by participants/experts. For this purpose, each partner invited key stakeholders of the education system, mental health, and children's rights fields for a set of focus group interviews and to collect qualitative data. The invitation emails to participants included information about the goals and procedures of the FGI and PBS-ECEC project. This sampling process was conducted with the expectation that a panel of experts in these areas could contribute to strengthening a set of strategies to tackle some of the challenges and needs of our education systems, thus facilitating the implementation of the PW-PBS approach in ECEC. Several experts were available on the dates provided and accepted the invitation from the four countries.

To facilitate the discussion, a short summary of the *Preliminary Recommendations* was prepared and sent to FGI participants beforehand, inviting them to read the document to maximize the discussion. During each focus group, the discussion was organised around these topics to reflect on their importance, feasibility, possible constraints, and to possibly identify additional strategies (see Annex 2). All participants signed a consent form before the FGI session. Participants agreed that the discussions could be audio- or video-recorded for the purpose of analysis. The consent form clearly explained that participation was voluntary, anonymous, and confidential; that they could withdraw from the activity at any point; and that their data would be safely stored and would only be used as part of this project result. Anonymous demographic data were collected using an online questionnaire (the results are provided below for groups in Cyprus, Greece, Ireland, and Portugal).

The FGI sessions took place online (e-focus group), and each session lasted approximately 120 minutes and was conducted by a researcher (facilitator) and an assistant researcher. An FGI protocol was followed, including several instructions and steps described in the **PBS-ECEC R4 Guidelines** document (specifically Annex 3), such as a set of predetermined customised questions and topics that had to be covered during the discussion, as well as ethical and methodological considerations. The transcription of the main ideas shared by the participants and the observations, inferences, and notes taken by the facilitators and research assistants were produced. Because of the confirmatory nature of this task, the categories of

analysis were previously established, corresponding to seven *Preliminary Recommendations* (i.e., topics of discussion). In each category, we focused our analysis on the importance, potential outcomes and opportunities, and constraints/challenges of the successful implementation of each preliminary recommendation at several ECEC levels of governance and service delivery (i.e., from the centre level to national policy).

FGI Participants' Characteristics in the four Partner Countries

Portugal

Two FGI were conducted by the IPP team, involving ten participants organised in two sessions. Participants were assigned to each session based on their institutional role: one group included policy/decision-makers, and the other included ECEC teachers, trainers, and coordinators. The participants ($n = 10$) were females (100%), with an average age of 51.4 years ($SD = 7.37$), varying between 41 and 62. When considering their educational qualifications, the distribution of the highest level of education completed was as follows: 20% ($n = 2$) held a bachelor's degree or higher, 60% ($n = 6$) had a master´s degree or equivalent, and 20% ($n = 2$) had a doctoral degree. In terms of professional background, five participants (50%) were school directors/coordinators or assistant directors, one (10%) was a higher education professor, three (30%) were policy/decision-makers or provided direct support to policymakers, and one (10%) was a clinical and educational psychologist. Three participants had a professional background as preschool teachers. The number of years in the current job position varied between 1 and 34 years ($M = 14.7$, $SD = 10.10$), and work experience in the area of education varied between 12 and 39 years ($M = 25.1$, $SD = 8.99$). In terms of the location of the institution where they worked, 20% ($n = 2$) were located in a small city or town, 40% ($n = 4$) in a city or large town, 10% ($n = 1$) in a large city, and 30% ($n = 3$) in a city with over 1 000 000 people.

Ireland

One focus group was organised in Ireland, by the ICEPE team. All participants ($n = 8$) were female and their ages ranged from 26 to 59 years ($M = 32$). Almost all participants held more than one role in the ECEC sector, with three describing themselves as preschool teachers, five as preschool leaders/managers/owners, two as teacher trainers, three as lecturers, and three as researchers. Years of experience in their current job ranged from 1 to 38 years ($M = 16.5$ years). Four of the participants completed a master's degree, three completed a bachelor's degree, and one held a doctoral degree. When

asked about the community in which their job was located, four participants said they worked in a small town, one said they worked in a village or rural area, two said they worked in a city or large town, and one said they worked in a large city.

Greece

One focus group was organised in Greece, by the IHU team. Eight participants (n = 8) participated in the FGI. All participants were female (100%) with an average age of 39.6 years (SD = 6.75), varying between 31 and 51 years. When considering educational qualifications, the distribution of the highest level of education completed was as follows: 12.5% (n = 1) held a bachelor's degree, 75% (n = 6) had a master´s degree, and 12.5% (n = 1) had a doctoral degree. In terms of professional background, six participants (75%) were preschool teachers, one (12.5%) was a preschool director/coordinator, and one (12.5%) was a higher education professor. The number of years in the current job position varied between three and 20 years, with a mean of 11 (SD = 7.21) years, and work experience in the area of education (in years) varied between five and 23 years, with a mean of 14.5 (SD = 6.82). In terms of the location of the institution, 12.5% (n = 1) worked in a village, 37.5% (n = 3) worked in a city or large town, and 50% (n = 4) worked in a large city.

Cyprus

One focus group was organized in Cyprus by the IoD and Cardet teams. Of the total participants (n = 8), seven were female (87.5%). Their average age was 41 (SD = 8.66) years, ranging from 33 to 60 years. Regarding their educational qualifications, the breakdown of their highest completed education level was as follows: 12.5% (n = 1) possessed a bachelor's degree, 37.5% (n = 3) had a master's degree or its equivalent, and 50% (n = 4) held a doctoral degree. Concerning their professional backgrounds, two participants (25%) were school directors (one working in a public kindergarten and the other the owner of a private kindergarten). Two participants (25%) worked as higher education professors, one (12.5%) was a preschool teacher and PBS-ECEC trainer, one (12.5%) was a researcher on the topic of Early Childhood in Cyprus, and two (25%) were stakeholders of the ECEC setting working at the Pedagogical Institute of Cyprus. The number of years in the current job position varied between three and 36 years, with a mean of 14.7 (SD = 11.19) years, and the work experience in the area of education (in years) varied between two and 25 years, with a mean of 12.23 (SD = 7.65) years. In terms of the location of the

institution, 75% (*n* = 6) worked in a city, 12.5% (*n* = 1) in a village or rural area, and 12.5% (*n* = 1) in a small town.

STAGE 3. INTEGRATION OF PREVIOUS FINDINGS INTO A SET OF RECOMMENDATIONS WITH STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

During Stage 3, based on the previous stages, a structured set of recommendations was further developed to be integrated into the ***Policy and Strategy Toolkit*** (the final output of R4). The main goal was to propose and develop a final set of ***Recommendations*** by the consortium, with the ***Strategies*** and ***Actions*** needed to guide educational stakeholders across Europe. Specifically, the process focused on the development of a pathway of essential steps that guarantees, for example, that a school district/cluster/centre can effectively and sustainably implement PW-PBS. In addition, relevant resources were collected and structured to support each recommendation, including voices from participants and experts, technical and scientific literature, and promising practices from all countries. This work was based on the directions, evidence, resources, and expertise provided by all partners throughout the PBS-ECEC project.

Because of the iterative and cumulative nature of this process of delivering Result 4, involving team critical and reflective thinking, the IPP team collected all the inputs from each consortium partner during the previous stages and organised them to extract and deliver a concise number of practical ***Recommendations***, ***Strategies*** and ***Actions*** that will help to engage and guide educational stakeholders in the successful implementation of a PW-PBS approach. The elements that encompass the ***Policy and Strategy Toolkit*** are directed at both the proximal systems at the micro-/meso-level (e.g., preschool settings, school clusters, professional associations, and relations among them) and distal systems at the macro-level (e.g., policy definition at a national/regional level) of governance and service delivery. The final section of this report provides a description of each **Recommendation**, **Strategy** and **Action** resulting from Stage 3.

3. RESULTS

This section presents the main results and outputs from Stages 1, 2, and 3, as described previously.

A SYNTHESIS OF THE COLLECTION OF KEY IDEAS (STAGE 1)

During Stage 1, teams from the four countries shared a total of 16 Key Ideas (Annex 1). The collection of 16 main contributions was discussed and revised by the entire team. Next, we provide a short description of each thematic group of *Key Ideas* used by the IPP team to extract *Preliminary Recommendations* (see Figure 2). Similarities and differences among *Key Ideas* were highlighted and a set of seven *Preliminary Recommendations* were abstracted, representing all these contributions (Annex 2).

Thematic group 1: Teachers' Professional Development and Career / Bottom-up Training Programs for ECEC Teachers / Promoting Continuous Professional Development

Regarding professionals' professional development, it was evident during the different phases of the project that more opportunities were needed for teacher training programs and to provide adequate support for managing children's behaviour. Managing children's behaviour appears to be one of the major challenges ECEC teachers face in their daily practice. To improve ECEC practices and contexts, there is a need for a comprehensive understanding of teaching positive behaviour in ECEC settings and a stronger focus on the effectiveness of ECEC professionals in this area. The continuous and holistic professional development of professionals on how to implement positive behaviour support ensures that children's socioemotional development is considered as important as their cognitive development. This can be achieved by ensuring that pre-service teachers receive training and coursework on child development, SEL theories, and effective strategies to foster socioemotional skills in their early years. Continuous professional development also plays a crucial role in enhancing the skills and abilities of ECEC professionals by providing them the opportunity to stay updated on the latest research, trends, and best practices in their field. Policymakers should also allocate resources for continuous professional development programs that prioritize the establishment of a supportive learning culture and encourage early year educators to engage in reflective practices, self-assessment, and goal setting to identify their professional development needs. This implies the provision of time and resources for educators to attend workshops, training sessions, and conferences that align with their interests and areas of growth.

Thematic group 2: Duration of PW-PBS Implementation / Implementing the PW-PBS for More than One Schoolyear / Mitigating Time Constraints / Time of Implementing PW-PBS framework for Sustainable Impact / Extending Implementation Time for Sustainable Impact

PW-PBS is an ongoing process and not a one-time intervention. Generally, the implementation of PW-PBS occurs in multiple phases, which usually takes more than a year to fully establish and integrate into preschool practices. The implementation phase includes the integration of strategies into daily routines and interactions within the preschool environment. This phase requires consistent monitoring and ongoing professional development to ensure that staff members remain committed to and skilled in applying PW-PBS principles. With consistent application and ongoing professional development, professionals can effectively address challenging behaviours, promote social skills, and foster a supportive and inclusive learning environment. As PW-PBS becomes deeply ingrained in the preschool's fabric, it creates a foundation for a lasting culture of respect, empathy, and understanding. Policymakers should allocate adequate funding and resources to support preschools in implementing and sustaining PW-PBS over extended periods. This includes financial support for staff training, data collection tools, and ongoing professional development opportunities. A more prolonged engagement would allow the interventions to become embedded in ECEC centres' daily routines, leading to lasting effects on children's socioemotional development. Moreover, an extended timeframe would enable educators to train in depth, refine their PW-PBS practices, and adapt to the evolving needs of children. Additionally, time constraints can pose significant challenges, hindering educators' ability to fully engage in professional development, learn new strategies, and effectively implement PW-PBS. By addressing these time constraints, educators can have dedicated time to training sessions, workshops, and collaborative planning with colleagues.

Thematic group 3: Family-ECEC Partnerships / Parent's Collaboration during PW-PBS / Parent's Training on Promoting Socioemotional Development at Home

The impact of the PW-PBS approach can be magnified by family-ECEC partnerships in ECEC institutions' endeavours. However, these partnerships are not easily achieved and sustained, and thus, need to be systematically promoted. There is a need to support staff in developing and enhancing skills that maximise family engagement and support the establishment of genuinely positive and productive partnerships in ECEC settings. Preschools and parents can share/exchange valuable resources, information, and strategies - families can complement (at home or in other social contexts) the efforts put in place by preschools in the implementation of PW-PBS and the promotion of socioemotional learning, which can support and

expand families´ efforts to meet the health and educational needs of their children (e.g., guidance and support in child-rearing, access to community services, parent education, etc.). Policies and practices include, among others, creating a system with organisational conditions (resources and infrastructure) to build, enhance, and sustain the capacity of staff/families for partnerships, building positive and respectful relationships, sharing relevant information and focusing on effective problem-solving, ensuring equitable family representation and building collaborative teams to support individual children (e.g., Tier 2 and Tier 3), and creating easy and accessible communication channels for families and program staff.

Thematic group 4: Team Collaboration / Collaboration Between ECEC Teachers and Mental Health Professionals / Effective Team Collaboration around a Shared Purpose

Collaborative work involving teachers and other professionals is crucial for successful implementation of PW-PBS. Collaborative work may occur at the classroom, centre, and community levels. This means that the assessment, training, and implementation phases must be inclusive of all professionals working with children, irrespective of their role and position. In the context of implementing PW-PBS in ECEC, it is essential for the entire team to develop a shared philosophy and vision that enables all members of the preschool to promote children's positive behaviours and socioemotional skills and sustain their actions in a coherent and solid background. This ensures consistency in pedagogical strategies and supports positive behaviours across school settings and daily routines. Investment in effective teamwork involving the whole team (directors and/or pedagogical coordinators, ECEC teachers, teacher assistants, psychologists, and other practitioners) implies allocating the required time and resources for teams to work properly to support a multi-tier system. Overall, mutual support is foundational for creating a supportive and inclusive educational environment, including the establishment of effective partnerships with stakeholders and designing policies that frame and foster team collaboration.

Thematic group 5: Inclusive Education / The Inclusion of One Child Involves the Whole School

The development of inclusive education stems from preschools' ability to organise available support into a multi-tiered system that addresses several competencies and needs. PW-PBS is an example of a multi-tiered system of support aimed at helping preschools promote children's developmental social and emotional competencies, establish a positive school culture, and create supportive environments. There is a need to support preschools in the organization and implementation of multi-tiered systems – training all professionals to understand the essence of an inclusive approach and the practical processes and procedures to implement it. The construction of an inclusive educational system implies the organization

of equitable support. For example, a formal mandate to implement such practices in all preschools would favour the construction of educational systems that effectively address the needs of all children. In the absence of a formal mandate to incorporate such practices, educational centres should consider the organization of available support in a multi-tiered format.

Thematic group 6: Pedagogical Leadership / Leadership Data-driven Decision-making / Highlighting the Importance of Leadership

Pedagogical leadership plays a core role in organising, coordinating, and motivating preschool teams throughout all phases of the implementation of PW-PBS. The specific preparation and support of pedagogical leaders is also paramount given the critical demands posed by their roles. They establish a clear vision and mission for implementation, ensuring that PW-PBS aligns with the values and goals of the preschool, and they provide ongoing professional development, training, and resources to educators, fostering a shared understanding of PW-PBS principles and techniques. A well-prepared, highly engaged, and supportive pedagogical leadership promotes common ground within the team at the level of professional vision (beliefs and values), theoretical underpinnings, and pedagogical practices. For example, the promotion of critical reflection processes focused on this triad (vision, theory, and practices) is the basis for the successful implementation of the PW-PBS primary-tier level. Leadership is recognised as a key element in the quality of ECEC in European policies. At the national level, policy frameworks should clearly acknowledge that the role of leaders in ECEC settings involves a critical pedagogical dimension while also integrating an administrative function. The creation or establishment of support systems for professionals at a regional or local level (e.g., through professional associations or training centres located in a cluster of schools) should provide specific preparation for this demanding role. At the centre level, leadership should be acknowledged as a driving force for change and transformation. This means the creation of working conditions for leaders to fully develop their pedagogical role and functions - careful planning is crucial to identify potential leaders and assess their qualifications and abilities to guide the implementation process effectively. Developing strategies such as mentorship programmes, targeted professional development opportunities, and collaborative decision-making processes can further promote the cultivation of leadership skills within the preschool setting.

Thematic group 7: The Promotion of Positive Behaviour in the Greek Curriculum for Early Childhood Education / Focusing on the Evaluation of the Impact of PW-PBS Practices on Children's Socioemotional

Development and Behaviours / Creating Continuity and Promoting Communication Between Early Years Settings and Primary Schools

The promotion of children's socioemotional learning should be clearly emphasised in ECEC national curricula and guidelines in line with European policies and frameworks that stress the core relevance of key personal, social, and emotional competencies. This entails defining national policy frameworks that clearly acknowledge a holistic understanding of children's learning and development, and an integrated approach to professional action in ECEC settings. Early childhood education curricula should focus on promoting the integration of socioemotional and behavioural management practices. This entails incorporating comprehensive guidelines and standards that underscore the significance of fostering emotional intelligence and self-regulation skills in young children. Centre-level recommendations include, among others, training ECEC professionals to create a supportive and nurturing environment, allocating time and resources for professionals to collaborate and design learning activities ensuring that socioemotional learning is integrated into the daily programme, and engaging in regular assessments of the practice's impact on children's development.

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS (FGI) REPORTS (STAGE 2)

Overall, participants from the FGI conducted in Cyprus, Greece, Ireland, and Portugal attributed great importance to the seven recommendations, finding them central elements in the promotion of the PW-PBS approach and highly relevant for effective and inclusive educational contexts. Next, a synthesis of the participants´ contributions from all partner countries was provided for each of the recommendations discussed.

Preliminary Recommendation A

To implement PW-PBS, it is fundamental to promote continuous professional development and training
Overall, participants acknowledged the importance of continuous professional development (CPD) and training, particularly in the implementation of an innovative, systemic, and holistic approach such as PW-PBS. The **potential outcomes and opportunities** identified in relation to continuous professional development are as follows:

- Provides a shared vision and purpose among professionals, helps develop the strategies that need to be implemented and a common language in each centre, involving all professionals and empowering them, which contributes to higher professional engagement.

- Training fosters innovation and motivates professionals to collaborate in team improvement; improved skills and competencies result in better support and development of children's socioemotional learning.

- Involves all ECEC professionals in a way that empowers them to provide better support to children's socioemotional development, while also focusing on the well-being/personal development of professionals.

- Encourages the use of new methodologies (e.g., training among peers on effective evidence-based practices) and technologies to support professional development/training (e.g., online distance learning), as well as the creation of collaborative learning communities.

- Promotes a shift towards greater emphasis on socioemotional learning in ECEC settings.

- Contributes to creating links with training centres/institutions and/or professional associations, which are an asset for ECEC settings/systems that want to implement this recommendation.

- Training on innovative approaches, such as PW-PBS, is welcome because it supports children's needs.

- CPD provides opportunities for other staff members, particularly for assistants. As the PW-PBS approach involves all preschool staff, including teachers, assistants, cooks, nurses, and others, it facilitates comprehensive training in current pedagogical trends for all members of the preschool centre's staff.

- When PW-PBS is embraced at the municipality, region, or country level, it may demonstrate a commitment to foster positive behaviour and socioemotional development across a broader educational landscape. This systemic approach will promote uniformity and ensure that the benefits of the PW-PBS approach reach a wider range of children and educators.

- By maintaining ongoing contact with professionals in the training system, the educational system can adapt to the changing social conditions and needs.

Some discourses illustrating these perceptions are as follows:

"Educators need to seek pedagogical practices and strategies to implement in their classrooms. Today's classrooms are more diverse than ever, with students coming from various backgrounds, abilities, and learning styles. As a result, educators endeavour to continually enhance their professional skills in order to adapt to these evolving needs and effectively correspond to their students demands." (S., Greece)

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"Training is fundamental (…), we have to provide time for training, for professionals to have the opportunity to debate these issues and reach a common ideal (…), to satisfy the need to review, adjust strategies and share, at various times. Educators must feel secure in their pedagogical approaches, or they will not work. Ensuring that we are all (…) on the same page (…), to create a sense of well-being in educators" (M., Portugal).

"I consider it crucial that education and training are the starting point for everything. Without trained personnel, it's challenging to implement any program effectively, so it's naturally a very significant recommendation. Funding for education and training may be necessary, as well as ways to incorporate the specific program into existing teacher training and education programs in different countries. (…) Most people will tell you that they want a child to develop socially and emotionally. (…) What's missing is the interpersonal connection and the ability to manage emotions, both positive and negative, which is extremely significant." (X., Cyprus)

The **constraints and challenges to successful implementation** included:

- Policies that do not support an effective training system for professionals - lack of validation, funding, and resources for relevant, systematic training programs from higher levels of governance (e.g., funding policies at the central level are focused on digital literacy).

- Professionals' lack of time for training and professional development, which occurs usually outside work schedules (e.g., overscheduling, overburdening); there is a pressing need for systemic changes that prioritise and facilitate CPD within the workday, ensuring that educators have the time and resources to enhance their skills.

- Educators facing several complex challenges in their classrooms, such as behavioural disorders, special needs, or cultural diversity, often need additional strategies and methodologies to address them effectively, which is seldom the case.

- Some educators may be sceptical of new approaches and may hesitate to adopt them; training should be conducted by professionals who possess the knowledge, experience, and expertise necessary to provide high-quality training opportunities.

- Allocation of resources - ensuring the sustainability of socioemotional development initiatives amid changing social and economic conditions–can be a challenge.

- Resistance to change among educators and stakeholders may hinder the successful integration of socioemotional learning.

- Ensuring that all students, regardless of their educational setting, have equal access to high-quality socioemotional development programs is critical.

- Lack of leaders' preparation to recognise the relevance of professional development opportunities and implement them accordingly.

- Professionals lack initial and continuous training in the promotion of SEL, particularly in evidence-based practices and strategies.

As one Irish teacher said, "CPD is important, but there is no space in people's work lives. There's no space within the funding, the funding elements around that, you know, about noncontact time, about being able to close a service down for a day, or two days. So, every early years´ educator that I ever come in contact with is absolutely proactive in their CPD, but they do it at nighttime. They do it on Saturdays and Sundays and they're not acknowledged for it, paid for it. So, I think that's the really big difference. It's all right saying it's fundamental to promote CPD, but there must be a strategy and a government policy around that to support that." (T., Ireland)

Preliminary Recommendation B

PW-PBS implementation requires a long-term process

Participants generally agreed that continuity is very important in ECEC contexts and that a long-term approach provides confidence and allows professionals to engage in a more in-depth pedagogical process. Time is needed to achieve a common language within the team to promote socioemotional competence and respond to challenging behaviours. Time is required to achieve a real, positive change.

The conditions as well as the **potential outcomes and opportunities** related to long-term implementation include:

- Adequate timelines that enable a long-term process, encompassing: (a) acquiring the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively implement PW-PBS; (b) the assessment of the ECEC setting; (c) the involvement of the staff in planning the routines, organising classrooms, establishing desired behaviours and rules, defining a common purpose, and reflecting on their current practices; (d) the implementation of the agreed strategies/practices and refining their practices; (e) the

evaluation of the impact on positive outcomes (i.e., some effects may only be visible in the long-term); and (f) adapting strategies to the unique needs of their children.

- Intra-context stability, coherence, and persistence throughout implementation are key; time is a valuable resource, requiring that professionals´ expectations of rapid results should be managed by leadership.

- The knowledge that a holistic, systemic, and integrated approach, such as PW-PBS, can constitute an asset, meeting the needs of each ECEC setting.

- A long-term approach allows for sustained results that short-term fixes cannot guarantee.

- A long-term approach allows educators and caregivers the time needed to tailor interventions to specific needs; a long-term perspective enables better resource planning and allocation.

- Building a positive culture within multilevel partnerships requires continuous reinforcement, time, trust, and effective communication.

- Ongoing effort and commitment by the whole preschool community ensures a lasting impact.

- A prolonged approach instils confidence in professionals and enables them to delve deeper into the pedagogical process.

- Long-term implementation can encourage data-driven decision-making, in which educators use evidence to assess and refine their approaches.

- The implementation of PW-PBS is flexible and may vary depending on the centre and its specific needs.

- Common guidelines can provide educators with effective strategies for behaviour management, reducing disruptions in the classroom and promoting a conducive learning atmosphere.

- Implementing a behavioural curriculum can promote inclusivity and equity by providing a structured approach to addressing challenging behaviours, ensuring that all students receive appropriate support.

Some discourses illustrating the perceptions of Recommendation 2 were as follows:

"(…) the PW-PBS is a flexible approach, which enables the staff of each preschool to implement it according to their needs and at a time they deem appropriate" (X., Greece)

"Directors must understand the time it will take to implement this approach; if professionals are given information and it is explained why this time is necessary for training, there will be less demotivation, (and) they will understand the time needed to acquire it". (P., Portugal).

"The program is gradually integrated into our work, and it is understood that negative emotions are also addressed. From my experience with the program, I believe it is effective and should be introduced in schools; it was an additional aid for me." (P., Cyprus)

The **constraints and challenges to successful implementation** included:

- Professional demotivation due to the absence of immediate results.
- Higher levels of staff turnover have implications for the implementation of holistic, systemic, and long-term approaches (PW-PBS).
- Lack of human resources in large school systems to meet the needs of all children (e.g., high group heterogeneity).
- Lack of preschool teachers in the coordination of institutions that include ECEC settings (e.g., at the school board).
- The large numbers of children transitioning in ECEC contexts challenge the continuity of the approach and, consequently, its success (assessment should be made to understand this phenomenon and prevent it).
- Early year teachers are already contending with significant workloads and staffing shortages, meaning that the long-term process of PW-PBS implementation may place an additional burden on them.
- A short timeline for managing bureaucracy and implementing new practices may be excessively demanding for educators, potentially leading to burnout and reduced effectiveness; implementing changes, such as creating lesson plans for social skills within a short time frame, can significantly increase educators' workload and affect their ability to deliver quality education.
- Allocating resources for training and professional development, including hiring additional staff if necessary, can be a constraint, especially in cases where budgets are tight.
- Maintaining momentum and commitment to the project over the extended 2-3 year timeline may pose challenges, requiring ongoing support and motivation.

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Some participants shared the following points:

"Now we're lucky enough. We have trainers who come into us for a very short training session. (…) Even though we have all the lovely supports, we're still struggling. So, for services that are private, who don't get the funding, whose staff are working 40 hours a week, it would be impossible. It actually would be impossible." (A., Ireland)

"We have 52 educational establishments, many of them with mixed education, and with a large number of children transitioning, which can be a constraint on the continuity of approach and educators feel like they have to start all over again" (C., Portugal).

"At preschools we create a positive and supportive environment, where we promote positive behaviours, but it is not always obvious the size effect." (D., Greece)

Preliminary Recommendation C

Implementing PW-PBS in preschools requires involving parents as part of the educational team

Overall, the participants agreed that involving parents as part of the educational team can be fruitful, but it is also a challenging endeavour. As genuine and enduring parental engagement is pivotal for yielding positive effects on the educational journey of children, professionals need to have or develop skills and acquire more resources to effectively involve and keep families engaged in the education of their children.

The **potential outcomes and opportunities** related to family engagement highlighted by the participants included the following:

- Effective communication strategies with parents (individually or as parents' associations) are key. A holistic, systemic approach that promotes the involvement of all stakeholders may contribute to improving family engagement in ECEC (parents need to feel that they are valued and welcome).
- Involving parents fosters open lines of communication between the early years setting and families - parents become active partners in their children's education, facilitating collaboration and shared decision-making.
- Collaboration with parents allows educators to tailor interventions and strategies according to children's specific needs.

- Parents can reinforce the positive behaviours learned in preschool at home; involving parents in PW-PBS would be easier if the parents could take part in online training about the PW-PBS approach.

- The preschool cannot act independently of the family; there must be bridges of communication and joint action.

- Meetings, discussions, and joint action planning can empower professionals to advocate high-quality education.

- Professionals should enhance their skills and access additional resources to proficiently engage with and maintain families' participation in their children's education.

- Diversification of strategies to engage families is needed – different approaches (e.g., meetings, leaflets, etc.) considering families' social and cultural characteristics and needs. For example, the use of an online platform is a practical way to share information with parents and involve them in ECEC.

- Consistent family involvement when the child presents challenging behaviours and/or developmental difficulties in a process within a multidisciplinary team. Specialists such as school psychologists should be part of teams implementing this recommendation in ECEC settings.

- Parents who are more involved may become more aware of the educational opportunities, resources, and support systems available to their children, thereby ensuring that they can access these resources effectively.

- The development of policies and strategies at the national level to promote and facilitate parental engagement in education may help to create a more comprehensive and supportive educational system.

- Involving parents creates a sense of community within preschool, which enables the development of a supportive and inclusive preschool environment.

The **constraints and challenges to successful implementation identified by the participants** include the following:

- The challenge of maintaining long-term parental involvement in the activities and strategies proposed by professionals has become more noticeable in older children.

- Diverse families´ lifestyles and routines can hinder them from participating or make it more demanding for professionals to adapt their strategies.

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- The time needed to fully engage with parents may be excessive considering all other responsibilities.
- Training programs often attract parents who are already interested in and involved in their children's education, leading to a self-selection bias that may exclude parents who could benefit the most.
- Parents facing socioeconomic, cultural, or language barriers may find it difficult to participate in training programs, thus limiting their accessibility to a wider audience.
- Some parents may associate participation in training programs with negative stereotypes or stigmas, which makes them less likely to engage.

Some participants shared the following points:

"I am not sure how parental involvement can be effectively done" (L., Portugal).

"Only the parents that do not really need it, come and engage in our activities" (S., Portugal).

"When I do early intervention and preschools, the hardest part is to get the parents and the preschool teachers and the managers to all, you know, sort of be singing off the same hymn sheet. So that is a challenge. So, I think one person is needed to gather those people up, if that's the right way to say it, just one point of contact." (T., Ireland)

"Some parents are sceptical, believing that they are not responsible and that it is the educator's responsibility to teach all these things to the children." (P., Greece)

"Efforts need to be taken at the level of educational policy regarding the training of parents as well." (S., Greece)

"This is valuable input and one of the most challenging to implement because it falls outside the scope of the school's jurisdiction in a way. Typically, parents who participate in training and programs are those who are already interested in making a change. It requires a lot of effort for that to be put into practice." (X., Cyprus)

Preliminary Recommendation D

The implementation of PW-PBS is based on the development of collaborative practices and partnerships

Participants validated the idea that educational endeavours, such as the PW-PBS approach, are effective and sustainable within a collaborative framework and agreed that collaborative practices, partnerships, and effective communication are the most important elements for the implementation of the PW-PBS approach.

The **potential outcomes and opportunities** related to collaborative practices and partnerships discussed by the participants include the following:

- Proximity among professionals in a team favours consistency and productivity.
- The development of collaborative practices among team members positively affects children.
- Debating and sharing are essential in defining common guidelines, complemented by the greater involvement of professionals, leading to context-specific application of strategies/practices.
- Collaboration fosters effective communication channels among all parties involved, ensuring alignment regarding children's progress, challenges, and strategies for improvement.
- Training programs that encourage collaboration and shared learning among educators can lead to a supportive professional community dedicated to the successful implementation of emotional empowerment initiatives.
- Partnerships involving data sharing and analysis (i.e., a data-driven approach) enable stakeholders to make informed decisions about strategies, interventions, and improvements in child development and behaviour management.
- Well-structured collaborative practices can align with broader educational goals related to child well-being and holistic development, contributing to a more comprehensive and balanced curriculum.
- ECEC settings and systems can benefit greatly from adopting a proactive stance in the search for partnerships in the community (e.g., mental health services and programs).
- A sustainable and continuous partnership between academic experts, researchers, and ECEC centres and systems is key to fully implementing and developing evidence-based approaches such as PW-PBS.

- The implementation of projects potentially has better results if executed in a present, active, and participatory way (e.g., continuity of support, the "critical friend," better dialog among institutions).

- The continuity of PBS strategies between the preschool years and the 1st Cycle (1st – 4th grade) could constitute an important asset for school clusters.

- Collaboration within ECEC partnerships ensures consistency in implementing PW-PBS strategies across various contexts in which the child develops.

For example, some participants from Portugal and Greece shared:

"No one lives alone. Teamwork enriches everyone, allows reflection on the different dynamics, and opens the mind to new experiences." (T., Portugal).

"…no matter how demanding the programme and working conditions are, it is through communication and cooperation between educators that the PW-PBS programme can be implemented." (D., Greece)

"We look at the community as a network of resources" (M., Portugal)

The **constraints and challenges to successful implementation** include the following.
- Difficulty in fostering collective engagement for sharing and discussing among team members.
- Larger ECEC teams are more difficult to manage and present challenges in coordination and collaboration.
- Lack of human resources in ECEC centres.
- Schools may face constraints in allocating resources to support educational training and program delivery.
- Ensuring that all educators, including those who are less inclined to embrace new teaching methodologies, are engaged and effective in delivering the program, can be intricate.
- Finding the right balance between traditional curriculum delivery and promoting PW-PBS can be challenging, with educators perceiving it as an additional burden rather than an integral part of their pedagogical practices.
- Difficulties in collaborating effectively with primary schools during the transition to new educational contexts can be demanding, although this continuity in socioemotional support is crucial, especially for children with complex needs.

Some discourses illustrating these perceptions are as follows.

"Project leaders must be active, present, and involved. Otherwise, the partnership may not be effective or fail to meet the objectives and timings initially indicated" (P., Portugal).

"If we don't have good leadership in earlier settings, then none of all these collaborative practices happen." (S., Ireland)

Preliminary Recommendation E

PW-PBS systems should include multi-tiered supports, to answer the needs of all children

The inclusion of multi-tiered supports to better answer the needs of children is considered a very important recommendation and has been partially implemented in a few countries. This recommendation was met with ample support from participants, with the main positive outcome being that multi-tiered support ensures that behavioural expectations are consistent, and all children are aware of that set of expectations, promoting a positive and predictable environment.

The conditions, as well as the **potential outcomes and opportunities** related to a multi-tiered support system, include:

- The pyramid model helps guide the team´s efforts and actions to answer children´s needs and to better manage resources, an avenue for inclusive education.
- Helps monitor what is happening within ECEC centres, their needs and difficulties, and their successes.
- Professionals are motivated to implement multi-tiered support that requires adequate information and training.
- Multi-tiered systems aim to meet children´s needs, placing school psychologists and other specialists at the forefront of the implementation of this recommendation working as part of the same team with teachers and other professionals towards equitable implementation.
- Providing training to professionals with advice and support from specialists in the field of mental health or special needs equips teachers in this area better.
- Starting with small steps allows for a more manageable and gradual implementation of the multi-tiered support system. This allows for feedback from staff and stakeholders to be incorporated into subsequent phases, leading to continuous improvement.

- Preschools can adapt multitiered support systems to their unique environments, ensuring that they fit within their existing structures and processes.

Some discourses illustrating these perceptions included the following:

"Very useful in guiding action" (L., Portugal).

"I advocate for the integration of PBS into the broader educational system as a method for advancing positive behaviour as a comprehensive approach." (A., Cyprus)

"In our preschool we follow an inclusive approach in which the activities are tailored to each child's needs. Even in challenging cases of children we have been successfully integrated and involved all children to the best of their abilities." (M., Greece)

"Socioemotional learning is promoted when all children participate in the activities without exclusion, finding meaning and joy in participation. This is what we seek to achieve in our preschool." (L., Greece)

"I would also highlight the coherence between this model and the current framework of inclusive education, which facilitates its implementation" (C., Portugal).

The **constraints and challenges to successful implementation** included:
- The lack of support and specialised staff hampers the coherent implementation of these systems.
- Lack of discussion regarding multitiered approaches among professionals.
- Existence of diversified, challenging ECEC contexts that lack the necessary tools and resources to implement a multi-tiered approach.
- Difficulties in identifying children in need of intensive and specialised support during the preschool period and the lack of specialised staff.
- Children with more complex needs may face additional challenges owing to a lack of collaborative practices. Participants suggested strategies such as establishing transition teams comprising educators from both settings, implementing standardised data-sharing protocols, and actively involving parents in the transition process.

- A comprehensive curriculum, especially one that includes PW-PBS, demands additional educational support. Schools may face challenges in providing the necessary resources and personnel to support the curriculum effectively.
- If PW-PBS is integrated rigidly, it may not align with the diverse needs of children.
- Ensuring that all educators are adequately trained is a logistical and resource-intensive challenge.

A participant from Greece shared:

"…preschool is a particularly sensitive stage when it is difficult to identify children in need of targeted intervention, especially by educators who do not have the relevant expertise." (D., Greece)

Preliminary Recommendation F

Leadership teams play a central role in coordinating, guiding and supporting the preschool teams throughout all phases of the implementation of PW-PBS

The participants considered that leaders are mobilisers of change that need to be supported in effectively implementing evidence-based practices, supervising, and guiding professionals towards the team´s goals. Participants agreed that this recommendation is critical in the implementation of any behaviour programme and the smooth running of any preschool service.

The **potential outcomes and opportunities** related to the central role of leadership include:
- Leadership plays a pivotal role in the PW-PBS approach in evolving and fully integrating pedagogical practices in ECEC contexts.
- Leadership teams act as important bridges between staff, parents, and external stakeholders, ensuring that everyone involved in the preschool community is aligned in their commitment to nurturing socioemotional growth and fostering a safe, supportive, and inclusive learning environment.
- The importance of mid-level leadership in ECEC settings is high; however, it should be less bureaucratic and play a more pedagogical role. Leaders should be mobilisers of change and creators of new solutions to challenges faced by ECEC teams.
- Leaders are a motivational force for professionals and partially responsible for their well-being.

- Leadership teams provide the necessary strategic direction for the implementation process. A leadership team can allocate roles and responsibilities to ensure that each team member has well-defined tasks.
- Leadership brings better results when it is shared (e.g., leadership teams in PW-PBS).
- Leaders should be well-informed and prepared to exert their roles in ECEC settings; access to quality training and resources is paramount.
- Preschool coordinators should receive adequate incentives and high-quality leadership training, and their work should focus on the quality of educational activities in ECEC.
- Leadership is indispensable in creating a preschool environment in which every child has the opportunity to thrive emotionally, socially, and academically.

Some discourses illustrating these perceptions included the following:

"Everyone on the leadership team has to believe that it will work. They have to provide the impetus for continuity" (M., Portugal).

"It is essential to teach and train in the area of leadership and provide incentives." (C., Portugal).

The **constraints and challenges to successful implementation mentioned by participants** include:
- Understaffed preschool settings and high turnover rates among educators can disrupt the continuity of leadership teams and implementation processes. It is difficult to find and retain skilled team members.
- Younger professionals are less frequently involved in leadership roles, often attributed to older professionals, who sometimes lack the energy necessary to lead effectively.
- Leaders are often overloaded with work and lack the support and time needed to fully exert their role. Bureaucracy is a barrier in ECEC.
- Lack of adequate incentives to contribute to this situation.
- Lack of specialized training in leadership skills. Leaders, as catalysts for change, should receive support to successfully implement evidence-based practices and oversee and steer professionals toward achieving the team's objectives.
- School leaders often focus on other levels of education (e.g., 7th to 9th Grades), and pay less attention to ECEC.

- Implementing the PW-PBS approach within the existing bureaucratic structures may be burdensome, and educators might cite high workloads as a challenge.

- Ensuring clear communication between the leadership and preschool teams throughout all phases of implementation can be challenging.

- Sustaining consistent leadership support and guidance over time can be difficult, particularly in the face of staff turnover or competing priorities.

Preliminary Recommendation G

The promotion of children's socioemotional learning should be clearly emphasised in ECEC national curricula and institution educational projects

Participants were unanimous in considering the relevance of emphasising the promotion of SEL in the national curricula and guidelines, as well as in ECEC institutions' educational projects.

The **potential outcomes and opportunities** are as follows.

- The PBS-ECEC project team should provide recommendations to government members and bodies (e.g., the Ministry of Education) regarding this issue.

- The initial training of professionals should focus more on SEL and the prevention of challenging behaviours, focusing on evidence-based strategies applicable to ECEC settings.

- Training of trainers must be improved to support professionals´ practices towards the promotion of positive behaviours and SEL. Professionals should be confident and capable of implementing evidence-based strategies and practices in ECEC.

- The growing recognition of the importance of socioemotional skills opens new possibilities for change in the education system.

- Better child outcomes: Socioemotional learning equips children with essential life skills that go beyond the classroom, such as problem-solving, decision-making, and effective communication. Children who receive a strong foundation in socioemotional learning are better prepared for future challenges and tend to have better mental health and overall well-being in adulthood.

- Embracing such guidelines can extend beyond preschool and other educational levels, thereby promoting a consistent approach to socioemotional learning throughout a child's academic journey.

Some participants noted:

"Guidelines and pedagogical practices should be created including how they would be taught in a wider range of activities." (M., Cyprus)

"Promoting socioemotional learning requires time, infrastructure, resources and staff." (M., Greece)

[in the context of a higher investment in SEL in the preschool years] "children are entering primary school in a much better way than they would have years ago." (S., Ireland)

The **constraints and challenges to successful implementation** included:

- Insufficient training and time for professionals to work in the promotion of socioemotional skills despite the existence of guidelines in this area.
- Professionals predominantly emphasize children's literacy and math skills and often overlook socioemotional domains.
- Lack of measurable goals regarding the development of socioemotional skills - what children expect to learn and develop – and difficulty in measuring socioemotional skills and the results of the implemented strategies.
- School responses primarily focused on problem behaviours rather than holistic SEL.
- The need to revise existing national curricula to incorporate socioemotional learning and disseminate changes among professionals effectively - even when new curriculum documents are published–many ECEC educators are unaware of them or do not receive adequate training to update their practice according to the new recommendations.
- Overcrowded classrooms make it very challenging for educators to simultaneously address the unique socioemotional needs of each child and organise the global classroom environment and activities.
- A focus on "static" activities due to the lack of infrastructure – the lack of a spacious environment for children to develop their imagination, express themselves freely, and establish cooperative relationships with their peers, as many kindergarten classes are particularly small and lack materials and toys that stimulate children.
- Educators allocate a disproportionate amount of time to cognitive activities compared to socioemotional learning.

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- Educators work under the stress of evaluation. The results of socioemotional learning are visible in the long term and are not always easily recognisable by an external evaluator, who makes individual observations in each class to assess the educator. This has led educators to engage in activities that have tangible results " (e.g., posters, constructions, worksheets) to create each child's portfolio and showcase their work.

- The absence of clear guidelines and pedagogical practices for incorporating socioemotional learning across a broader range of academic subjects can hinder the effective implementation of such programs. Educators may struggle to integrate these practices without proper guidance.

A participant from Portugal shared:

"These documents [legislation] are not always being reformulated. So, changes are not expected in the near future, but there are other strategies at hand" (L., Portugal).

Strategies for Dissemination and Sustainable Implementation Shared by Participants

The strategies for dissemination of the PBS-ECEC project and the PW-PBS approach discussed by the participants included:

- Offering comprehensive professional development programmes for early childhood educators and administrators. These programmes should focus on PW-PBS implementation, including training on data collection, analysis, and intervention strategies.

- Encouraging collaboration among early year settings, educational institutions, government agencies, and community organisations to share best practices related to PW-PBS.

- Start pilot programmes in selected early year settings to test the effectiveness of PW-PBS.

- Soliciting the guiding power of the Ministry of Education and its recommendations, municipalities follow through with recommendations from the government and integrate PW-PBS in their ECEC systems (based on the needs of their children and preschools).

- Reaching school clusters, specifically the General Board, which holds the power to make changes.

- Disseminating the project and the PW-PBS approach among families based on the importance of SEL and the potential positive outcomes of PW-PBS.

- Extending the guidelines for SEL from preschool to higher educational levels ensures a consistent approach throughout a child's academic journey, which can lay the foundation for positive behaviours and emotional empowerment from an early age.

- Effective training and support for educators can lead to deeper comprehension and more successful implementation of PW-PBS. Collaboration among educators can create a supportive professional community dedicated to child development and SEL.

- Effective leadership coordination and guidance are vital throughout all phases of implementation.

- Successful implementation requires a comprehensive and flexible approach, ongoing support, and commitment to adapting to evolving needs. Collaboration among educational stakeholders and clear understanding of the cultural context are essential elements.

Key Takeaways from the FGI

1. Overall, recommendations were considered essential for successful PW-PBS implementation in ECEC and pivotal for strengthening educational systems as a whole. PW-PBS provides an integrated response to educational needs and challenges at the local and national levels. However, they face specific challenges.

2. Professional development, leadership, long-term sustainable processes, and collaborative practices are intertwined, building on each other. The success and effectiveness of each depends on the synergies created among them in an ECEC system/setting.

3. Adequate time, timelines, and resources must be provided to ECEC teams to fully implement evidence-based holistic approaches, such as PW-PBS, to promote positive changes in ECEC systems and settings.

4. The PW-PBS approach can be highly sustainable because it focuses on the training of professional teams to deliver evidence-based practices and helps them build strong support systems in ECEC, as well as foster a collaborative professional community.

5. The PW-PBS approach is consistent with recent changes in educational policies and guidelines at European and national levels.

6. Early year educators want to upskill, train, and learn, but they need to be given space and time to do so. The need for increased funding of CPD opportunities for early years educators cannot be overstated. Professionals working in the early childhood sector are increasingly interested in supporting the socioemotional well-being of their children, creating trauma-informed settings, and supporting positive behaviour.

7. The implementation of the Recommendation "PW-PBS systems should include multi-tiered supports, to answer the needs of all children" in preschool centres requires the support of specialised staff.

8. Training to promote socioemotional learning should not only concern educators but also parents to ensure continuity in the child's education.

Based on these findings from the previous stages, the *Toolkit* was organised and developed according to the following seven recommendations (next section).

TOOLKIT Recommendations, Strategies and Actions (Stage 3)

ID: STRATEGY AND POLICY RECOMMENDATION 1

Title: <u>Continuous professional development</u>

Subtitle: To implement PW–PBS, it is fundamental to promote continuous professional development

Key Points: Continuous professional development (CPD), in addition to solid initial education and training, is essential for the successful implementation of Programme-Wide Positive Development Support (PW–PBS) in early childhood education and care (ECEC). CPD ensures high-quality education and support for children. As our understanding of child development evolves, ECEC professionals need to stay up to date on the latest research and best practices. CPD empowers ECEC professionals with the attitudes, knowledge, and skills to adapt to diverse learning needs, establish positive relationships, use innovative pedagogical strategies, and create nurturing environments. Participation in CPD programmes keeps professionals informed about trends in research, allowing them to implement new strategies as well as the systems necessary to promote young children's socioemotional learning and to prevent and mitigate challenging behaviours (please see our PBS–ECEC Key Resources). An in-depth understanding of PW–PBS principles and strategies, a common understanding among ECEC team members, and specific teaching skills are required to ensure the successful implementation of the PW–PBS approach with high fidelity. As a result, investing in CPD benefits the development of young children, thus ensuring a solid foundation for their wellbeing, growth, and success.

Voices of professionals and educational stakeholders from PBS–ECEC

"I consider it crucial that education and training are the starting point for everything. Without trained personnel, it's challenging to implement any programme effectively, so it's naturally a very significant recommendation." (X., Cyprus)

"Nowadays, educators in ECEC face several complex challenges in their classrooms (…). These challenges require them to possess a diverse toolkit of strategies and methodologies to address them effectively. CPD and training in approaches such as PW–PBS support them to enhance their skills and provide them with the appropriate tools to address these challenges." (K., Greece)

"Training is fundamental (…), we must provide time for training, for professionals to have the opportunity to debate these issues and reach a common ideal (…), to satisfy the need to review, adjust strategies and share, at various times. Educators must feel secure in their pedagogical approaches, or these will not work. Ensuring that we are all (...) on the same page." (M., Portugal)

What can be done to make a difference?

Strategies & *Actions*

Promote and fund initial teacher education as well as accessible professional development opportunities focusing on socioemotional learning and managing challenging behaviours

- *Develop comprehensive national strategies that emphasise the importance of continuous learning and development, and support an effective training system for professionals.*
- *Ensure that pre-service teacher education includes core topics such as child development, SEL frameworks, and effective strategies for fostering children's socioemotional learning.*
- *Foster collaborative partnerships between organizations dedicated to teacher education and relevant professional groups and associations to align programmes with professional profiles and recent advancements in the relevant literature.*
- *Allocate resources for programmes focused on promoting SEL and PW–PBS, prioritising time for professional development and collaboration.*
- *Provide regular training on PW–PBS principles, systems, and practices to ensure that professionals remain skilled and knowledgeable in implementing the approach effectively and incorporate training sessions into work schedules or implement flexible hours to accommodate educators' participation.*
- *Emphasise the availability of online training courses and webinars and establish communication channels and guidelines to facilitate the sharing of information and resources.*
- Support collaborative learning communities, valuing and promoting evidence-based practices that strengthen ECEC systems and settings as a whole
- *Foster collaborative partnerships between educational institutions, organisations, and early childhood centres to facilitate the delivery of professional development programmes, workshops, or conferences in local communities, and evaluate the effectiveness of programmes.*
- *Provide funding for workshops, conferences, coaching, and mentoring opportunities, thus alleviating the financial burden of training.*
- *Encourage the use of diversified methodologies (e.g., observation and peer feedback) and promote the creation of spaces and opportunities for professionals to share experiences, best practices, and research-based strategies to enhance socioemotional development, facilitating ongoing dialogue and exchange of ideas.*
- *Invest in research and evaluation efforts to assess the impact of professional development programmes as data-driven insights can inform the refinement of policies and practices in the future.*

What are the expected benefits and impact?

- *Investing in CPD enhances the quality of early childhood education by incorporating evidence-informed practices, increasing professional competence and confidence among educators, fostering collaboration and knowledge sharing, and ultimately improving child outcomes.*
- *On-site training in PW–PBS provides a shared vision and purpose among professionals and helps develop strategies that need to be implemented as well as a common language in each centre, involving and empowering all professionals. It contributes to changing less-than-optimal language use, routines, and behaviours that persist in ECEC practices, as training favours innovation and motivates professionals to collaborate in team improvement efforts. Online training has the potential to include diverse professionals from different regions and services.*
- *These policies contribute to the increase in ECEC professionals' job satisfaction and wellbeing and to the creation of better conditions for promoting children's SEL. By prioritising socioemotional*

development in ECEC, professionals can help children develop essential life skills, mental health, and overall wellbeing, thus playing a fundamental role in shaping their success in various life domains.

- *Beneficiaries of such policies include professionals, children, families, ECEC centres, and the education system as a whole. When PW–PBS is embraced at the municipality, region, or country level, it may demonstrate a commitment to fostering children´s positive behaviour and socioemotional development across a broader educational landscape.*

What practices show the way forward?

A bottom-up training programme for ECEC teachers

Before PBS–ECEC implementation, ECEC professionals had the opportunity to discuss with an external coach and internal trainer the needs regarding child behaviour and socioemotional development using a diagnostic questionnaire. This helped the leadership team to develop an action plan. The action plan was used for guiding activities in the centre but also for prioritising professionals' needs regarding professional development and training in order to address such issues and promote children's SEL. The staff then received training and support to address daily challenges and make decisions based on the agreed practices and strategies. These efforts implied an investment in human resources by adapting the professional development programme of the PW–PBS approach to the specificities and challenges of each centre. This effort was made in collaboration with the staff, which helped them feel a sense of ownership and competence in the new approach, for which they were being trained.

Supporting evidence and resources

Key Resources
Needs assessment in four countries
Krousorati, K., Grammatikopoulos, V., Agathokleous, A., Michaelidou, V., Szproch, A., O'Brien, M., Barros, S., Araújo, S., Santos, M., & Sousa, M. (2023). *PBS–ECEC transnational consolidated report: Research findings for developing the guide on Positive Behaviour Support in early childhood education and care*. https://PBS–ECEC.eu/wp-content/uploads/documents/PBS–ECEC_NeedsAssessment_Consolidated_report_EN.pdf

A Guide for using PW-PBS in ECEC
Krousorati, K., Grammatikopoulos, V., Agathokleous, A., Michaelidou, V., Szproch, A., O'Brien, M., Araújo, S., Santos, M., Sousa, M., & Barros, S. (2023). *PBS–ECEC guide on Positive Behaviour Support in early childhood and care in European countries*. https://PBS–ECEC.eu/wp-content/uploads/outputs/PBS–ECEC_Guide_EN.pdf

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ID: STRATEGY AND POLICY RECOMMENDATION 2

Title: <u>Sustainable PW–PBS Implementation</u>

Subtitle: As a whole-school approach, PW–PBS implementation requires a sustainable, long-term process

Key Points: Implementing Programme–Wide Positive Behaviour Support (PW–PBS) requires time to achieve a sustainable impact across various levels (children, families, professionals, ECEC settings, communities) and desired outcomes (socioemotional learning, health, learning, and positive school climate). The duration of implementation can vary depending on the specific needs and goals of each ECEC setting, but typically, over a year is required for full integration. Continuous evaluations, updates, and fidelity checks are necessary to ensure the ongoing effectiveness of PW–PBS systems and practices. Commitment from all stakeholders (administration, professionals, children, parents, and the wider community) creates a positive and supportive school culture for long-term success. Educational stakeholders must consider adequate and reasonable timelines and define policies that support long-term implementation. An extended timeframe enables professionals to learn and develop necessary skills, support each other in becoming proficient in the approach, and refine PW–PBS practices to adapt to children's evolving needs. Prolonged commitment allows interventions to become truly embedded in ECEC daily life, creating a positive and supportive environment with lasting effects on children's development and behaviour (please see our PBS–ECEC Key Resources below).

Voices of professionals and educational stakeholders from PBS–ECEC

"Directors must understand the time it will take to implement this approach; if professionals are given information and it is explained why this time is necessary for training, there will be less demotivation, (and) they will understand the time needed to acquire the skills". (P., Portugal).

"The programme is gradually integrated into our work (…). From my experience with the programme, I believe it is effective and should be introduced in schools." (P., Cyprus)

"Implementing PW–PBS requires the use of evidence-based assessment methods and appropriate tools for evaluating its effectiveness. This process may take time. However, PW–PBS is a flexible approach, allowing each preschool to implement it according to their specific needs and timeline." (K., Greece)

What can be done to make a difference?

Strategies ı *Actions*

Promote on-site continuous and effective implementation

- *Promote planning, monitoring, and evaluation focused on quality and positive outcomes. PW–PBS requires adequate time for training staff in PW–PBS principles and strategies, to tailor interventions to individual children's needs, to consistently apply positive behaviour strategies, and to actively involve all ECEC professionals.*
- *Provide implementation guidelines that favour coherence through workforce stability and adequate training and integration of new staff members into PW–PBS practices.*

- *Encourage the use of evidence-based methods to assess implementation effectiveness at several points in time and monitor changes in children´s long-term outcomes.*
- *Adopt a long-term perspective that enables better resource management; for example, allocate adequate funding and resources for sustained implementation of the PW–PBS framework, including professional development for staff and family engagement initiatives.*
- Support a community-wide, long-term sustainability approach
- *Foster collaboration between educational stakeholders and community organisations to support long-term outcomes in ECEC settings.*
- *Incentivise ECEC systems to collect data on positive child and school climate outcomes, which can inform future policy decisions to develop sustainability plans.*
- *Encourage critical reflection and the creation of reflexive communities of practice as sustainers of professional autonomy and learning.*
- *Foster a community of support and collaboration among ECEC centres that have successfully implemented PW–PBS (inter-peers training and sharing of best practices, strategies, and lessons learned), while introducing initiatives that acknowledge ECEC centres with successful long-term implementation of PW–PBS to motivate other centres to embrace the approach.*

What are the expected benefits and impact?

- *By embedding PW–PBS principles and strategies into the ECEC setting's culture and practices over an extended period, both professionals and children can experience the full benefits.*
- *With consistent implementation and ongoing professional development, professionals can effectively address challenging behaviours, promote positive social skills, and foster a supportive and inclusive learning environment.*
- *By mitigating time constraints, for example through online training, professionals can engage in professional development at their own pace, fostering a culture of lifelong learning, and can develop a collaborative approach that encourages the exchange of perspectives, fosters innovation, and promotes evidence-based decision-making.*
- *As PW–PBS becomes deeply ingrained in the ECEC centre, it creates a foundation for a lasting culture of respect. The long-term commitment to PW–PBS enables the continuous improvement and refinement of the approach based on the centre's evolving needs.*
- *The importance of extending implementation lies in providing children with sufficient exposure to positive behaviour support strategies. This prolonged engagement allows the interventions to become embedded in ECEC centres' daily routines, leading to long-term positive outcomes, including:*
  - positive changes in children's socioemotional development and behaviour;
  - enhanced professional expertise and commitment to evidence-based practices;
  - strengthened partnerships between centres, families, and the community;
  - stronger carer-child relationships (trust, bonding);
  - positive culture change within the centre (nurturing and inclusive social climate);
  - continuous monitoring and adjustment of strategies for children with complex behavioural needs;

o data-driven decision-making, which helps to identify trends and patterns that inform optimal effectiveness.

What practices show the way forward?

PBS–ECEC online training course

The PBS–ECEC project participants received blended, asynchronous training within a train the trainers´ approach and were given access to online learning resources. The training, conducted online, has provided a valuable opportunity for greater time flexibility. Professionals could engage in training sessions at their own pace and convenience, allowing them to balance their professional responsibilities with their personal commitments. This flexibility has enabled them to allocate time specifically for training and implementation while also supporting their colleagues in finding suitable time slots to participate. By embracing online training, participants demonstrated willingness to invest in their professional growth, overcome time constraints, and actively collaborated to create a positive and supportive learning environment for children.

Supporting evidence and resources

Key Resources
Needs assessment in four countries
Krousorati, K., Grammatikopoulos, V., Agathokleous, A., Michaelidou, V., Szproch, A., O'Brien, M., Barros, S., Araújo, S., Santos, M., & Sousa, M. (2023). *PBS–ECEC transnational consolidated report: Research findings for developing the guide on Positive Behaviour Support in early childhood education and care*. https://PBS–ECEC.eu/wp-content/uploads/documents/PBS–ECEC_NeedsAssessment_Consolidated_report_EN.pdf

A Guide for using PW-PBS in ECEC
Krousorati, K., Grammatikopoulos, V., Agathokleous, A., Michaelidou, V., Szproch, A., O'Brien, M., Araújo, S., Santos, M., Sousa, M., & Barros, S. (2023). *PBS–ECEC guide on Positive Behaviour Support in early childhood and care in European countries*. https://PBS–ECEC.eu/wp-content/uploads/outputs/PBS–ECEC_Guide_EN.pdf

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ID: STRATEGY AND POLICY RECOMMENDATION 3

Title: Family Engagement

Subtitle: Implementing PW–PBS in ECEC settings requires involving parents as part of the educational team

Key Points: Children´s socioemotional learning (SEL) and the prevention of challenging behaviours can be optimised through positive family–ECEC partnerships. Parents significantly influence child development, and their insights during Programme–Wide Positive Behaviour Support (PW–PBS) implementation enable tailored approaches to meet each child's needs. Working in partnerships with families at all tiers of the intervention is central to PW–PBS, ensuring continuity and consistency across contexts. Professionals are invited to cultivate skills that help enhance family engagement and create genuine positive partnerships. Collaborative efforts between parents and professionals create a holistic approach to the prevention of socioemotional challenges and promotion of SEL. Moreover, by providing parents with PW–PBS training and resources, the family–ECEC synergies can be strengthened, promoting consistent, positive approaches that benefit children's development and empower families as part of the educational team.

It is expected that the impact of the PW–PBS approach can be magnified by positive parental involvement and by building ECEC staff capacity to establish successful partnerships, which reflects high-quality early education. Therefore, educational stakeholders should support a culture of participation by developing policies related to family participation and engagement, which are fully integrated into the educational system and promote cultural sensitivity and inclusivity. This will help develop positive attitudes that favour participation in ECEC.

Voices of professionals and educational stakeholders from PBS–ECEC

"I think the best way forward would be if (…) a sort of mentorship could be established, which would oversee, maybe, you know, getting heads together. Because that is the hardest part. When I do early intervention in preschools, the hardest part is to get the parents and the preschool teachers and the managers to all, you know, sort of be singing off the same hymn sheet. So that is a challenge. So, I think one person is needed to gather those people up, if that's the right way to say it, just one point of contact." (L., Ireland)

"Parents are constantly informed in all aspects. During the PW–PBS implementation, they were informed about the educational practices and understood the intentions behind them. Parents were also asked for their input. (…) We use a platform to share with parents all the activities that are being carried out in the centre." (M., Portugal)

"I think the school has to think about how to promote their involvement. If some families usually enjoy participating, others don't feel comfortable, they often avoid this involvement. It requires diversification." (C., Portugal)

"This is valuable input and one of the most challenging to implement because it falls outside the scope of the school's jurisdiction in a way. Typically, parents who participate in training and programmes are those who are already interested in making a change. It requires a lot of effort to be put into practice." (X., Cyprus)

What can be done to make a difference?

Strategies & *Actions*

Build ECEC team´s capacity for positive and effective family partnerships

- *Invest in ongoing professional training for ECEC professionals in building partnerships with families.*
- *Create a system with organisational conditions (resources, infrastructure, and procedures) to build, enhance, and sustain the team´s capacity for partnerships.*
- *Create open, flexible, and accessible communication channels for families and staff that facilitate dialogue (e.g., virtual meetings, evening social events). For example, ECEC teams should be provided with resources and materials, including plurilingual communication tools, informative brochures, and interactive platforms/apps that keep families informed about their children's progress, upcoming activities, and ways to get involved in their children's education.*

- *Foster collaborative partnership between home and ECEC centres to help families build a supportive home learning environment. Create a positive and non-judgmental environment where parents feel comfortable sharing their perspectives and concerns and are acknowledged by their efforts to promote PW–PBS at home.*

- *Clearly define the roles of all stakeholders and consider opening new roles for parents (e.g., advocates, supporters, organisers).*

- *Offer incentives and recognition programmes for ECEC centres that demonstrate exemplary family engagement practices; recognising and celebrating successful family partnerships can motivate other centres to improve their approach.*

- *Diversify strategies to engage families and support initiatives that are inclusive and consider the diverse and unique needs and circumstances of families, such as those with special needs from low-income backgrounds and/or different cultures.*

- Provide services, activities and resources that facilitate and support family engagement throughout PW–PBS implementation

- *Invest in a more systemic approach that promotes the involvement of all stakeholders. Involve parents' associations and collaborate with community organisations and local agencies to establish strong networks of support for families.*

- *Develop policies that provide guidance related to family participation and engagement which are fully integrated into the school system. These policies should promote cultural sensitivity and inclusivity in all aspects of ECEC, recognising and valuing the diverse backgrounds and experiences of families.*

- *Allocate adequate funding and resources to implement these actions effectively, prioritizing family engagement initiatives in ECEC systems and settings.*

- *Invest in research initiatives that explore effective family engagement practices and evaluate their impact on children's development; for example, conduct parent surveys to gather feedback on the effectiveness of PW–PBS initiatives and identify areas for improvement.*

- *Develop comprehensive online learning platforms where parents can access PW–PBS training modules, videos, and resources while also providing other useful materials and workshops to support parental engagement in their children's SEL. Additionally, develop and distribute parental handbooks or leaflets that outline PW–PBS concepts, approaches, and resources for practical application PW–PBS in their daily interactions with their children.*

- *Establish parent support groups focused on PW–PBS where parents can share experiences, seek advice, and learn from each other, helping build positive beliefs, attitudes, and competencies that favour parental participation and inclusion.*

- *Create opportunities for families to actively participate (e.g., empowerment programmes, workshops, decision-making processes). Additionally, recruiting and preparing parent ambassadors who have experience with PW–PBS and can serve as advocates; ambassadors can share their success stories and encourage other parents to get involved.*

- *Build collaborative teams to effectively support individual children with specific behavioural and socioemotional needs and involve families at all stages.*

What are the expected benefits and impact?

- *Parents and professionals can create a collaborative partnership that benefits children's socioemotional development. This partnership creates a nurturing environment for children's wellbeing and a lifelong path of success. Effective family–ECEC partnerships work bidirectionally: ECEC settings and parents can share valuable resources, information, and strategies.*

- *Parents' active involvement is indispensable for supporting and fostering children's socioemotional development, as their guidance, positive role modelling, and emotional support create an environment that helps children navigate social interactions, develop resilience, and build essential life skills.*

- *Children's growth benefits from enhancing family and ECEC centres concerted inputs – the capacity to create an inclusive learning environment in ECEC settings can be significantly increased and parents can complement (at home or in other social contexts) the efforts put in place by ECEC centres in the implementation of PW–PBS and the promotion of SEL.*

- *ECEC teams can build their capacity for effective family partnerships, leading to improved child outcomes, enhanced parental involvement, and robust implementation of PW–PBS. This results in (a) stronger partnerships between ECEC settings and families, which enhances the consistency of PW–PBS implementation across environments; (b) better parental support and understanding of socioemotional development and other educational processes and resources, enabling informed decisions about their child's education; (c) tailored PW–PBS initiatives that better meet the needs of children/families; and (d) the development of a group of informed and engaged parents, contributing to a positive school climate that emphasises collaboration.*

What practices show the way forward?

Diary app

In a preschool in Portugal, an effective communication strategy with families was established using a diary app, resulting in communication efficacy and parental satisfaction. This app is used by parents and professionals as a two-way communication tool to share information about the child´s behaviour and wellbeing, the activities the child participates in, share practices and strategies that can be replicated at home, as well as programmes and activities being developed at school, among others. The leadership team uses this tool as a basis for the involvement of parents in the implementation of PW–PBS (e.g., sharing desired behaviours, and activities implemented to teach specific socioemotional skills). Professionals need to guide and encourage parents to establish clear expectations and rules for positive behaviours at home. Consistency between ECEC setting and home practices helps children understand behavioural expectations across different environments.

Coffee with parents

The monthly activity "Coffee with Parents" was developed in one ECEC setting in Portugal, which helped the implementation of the PW–PBS approach. The leadership team of this ECEC centre asks parents about their preferred themes on early childhood education and care, which serve as a motif for the monthly gathering of staff/teachers and parents (sometimes with a guest which can be a specialist in a specific area). These gatherings focus on a specific theme that can be related to SEL, child health and behaviour, pedagogical practices/programmes being implemented at the school, among others. These moments help

participants share relevant information, build a sense of belonging and community, empower families to provide better care, and inform pedagogical strategies and choices of professionals. Additionally, this activity helps the leadership/staff engage parents and align parental behaviour with PW–PBS practices. This is very useful to support parents in, for example, displaying positive social and emotional behaviours, encouraging open communication, developing problem-solving skills to handle challenging situations, focusing on constructive feedback to their children´s behaviours, and in using positive language while avoiding using negative labels or punitive expressions when addressing behavioural issues.

Supporting evidence and resources

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ID: STRATEGY AND POLICY RECOMMENDATION 4

Title: <u>Collaborative Practices and Partnerships</u>

Subtitle: The implementation of PW–PBS is based on the development of collaborative practices and partnerships, at multiple levels, among educational stakeholders

Key Points: For a successful and enduring Programme–Wide Positive Behaviour Support (PW–PBS) implementation, collaborative efforts involving stakeholders at all levels, from classrooms to the community, are crucial. An engaged, collaborative workforce forms the foundation of the PW–PBS approach. In ECEC settings, effective communication, a collaborative atmosphere, and democratic leadership promote consistency in pedagogical strategies and practices. Engagement and consistency stem from shared visions and goals regarding the support of socioemotional development for both children and professionals (please see our PBS–ECEC Key Resources section). Therefore, all PW–PBS phases – assessment, training, and implementation – should involve all professionals and families.

Recognising the interconnectedness of children's socioemotional learning (SEL) with their overall development and learning, it is paramount for ECEC settings to proactively seek community partnerships, fostering sustainable connections with families, academic experts, researchers, other specialists/therapists and policymakers. ECEC practitioners and specialists may conduct detailed assessments to enhance professionals' and families' understanding of each child's strengths and needs to integrate tailored strategies into daily routines. Further, partnerships facilitate professional development opportunities for ECEC professionals. Long-term, multi-system collaborations at several ecological levels throughout children´s educational pathways ensure efficient resource organisation, equity, consistency, and educational continuity.

Voices of professionals and educational stakeholders from PBS–ECEC

"(…) no matter how demanding the programme and working conditions are, it is through communication and cooperation between educators that the PW–PBS programme can be implemented. In our preschool, the collaboration was so important that became the common vision for our preschool. "Together we become better", was the slogan (…). Good collaboration between educators helps each individual become a better professional and then this is passed on to the children." (S., Greece)

"If we don't have good leadership in earlier settings, then none of all these collaborative practices happen." (K., Ireland)

What can be done to make a difference?

Strategies ᛁ *Actions*

Foster a collaborative approach in ECEC settings

- *Encourage open communication and collaboration among stakeholders. Professional preparation for teamwork, assertive communication, and problem-solving skills facilitates cooperation. In addition, open channels ensure ongoing communication between professionals in ECEC settings.*
- *Implement effective leadership practices involving regular and constructive information sharing, discussion of common philosophy and purpose, the creation of shared goals and values, the establishment of clear roles and expectations, and the discussion of strategies and progress*

updates to ensure a consistent approach. Additionally, acknowledge successes, identify challenges collaboratively, and discuss appropriate strategies for effective interventions; then, evaluate practices and set new goals.

- *Promote collaborative problem-solving and the sharing of resources and expertise that results in a more cohesive and unified approach to behaviour support in ECEC settings and systems.*

- *Allocate resources for joint professional development opportunities that focus on enhancing collaboration skills and understanding each other's roles and expertise. In addition, there are opportunities for professionals to be actively involved in training and receive guidance from experts in PW–PBS through a collaborative and reflexive approach to professional development.*

- Develop policies for ECEC settings that support collaborative practices and partnerships

- *Produce policy documents (e.g., curricula, curriculum guidelines, other legislation) that explicitly recognise the importance of team collaboration and institutional partnerships in the implementation of positive behaviour support and SEL.*

- *Create mechanisms to promote collaboration among policymakers, researchers, administrators, professionals, and families. Additionally, encourage systematic discussions and exchange of perspectives and foster participation in decision-making processes to ensure alignment between policies, current research, and best practices.*

- *Foster, encourage, and acknowledge ECEC centres and professionals who demonstrate effective collaboration in addressing socioemotional needs, including awards, grants, or professional development opportunities.*

- *Use a data-driven approach (data sharing and analysis) that allows stakeholders to make informed decisions about strategies, interventions, and improvements in child development and behaviour management; standardised data collection tools and evaluation measures assess the effectiveness of collaborative interventions.*

- *Explore co-location of mental health services within or near ECEC centres, enhancing communication and collaboration, while also incentivising resource sharing and professional consultation to address challenging behaviours and complex socioemotional issues.*

- *Support working conditions that foster teamwork, staff wellbeing, and professional development opportunities.*

What are the expected benefits and impact?

- *Aligned strategies among educational stakeholders lead to improved quality in ECEC settings; well-structured collaboration practices align with broader educational goals related to wellbeing and holistic development.*

- *Collaboration among ECEC staff, mental health professionals and other specialists creates a comprehensive and supportive approach to promoting children's socioemotional development, which addresses the whole child, ensures early intervention when needed, and lays the foundation for wellbeing and future success in school and life.*

- *Professionals benefit from increased commitment, improved wellbeing, and job satisfaction.*

- *A democratic leadership style, promoting open participation and mutual support within the team, has the potential to strengthen teamwork, and the involvement of the entire team results in better outcomes regarding SEL and prevention of behaviour challenges.*

- *A structured, collaborative training approach can encourage educators to adopt best practices in implementing PW–PBS, thus reducing the risk of misinterpretation or superficial implementation.*
- *Collaboration and shared learning among educators can lead to a supportive professional community dedicated to successful SEL initiatives, which define common guidelines and implement real-world experimentation of strategies/practices. That experience gained from a shared collaborative approach can serve as a model for adapting initiatives to other educational contexts or addressing different aspects of child development.*

What practices show the way forward?

Shared purpose

In a large ECEC setting in Portugal, the leadership team, guided by clear institutional goals, systematically involved all professionals from the beginning of PW–PBS implementation, regardless of their different roles, in identifying a shared purpose. This concerted effort was built on open communication. For example, the leadership team started the process by involving the staff in the definition of their guiding values and desired behaviours. They also adapted training materials to effectively include, engage, and empower all staff members during training sessions. Furthermore, they collectively identified the necessary pedagogical strategies for achieving their pedagogical goals and the individual contributions of each professional to their daily tasks and activities. Staff members also received training on how to document and discuss daily challenges with their colleagues and make decisions based on agreed-upon practices and strategies. This fostered a sense of belonging and a collective direction that facilitated the implementation of PW–PBS strategies and helped create a positive school culture. These efforts required an investment in time for team meetings and tasks, as well as in improving communication skills and strategies among staff members.

Co-consultation model

A promising practice for promoting collaboration between ECEC staff and mental health professionals is the Co-Consultation Model. This approach encourages regular communication and collaboration between the two groups, enabling them to share expertise and work together to effectively support children's socioemotional development. A co-consultation model includes: appointing a designated liaison within the ECEC centre; organising scheduled meetings between ECEC educators and mental health professionals; establishing specific goals and objectives for children's socioemotional development and creating personalised action plans; sharing information (i.e., observations, concerns, and strategies); collaboratively addressing challenging behaviours or socioemotional issues; offering joint professional development opportunities; involving parents in the collaborative process; collecting data on the effectiveness of strategies and interventions; emphasising an inclusive approach that considers the diverse needs of all children; and fostering a culture of mutual respect. By working together, these professionals can create a comprehensive and holistic approach to promoting children's socioemotional development, leading to improved outcomes for all children in ECEC centres.

Supporting evidence and resources

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ID: STRATEGY AND POLICY RECOMMENDATION 5

Title: Inclusive Education

Subtitle: Promote an inclusive approach based on multi-tiered systems of support at all levels (centre-level, local, national)

Key Points: Every school should address the diverse needs of all children with a positive approach, encompassing multiple developmental dimensions (e.g., cognitive, psychomotor, and socioemotional). This involves implementing a school-wide multi-tiered support system and shifting from a remedial to a preventive approach. Inclusive educational systems support all children regardless of their abilities or backgrounds, promote participation, foster accessible learning environments, and provide the necessary resources for success. A multi-tiered support system promotes inclusive environments, organising supports equitably. This includes a universal level of support, addressing all children, a selective level of support to complement the previous, for a limited number of children, and an additional support level for children with significant and persistent difficulties requiring individualised intervention. This system can be legislated nationally, recommended by local policymakers, or implemented at the ECEC setting level.

Programme–Wide Positive Behaviour Support (PW–PBS) adopts a multi-tiered support system framework to promote children's socioemotional development, establish a positive culture, and create an inclusive environment. The pyramid model is a well-established example of PW–PBS in ECEC (please see our PBS–ECEC Key Resources). ECEC centres implementing PW–PBS establish assessment and data collection procedures, focusing on children's behaviour and socioemotional competencies to sustain data-driven decisions. They also promote collaborative partnerships between staff, families, and mental health professionals to address children's developmental needs.

Voices of professionals and educational stakeholders from PBS–ECEC

"Socioemotional learning is promoted when all children participate in the activities without exclusion, finding meaning and joy in participation. This is what we seek to achieve in our preschool" (S., Greece)

"The multi-tiered approach is very useful in guiding action" (L., Portugal)

"In our preschool we follow an inclusive approach in which the activities are tailored to each child's needs. Even in challenging cases, we have successfully integrated and involved all children to the best of their abilities" (A., Greece)

"I advocate for the integration of PBS into the broader educational system as a method for advancing positive behaviour and as a comprehensive approach" (M., Cyprus)

"I would highlight the coherence between this model [PW–PBS] and the current framework of inclusive education in Portugal, which facilitates its implementation" (C., Portugal)

What can be done to make a difference?

Strategies ı *Actions*

Promote an inclusive approach, based on a multi-tiered system, at ECEC centres

- *Support ECEC centres in the organisation and implementation of a multi-tiered approach; the implementation depends on the ability to organise the available supports into a multi-tiered system, addressing several competencies and needs.*
- *Provide ongoing professional development and training to all professionals in the ECEC centre to understand the meaning of an inclusive approach and the practical processes and procedures to implement it; involve experts/practitioners as trainers.*
- *Favour a gradual implementation: start with small steps to allow a more manageable implementation of the multitiered support system. In this way, staff can avoid feeling overwhelmed and focus better on effectively integrating each tier. In addition, feedback can be incorporated into subsequent phases, leading to continuous improvements.*
- *Establish a collaborative approach involving ECEC teams, families, specialists, mental health services, community agencies, and decision makers in the design and implementation of a multi-tiered support system.*
- Develop and implement inclusive policies based on a multi-tiered approach
- *Ensure that policies are informed by research, best practices, and evidence-based strategies in early childhood education.*
- *Implement a system for ongoing monitoring and evaluation to assess the effectiveness of inclusive policies and regularly update them to ensure that they remain effective.*
- *Provide funding to support the implementation of multitiered systems across children´s educational trajectories.*
- *Ensure that ECEC centres and school systems adapt the multi-tiered support system to their unique environments, ensuring that they fit within their existing structures and processes; for example, ECEC settings should have the opportunity to prioritise aspects that align with their specific needs and circumstances.*
- *Understand that gradual, consistent, and in-depth implementation increases the likelihood of the multi-tiered system's sustainability within the educational institution or system.*
- *Involve school psychologists and other specialists working directly with ECEC teachers and other professionals towards equity.*

What are the expected benefits and impact?

- *Children are the most benefitted through the creation of positive contexts, where high-quality educational practices are implemented, and support is available to address their needs. The potential positive outcomes stem from addressing social, behavioural and emotional disparities among children by ensuring that all of them, regardless of their background, receive appropriate support.*

- *Creating a more positive school culture can lead to increased teacher satisfaction, improved children's wellbeing, a more cohesive school community, and a more inclusive society.*
- *Multi-tiered support ensures that behavioural expectations are clear and consistent across the early years' settings, promoting a positive and predictable environment.*
- *The whole ECEC centre benefits from a clear organisation of activities, tasks, and responsibilities in addressing developmental needs and challenging behaviours.*
- *The high-quality educational support provided to the universal tier tends to reduce the number of children requiring additional support.*
- *The pyramid model, guiding teams' efforts and actions to address children's needs, allows for better organization and management of available resources. The integration of services allows for a more comprehensive approach that benefits children, professionals, and families. There is high potential for improved learning outcomes and a more supportive educational environment.*
- *The assessment and data-driven decision processes help monitor what is happening within ECEC centres and systems, their needs and difficulties, and their successes*

What practices show the way forward?

Inclusion involves the whole school

The leadership team from a ECEC setting organised all the support needed, using an inclusive multi-tiered systems approach, for a child with autism spectrum disorder attending one of its classrooms. The child participated in all classroom activities, in which she had the opportunity to learn new skills and interact with peers. These activities involved everyday activities such as play, storytelling, and painting, as well as those related specifically to socioemotional learning and the implementation of PW–PBS (e.g., training a new skill such as controlling the tone of voice and using sign language to convey ideas among children and adults). Because some PW–PBS practices include the use of visual information (pictures, gestures, drawings, signs, objects/toys), this also contributes to the child feeling secure and included in the daily life of the ECEC setting, a practice that benefits all children. In addition, a very careful preparation of the routines and transitions within the group of children was helpful in handling any anxiety or frustration that could arise. All professionals in the ECEC setting received training or were briefed on the best ways to include the child in the ECEC setting routines. Additionally, one adult constantly monitored the behaviour of the child and provided the cues needed to guide the child's participation in the activities. Everyone in the classroom (both teachers and children) already knew the signs that indicated when the child was feeling anxious or frustrated, and they had strategies to help her cope with her feelings in those moments (e.g., play with her favourite toy). The child received additional support from specialised professionals, which also guided the intervention of teachers and auxiliary staff in the ECEC setting, as well as parents at home. The flow of information between the family and school was very effective and was based on trust. These systems put in place were managed by the pedagogical director, who made sure that they complemented each other and that the whole school was working for the inclusive education of the child, as well as her peers.

Policies towards inclusion

The construction of an inclusive educational system implies the organisation of equitable supports. Several countries have been applying, nationally or regionally, the general principles of the multi-tiered systems of support (e.g., United States of America, Canada, Finland, and others). In 2018, the Portuguese

government mandated the implementation of multi-tiered systems of supports in all public schools. A formal mandate to implement such practices in all schools with adequate support and funding favours the construction of educational systems that effectively answer the needs of all children. In the absence of a formal mandate to incorporate such multi-tiered systems, educational centres should consider the organisation of the available supports in a multi-tiered format. In the case of ECEC settings, the PW–PBS approach is of particular importance, due to the centrality of the Pyramid Model and equity in the promotion of children´s socioemotional development.

Supporting evidence and resources

Key Resources

Needs assessment in four countries

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ID: STRATEGY AND POLICY RECOMMENDATION 6

Title: Leadership: a catalyst for change

Subtitle: Leadership teams play a central role in coordinating, guiding and supporting the ECEC setting teams throughout all phases of the PW–PBS implementation

Key Point: The implementation of Programme–Wide Positive Behaviour Support (PW–PBS) is led by a leadership team, comprising various professionals, in each ECEC centre. This team organises, integrates, and coordinates the implementation of effective strategies and practices. A well-prepared, highly engaged, and supportive leadership promotes common ground at the level of the vision (beliefs and values), theoretical underpinnings, and pedagogical practices. Leadership teams are also responsible for facilitating communication and providing ongoing professional development and resources to professionals, guaranteeing spaces for reflecting and debating on the progress and challenges encountered. Ultimately, knowledgeable and committed leadership promotes professionals' autonomy and participation, which accounts for the sustainability of outputs for both professionals and children (please see our PBS–ECEC Key Resources). The preparation of and support for leadership in ECEC settings are central to providing the conditions for the successful implementation of PW–PBS. The preparation of leaders is intended to help sustain a highly informed and intentional exercise of pedagogical leadership, focused on promoting children's and professionals' learning and wellbeing.

Voices of professionals and educational stakeholders from PBS–ECEC

"It is essential to teach and train in the area of leadership and provide incentives" (C., Portugal).

"Everyone on the leadership team must believe that it will work. They must provide the impetus for continuity" (M., Portugal).

What can be done to make a difference?

Strategies ι *Actions*

Create a leadership team to guide the successful implementation and sustainability of PW–PBS

- *Ensure that the leadership team is empowered to guide and support professionals, collaboratively developing policies, strategies, and procedures that facilitate the integration of PW–PBS into daily practices. Invest in specialised high-quality training in leadership skills (e.g., through professional associations or training centres located in school systems).*

- *Ensure that leaders have the resources needed to facilitate communication among team members; guarantee spaces for debating the progress, challenges, and tensions encountered by professionals; and promote processes of critical reflection focused on vision, theory, and practices is essential for successful PW-PBS implementation.*
- *Build a shared commitment among stakeholders, including administrators, professionals, and families, to provide support to emerging leaders and allocate dedicated time for leadership activities. This means acknowledging leadership as a driving force of change and transformation and creating working conditions for leaders to fully develop their pedagogical role and functions*
- *Create adequate conditions and incentives for a motivated and highly engaged leadership team. Their role involves guaranteeing the training of all professionals, setting goals, managing resources, overcoming barriers, conducting intersectoral work, and making PW–PBS implementation sustainable. Additionally, involve younger professionals in leadership roles to help build crucial skills early in their careers.*
- *Ensure the availability of quality assessment tools aligned with the PW–PBS framework to sustain data-driven decisions by leadership.*
- *Decrease the burden of the bureaucratic role and invest in the pedagogical role; leaders should be mobilisers of change and creators of new solutions to the challenges faced by ECEC teams.*
- The leadership team effectively guides professionals and stakeholders throughout PW–PBS implementation and assessment
- *Support trusting, non-judgmental, and collaborative ethos among all professionals.*
- *Guarantee the participation of all team members, irrespective of their roles.*
- *Provide ongoing professional development, training, and resources to professionals, fostering a shared understanding of PW–PBS principles, strategies, and practices.*
- *Allow for flexibility in determining the composition of leadership teams (particularly in small-scale ECEC centres) and be open to alternative, smaller leadership structures.*
- *Develop strategies such as mentorship programmes, targeted professional development opportunities, and collaborative decision-making processes that can further promote the cultivation of leadership skills within ECEC settings.*

What are the expected benefits and impact?

- *Leadership teams serve as an important bridge between stakeholders, ensuring that everyone involved in the ECEC community is aligned in nurturing socioemotional growth and fostering a safe, supportive, and inclusive learning environment. Leaders influence pedagogical practices and focus on children's positive outcomes concerning socioemotional learning and the prevention of challenging behaviours.*
- *Effective leadership helps create an environment where every child has the opportunity to thrive emotionally, socially, and academically, implying the purposive development of a shared vision among key stakeholders in the implementation of PW–PBS.*
- *Leaders create a positive organisational climate, supporting and motivating all professionals, and co-creating collaborative mechanisms to involve families and the community.*

- *Leaders provide context-specific guidance and continuous evaluation of PW–PBS implementation. This promotes realistic and feasible implementation, leading to increased programme effectiveness and positive behavioural outcomes for children.*
- *Effective leaders allow the sharing of resources, best practices, and support, ultimately leading to a more sustainable implementation of PW–PBS programmes.*

What practices show the way forward?

Data-based leadership

As a result of PBS–ECEC training and the implementation of the PW–PBS component related to data-driven decision-making, the leadership team in a participating ECEC setting in Portugal developed a shared tool for the staff to report incidents. This tool was deemed necessary because professionals usually commented on the incidents but rarely recorded them. This instrument comprises elements such as date/hour, description of incident, location, involved parties, professional responsible for handling the situation, and other observations. All professionals could use this tool to report everyday events that were problematic, challenging, or somewhat disruptive to their normal routine. Looking at the data provided by this new tool, the leadership discussed with the professionals the patterns that emerged and became clear: most of the difficulties experienced and the problems reported were in the transition periods. The clarity provided by the data informed the team´s decisions regarding several intervention strategies, which were guided by the leadership team. Later, the leadership team assessed the effectiveness of the strategies and made the necessary adjustments in collaboration with the whole team to achieve the goals and reduce the incidence of challenging behaviours occurring during the transition periods.

Mitigating barriers

In Ireland, during PBS–ECEC implementation, leadership teams were made up of a small number of staff members. In some instances, only one staff member (usually the ECEC setting owner or manager), became the "leadership team" on behalf of the ECEC setting. While staff shortages in ECEC in Ireland are an issue, some ECEC setting settings operate on a very small scale, so, to adapt accordingly, some ECEC settings chose smaller leadership teams.

Supporting evidence and resources

Key Resources
Needs assessment in four countries
Krousorati, K., Grammatikopoulos, V., Agathokleous, A., Michaelidou, V., Szproch, A., O'Brien, M., Barros, S., Araújo, S., Santos, M., & Sousa, M. (2023). *PBS–ECEC transnational consolidated report: Research findings for developing the guide on Positive Behaviour Support in early childhood education and care*. https://PBS–ECEC.eu/wp-content/uploads/documents/PBS–ECEC_NeedsAssessment_Consolidated_report_EN.pdf

A Guide for using PW-PBS in ECEC
Krousorati, K., Grammatikopoulos, V., Agathokleous, A., Michaelidou, V., Szproch, A., O'Brien, M., Araújo, S., Santos, M., Sousa, M., & Barros, S. (2023). *PBS–ECEC guide on Positive Behaviour Support in early childhood and care in European countries*. https://PBS–ECEC.eu/wp-content/uploads/outputs/PBS–ECEC_Guide_EN.pdf

PBS-ECEC online modules

PBS–ECEC Consortium (n.d.). *Implementing Positive Behaviour Support in early childhood education and care* [MOOC]. https://PBS–ECEC.ese.ipp.pt/login/index.php

Impact assessment study & recommendations

Szproch, A., O'Brien, M., Araújo, A., Santos, M., Oliveira, V., Barros, S., Otero-Mayer, A., Michaelidou, V., Agathokleous, A., Krousorati, K., & Grammatikopoulos, V. (2023). *Report of the PBS–ECEC impact assessment study and practice recommendations. Result 3: Transnational Report.* https://PBS–ECEC.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/PBS–ECEC_R3_Consolidated-Report-Final.pdf

Additional Resources

Charalambous, V., Stalikas, A., & Vrasidas, C. (2021, July 13 - 16). *The design and implementation of a program to enhance teachers' wellbeing* [Paper presentation]. 42nd Annual Conference of the International School Psychology Association, ISPA 2021, Nicosia, Cyprus.

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OECD (2019). *Providing quality early childhood education and care: Results from the Starting Strong* Survey 2018. OECD Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1787/301005d1-en

OECD (2020). *Building a high-quality early childhood education and care workforce: Further results from the Starting Strong Survey 2018.* OECD Publishing. https://www.oecd.org/education/talis/building-a-high-quality-early-childhood-education-and-care-workforce-b90bba3d-en.htm

ID: STRATEGY AND POLICY RECOMMENDATION 7

Title: Practices, Cultures, and Policies Aligned with SEL

Subtitle: The promotion of children's SEL should be clearly emphasised in ECEC national curricula and guidelines, as well as ECEC centres´ educational projects

Key Points: The promotion of children's socioemotional learning (SEL) should be clearly emphasised in ECEC national curricula and guidelines, in line with European policies and frameworks that stress the core relevance of key personal, social, and emotional competencies. This entails defining national policy frameworks that clearly acknowledge a holistic understanding of children's learning and development, and an integrated approach to professional action in ECEC settings. Additionally, the successful implementation of Programme–Wide Positive Behaviour Support (PW–PBS) encompasses the definition of a common philosophy that should be clearly stated in the educational projects of ECEC institutions. Explicit written guidelines create a common vision and coherence throughout all phases and processes of

the implementation of PW–PBS in ECEC centres and school systems (please see our PBS–ECEC Key Resources, below). Policy recommendations at the national, local, and central levels guide these phases and processes and facilitate their transformation into consistent and effective daily practices.

Voices of professionals and educational stakeholders from PBS–ECEC

"Guidelines and pedagogical practices should be created including how they would be taught in a wider range of academic subjects." (M., Cyprus)

"I think we need to remind ourselves as early years educators that we are in the social and emotional business. (...) Let's move away from trying to prepare them for school, you know, with the ABCs, and try to prepare them emotionally and socially." (P., Ireland)

"Promoting socioemotional learning requires time, infrastructure, resources and personnel." (A., Greece)

What can be done to make a difference?

Strategies ׀ *Actions*

Develop and implement national and regional strategies for the promotion of SEL

- *Incorporate comprehensive guidelines in national or regional policies that underscore the significance of fostering socioemotional development and self-regulation skills in the early years. Additionally, review and update curriculum frameworks and guidelines to emphasise comprehensive orientations on pedagogical practices focused on SEL and behavioural management and to reflect the evolving needs and priorities of ECEC.*
- *Ensure that regulations for the initial and continuous training of professionals focuses on SEL and the prevention of challenging behaviours using an applied approach.*
- *Contribute to changing mindsets in the professional development system by enhancing trainers' training to better support professionals´ practices towards the promotion of positive behaviours. Professionals must feel confident in implementing evidence-based strategies and practices.*
- *Sustain the integration of SEL across a broad range of academic areas and support long-term commitment from educational institutions and policymakers.*
- *Encourage collaboration among ECEC settings, educational institutions, government agencies, and community organisations to share best practices related to PW–PBS; start pilot programmes in selected ECEC settings to test the effectiveness of PW–PBS.*
- Develop and implement local ECEC centres/systems strategies for the promotion of SEL
- *Train and encourage ECEC professionals to create supportive and nurturing environments that value children's socioemotional development, following improvements in national curriculum guidelines.*
- *Create written guidelines, through a participatory approach, for each ECEC centre that express its core values; encourage professionals' reflexive processes in support of a growing coherence between the written vision and daily pedagogical practices.*
- *Allocate time and resources for professionals to collaboratively design and implement learning activities that ensure that SEL is integrated into daily routines and practices.*
- *Engage in regular assessment and evaluation of the impact of practices on children's outcomes.*

- *Contribute to changing the mindset from a focus on problem behaviours to a shift towards the promotion of socioemotional competence.*
- *Define measurable goals regarding the development of socioemotional skills - what are children expected to learn and develop – and assess the results of the implemented strategies.*

What are the expected benefits and impact?

- *The inclusion of SEL in national curricula and guidelines encourages more coordinated action at this level, as well as having the potential to raise awareness of its importance in society.*
- *Implementing SEL in ECEC helps establish a foundation for positive behaviours; this emphasis can lead to improved interpersonal relationships and emotional wellbeing among children and staff, contributing to a more positive and inclusive social and pedagogical environment.*
- *SEL prepares children with essential life skills beyond the classroom, such as problem-solving, decision-making, and effective communication skills.*
- *Children who have a strong foundation in SEL are better prepared for future challenges and tend to have better mental health and overall wellbeing in adulthood.*
- *The adoption of guidelines can extend beyond ECEC settings and to other educational levels, promoting a consistent approach to SEL throughout children´s academic journeys.*

What practices show the way forward?

Curricula that promote SEL

In 2014, the Greek Ministry of Education's curriculum for kindergarten introduced a section on personal and social development as a separate learning area of the programme, emphasising the development of children's social competencies. Some of the basic principles of the Greek national curriculum regarding socioemotional development in ECEC settings include conflict resolution, following rules, autonomy, and self-regulation. In February 2023, the newly developed kindergarten curriculum was introduced in the Greek educational system. In line with the previous curriculum, the promotion of children's socioemotional development remains at the core of the new curriculum. However, the novelty lies in the explicit reference to the need to promote positive behaviours in ECEC settings, a concept that was previously implied, but not explicitly stated. For instance, one of the foundational principles on which the curriculum is grounded is that the child learns to develop as he/she encounters the environment, objects, and everyday situations by interacting with significant others. Positive and supportive relationships are the key elements of this process, as the social nature of learning is recognised. This revised curriculum reflects a more explicit and intentional focus on fostering positive behaviours and socioemotional development, thereby reinforcing the importance of nurturing supportive learning environments for young children. This also demonstrates a close alignment with the objectives set forth by the PBS–ECEC project, which aims to support ECEC professionals in promoting socioemotional development and positive behaviours in ECEC settings.

Promoting Positive Behaviour in ECEC

With the support of EU Funds, Cyprus has started implementing targeted and innovative programmes in education, through which multilevel support is provided to students and their families. In Cyprus, the implementation of the PW–PBS system is fairly new. However, during the last decade, there have been

several interventions led by various research groups to support ECEC setting and primary schools to implement PW–PBS.

Supporting evidence and resources

Key Resources
Needs assessment in four countries
Krousorati, K., Grammatikopoulos, V., Agathokleous, A., Michaelidou, V., Szproch, A., O'Brien, M., Barros, S., Araújo, S., Santos, M., & Sousa, M. (2023). *PBS–ECEC transnational consolidated report: Research findings for developing the guide on Positive Behaviour Support in early childhood education and care*. https://PBS–ECEC.eu/wp-content/uploads/documents/PBS–ECEC_NeedsAssessment_Consolidated_report_EN.pdf

A Guide for using PW-PBS in ECEC
Krousorati, K., Grammatikopoulos, V., Agathokleous, A., Michaelidou, V., Szproch, A., O'Brien, M., Araújo, S., Santos, M., Sousa, M., & Barros, S. (2023). *PBS–ECEC guide on Positive Behaviour Support in early childhood and care in European countries*. https://PBS–ECEC.eu/wp-content/uploads/outputs/PBS–ECEC_Guide_EN.pdf

PBS-ECEC online modules
PBS–ECEC Consortium (n.d.). *Implementing Positive Behaviour Support in early childhood education and care* [MOOC]. https://PBS–ECEC.ese.ipp.pt/login/index.php

Impact assessment study & recommendations
Szproch, A., O'Brien, M., Araújo, A., Santos, M., Oliveira, V., Barros, S., Otero-Mayer, A., Michaelidou, V., Agathokleous, A., Krousorati, K., & Grammatikopoulos, V. (2023). *Report of the PBS–ECEC impact assessment study and practice recommendations. Result 3: Transnational Report.* https://PBS–ECEC.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/PBS–ECEC_R3_Consolidated-Report-Final.pdf

Additional Resources
Anchorage School District Social Emotional Learning (n.d.). *What is social and emotional learning?*. https://www.asdk12.org/Page/6643

Cefai, C., Bartolo, P. A., Cavioni, V., & Downes, P. (2018). S*trengthening social and emotional education as a core curricular area across the EU: A review of the international evidence (NESET II report).* Publications Office of the European Union. https://doi.org/10.2766/664439

Cefai, C., Downes, P., & Cavioni., V. (2021). *A formative, inclusive, whole school approach to the assessment of social and emotional education in the EU (NESET report).* Publications Office of the European Union. https://doi.org/10.2766/506737

Center for Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (n.d.). *Tutorial 6: Recognizing and supporting the social and emotional health of young children birth to age five.* https://www.ecmhc.org/tutorials/social-emotional/mod1_2.html

Childhood Education International (2017, January 17). *Status of ECEC in Cyprus*.

https://ceinternational1892.org/article/status-of-ecec-in-cyprus.

EASEL LAB (n.d.). *K-12 SEL Standards (Anchorage)*. http://exploresel.gse.harvard.edu/frameworks/29

Loizou, E. (2007). *System of early education/care and professionalisation in Cyprus. Report commissioned by the State Institute of Early Childhood Research (IFP).* State Institute of Early Childhood Research (IFP). http://www.ifp.bayern.de/imperia/md/content/stmas/ifp/commissioned_report_cyprus.pdf

Resilient Preschools Consortium (2022). *Resilient Preschools IO2.A2.1 curriculum for preschool teachers*. https://resilientpreschools.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/IO2_A.2.1.ResilientPreschools_Curriculum_Final.pdf

Sala, A., Punie, Y., & Garkov, V. (2020). LifeComp: *The European framework for personal, social and learning to learn key competence.* Office of the European Union. https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2760/302967

4. CONCLUSION

This report presents a Policy and Strategy Toolkit that includes insights, lessons, and recommendations aimed at steering policymakers and ECEC professionals to effectively implement and set adequate conditions for the implementation of a program-wide positive behaviour support approach in Early Childhood Education and Care across different countries in Europe. This toolkit stems from a comprehensive and participatory process that involved experts, professionals, and policymakers in different tasks and moments of the PBS-ECEC project.

From this thorough process, seven key recommendations have emerged, each with the potential to be significant in promoting SEL and positive behaviours in Early Childhood Education and Care settings in Cyprus, Greece, Ireland, and Portugal. These recommendations are grounded in the paramount importance of professional development, parental involvement, collaborative practices, leadership roles, and curricular emphasis on socioemotional learning.

This Policy and Strategy Toolkit was developed as a practical guide for policymakers and professionals to support and guide the successful implementation of PW-PBS across diverse European ECEC settings. Therefore, these strategies and actions can lead to sustainable and effective implementation of PW-PBS, with strong contributions to children's socioemotional development.

On completing this work, the PBS-ECEC team expects that this document is a valuable resource available for policymakers, school leaders, and ECEC professionals, contributing to the effective and enduring implementation of PW-PBS, thus fostering a positive environment for ECEC children, their families, and professionals.

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Krousorati, K., Grammatikopoulos, V., Agathokleous, A., Michaelidou, V., Szproch, A., O'Brien, M., Araújo, S., Santos, M., Sousa, M., & Barros, S. (2023). *PBS–ECEC guide on Positive Behaviour Support in early childhood and care in European countries*. https://PBS–ECEC.eu/wp-content/uploads/outputs/PBS–ECEC_Guide_EN.pdf

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Szproch, A., O'Brien, M., Araújo, A., Santos, M., Oliveira, V., Barros, S., Otero-Mayer, A., Michaelidou, V., Agathokleous, A., Krousorati, K., & Grammatikopoulos, V. (2023). *Report of the PBS–ECEC impact assessment study and practice recommendations. Result 3: Transnational Report.* https://PBS–ECEC.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/PBS–ECEC_R3_Consolidated-Report-Final.pdf

6. ANNEXES

ANNEX 1. KEY IDEAS FROM PARTNER COUNTRIES

CYPRUS

Cyprus. Key Idea 1: Teachers' Professional Development and Career

1.1. Lessons Learned and Challenges: *Continuous and bottom-up professional development of teaching and leadership ECEC staff is vital for implementing system-wide approaches (such as PW-PBS).*
• Related Result(s) of the PBS-ECEC + Informational Source: *R1 and R3* *Sources: meeting with participants, team reflection, school visits*
• Description: *Despite some initiatives by the Ministry of Education, Sports & Youth and the Pedagogical Institute of Cyprus regarding teachers' professional development, there are not enough opportunities for teacher training programs and not adequate support is provided on managing children's behaviour, despite this being one of the major challenges that ECEC teachers face in their daily practice. Even fewer opportunities are provided for teachers' professional development in the private sector. To improve ECEC practices and contexts, there is a need for a comprehensive understanding of teaching positive behaviour in ECEC settings and a stronger focus on the professionalism of ECEC teachers in this direction. Additionally, providing opportunities for continuing professional development programs that enhance teachers' knowledge and skills in well-being-related areas would be very beneficial for students' socioemotional development.*
• Importance and Possible Impact: *Continuous and holistic professional development of teachers on how to implement in their educational practice positive behaviour support ensures that children's socioemotional development will be considered as important as their cognitive development and relevant efforts will be made in this direction. A common understanding among the ECEC team members and specific teaching skills are required to ensure the successful implementation of the PW-PBS approach by applying the systems' elements with high fidelity.*
• Possible Challenges: *Culture of focusing more on the cognitive aspect of ECEC; teachers' heavy workload and availability to participate in demanding training programs; difficulty to train an ECEC teacher team at the same time during working or afternoon hours; lack of relevant training programs offered to ECEC teachers; top-down approach of teachers' professional development which ignore the needs of teachers and does not provide practical recommendations easily applicable in the classroom; mixed-capacity classes with children with various needs and characteristics.*
• Strategies to Address the Challenges: *Training focusing on teachers' skills and not that much on theory, training on identifying children's problem behaviours in order to plan ahead, effective classroom management practices, constructive information about positive behaviour support in ECEC, creating a common understanding of desired behaviour among team members, empowerment of ECEC professionals by investing in their teaching and personal skills development to become more effective.*

1.2. Promising practice: *Bottom-up training programs for ECEC teachers*
• Country of Collection: *Cyprus*
• Related Result(s) of the PBS-ECEC + Informational Source: *R1 & R3* *Sources: teacher evaluation questionnaires during implementation, needs assessment, ongoing communication with participants.*

- **Description of Practice:** Before the PBS-ECEC implementation each ECEC setting had the opportunity of discussing with an external coach and the school's trainer in order to identify the school's needs in regard to behaviour and socioemotional development by using a diagnostic questionnaire. The prior assessment of school needs for children's problem behaviours helped the leadership team to develop an action plan. The action plan was used for guiding future school activities and for prioritising teachers' needs on professional development in order to address such issues and promote children's socioemotional development. Staff then received training and support in ways to address daily challenges with their colleagues and make decisions based on the agreed practices and strategies noted in the initial action plan. These efforts imply an investment in human resources by adopting the professional development program of the PW-PBS approach to the specificities and challenges of each school. This effort was done in collaboration with the staff, which helped them to feel a sense of ownership of the new approach for which they were being trained and asked to implement.

- **Implications for Policy:** *Continuous professional development for ECEC teachers plays a pivotal role in ensuring the provision of high-quality education and support for young learners. As our understanding of child development and effective teaching methodologies evolves, it becomes imperative for educators to stay abreast of the latest research and best practices. Ongoing professional development empowers ECEC teachers with the knowledge and skills needed to adapt to diverse learning needs, implement innovative teaching strategies, and create nurturing learning environments. One approach that has shown significant promise in promoting positive behaviour and social-emotional development in young children is the PW-PBS approach. By integrating PW-PBS into their teaching practices, ECEC teachers can foster a safe and inclusive atmosphere, teach children essential social skills, and effectively address challenging behaviours. Emphasising continuous professional development of the PW-PBS approach not only enhances teacher competence but also ensures that young children receive the best possible foundation for their future growth and success.*

- **Supporting Materials and Resources:** *PBS-ECEC needs assessment*
https://pbs-ecec.eu/wp-content/uploads/documents/PBS-ECEC_NeedsAssessment_Consolidated_report_EN.pdf
DeMulder, E. K., Denham, S. A., Schmidt, M., Mitchell, J. N., & Quraishi, S. (2021). Preschool PATHS Curriculum Effects on Social Emotional Learning and Executive Functions. *Early Education and Development, 32*(6), 791-811.
National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). (2021). *Position statement on teacher preparation and professional development: A joint statement of NAEYC and the National Association of Early Childhood Teacher Educators*. Retrieved from https://www.naeyc.org/resources/position-statements/teacher-preparation
Fox, L., & Lentini, R. (2016). *Positive behavior support in early childhood. Baltimore*, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing.

1.3. Policy recommendation: *Establishment of continuous teacher professional development program on promoting children's socioemotional development.*

- **Recommendations for Decision-makers and Educational Stakeholders:**
Incorporate Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) into Teacher Education: Policymakers can support the integration of social-emotional learning into teacher education programs. This can be achieved by ensuring that pre-service teachers receive training and coursework on child development, SEL theories, and effective strategies for fostering socio-emotional skills in children.
Provide Ongoing Professional Development Opportunities: Policymakers should allocate resources for continuous professional development programs focused on promoting socio-emotional development. These professional development opportunities could cover topics such as understanding and addressing

social-emotional challenges, implementing positive behaviour support strategies, and cultivating a supportive classroom environment. Policymakers can prioritise policies that require and facilitate continuous professional development for educators and school staff. Providing regular training on PW-PBS principles and practices ensures that educators remain skilled and knowledgeable in implementing the approach effectively.

Support Collaborative Learning Communities: Encourage the formation of collaborative learning communities for teachers. These communities can serve as spaces where educators can share experiences, best practices, and research-based strategies for promoting socio-emotional development effectively.

Promote Evidence-Based Practices: Policymakers should encourage the use of evidence-based practices in teachers' professional development, ensuring that educators receive training in approaches that have been shown to be effective in promoting socio-emotional development.

Incorporate Observation and Feedback: Policy recommendations can emphasise the importance of incorporating observation and feedback mechanisms into teacher professional development. Providing constructive feedback and support can help teachers refine their skills in promoting socio-emotional development.

Allocate Adequate Time and Resources: Adequate time and resources should be provided for professional development activities. This may include funding for workshops, conferences, coaching, and mentoring opportunities for teachers.

Support Research and Evaluation: Policymakers should invest in research and evaluation efforts to assess the impact of professional development programs on teachers' ability to promote socio-emotional development in children. Data-driven insights can inform the refinement of policies and practices in the future.

• **Expected Benefits of the Policy Recommendation:** *Background studies and continuing professional development programs will help enhance teachers' job satisfaction and also address their overall well-being. The government and private sector by prioritising teachers' well-being and promoting initiatives to empower teachers' skills in implementing the PW-PBS approach will ensure that teachers are being adequately educated and supported. Moreover, the socioemotional development of children will not be underestimated. Socioemotional development will be seen as a critical aspect of ECEC, playing a fundamental role in shaping children's overall well-being and success in various life domains. Focusing on the promotion of socioemotional development will encompass the acquisition of social and emotional children's skills, including self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, communication, and forming positive relationships. Through supportive and nurturing environments in ECEC settings, children will have the opportunity to develop a strong sense of self, build healthy relationships with peers and adults, and learn to express and manage their emotions effectively. These skills not only contribute to a positive and inclusive classroom atmosphere but also foster a sense of belonging, which enhances children's engagement in learning and overall cognitive development. By prioritising socioemotional development in ECEC, educators can help children develop essential life skills that will serve as a basis for their lifelong emotional intelligence, mental health, and overall well-being.*

• **Supporting Evidence and Resources:**

Denham, S. A., Bassett, H. H., Zinsser, K., & Wyatt, T. (2014). How preschoolers' social–emotional learning predicts their early school success: Developing theory-promoting, competency-based assessments. *Infant and Child Development, 23*(4), 426-454.

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Cyprus. Key Idea 2: Duration of PW-PBS implementation

1.1. Lessons Learned and Challenges: PW-PBS implementation needs time.

• **Related Result(s) of the PBS-ECEC + Informational Source:** *R3*
Sources: Discussions with ECEC Teams and Trainers; Monthly Meetings with ECEC Teachers; Ongoing Communication via Phone Calls and Emails; Face-to-Face School Visits

• **Description:** *The duration of the implementation of PBS can vary depending on the specific needs and goals of each school or educational institution. PBS is not a one-time intervention but rather an ongoing process. Generally, the implementation of PBS occurs in multiple phases, which usually takes more than a year to fully establish and integrate into the school's practices. The implementation phase includes the integration of PBS strategies into daily routines and interactions within the school environment. This phase requires consistent monitoring and ongoing professional development to ensure that staff members remain committed and skilled in applying PBS principles. However, the sustainability phase, which is usually forgotten involves maintaining the PBS approach as an integral part of the school's culture. Continuous evaluation, periodic updates, and fidelity checks are necessary to ensure that PBS practices remain effective over time. It is therefore important to recognise that the duration of PBS implementation is not fixed and can be influenced by various factors, such as the school's size, available resources, and staff's readiness and willingness to embrace the approach.*

• **Importance and Possible Impact:** *Long-lasting implementation of the PW-PBS approach can ensure more sustainable positive outcomes in educational settings. By embedding the PW-PBS principles and strategies into the school's culture and practices over an extended period, educators and students can experience the full benefits of this proactive framework. With consistent application and ongoing professional development, school staff can become adept at addressing challenging behaviours effectively, promoting positive social skills, and fostering a supportive and inclusive learning environment. As PW-PBS becomes deeply ingrained in the school's fabric, it creates a foundation for a lasting culture of respect, empathy, and understanding among students and staff. Moreover, the long-term commitment to PW-PBS allows for the collection of valuable data and insights, enabling continuous improvement and refinement of the approach based on the school's evolving needs.*

• **Possible Challenges:**
Implementing the PW-PBS approach in educational settings can present several challenges in terms of duration and workload:
Time and Resources: Sustaining the PW-PBS approach over the long term requires a significant investment of time, effort, and resources. Schools need to allocate adequate time for staff training, ongoing professional development, and regular data collection and analysis. Limited resources or competing priorities may hinder the school's ability to dedicate sufficient time and funding to fully implement and maintain the PW-PBS approach.
Staff Training and Turnover: Training all school staff in PW-PBS principles and strategies is crucial for successful implementation. However, high staff turnover can be a challenge, as new staff members may need training and support, which can add to the workload of existing staff who are already involved in the PW-PBS program.
Data Collection and Analysis: Implementing PW-PBS involves data-driven decision-making, which requires continuous data collection and analysis to assess the effectiveness of interventions and make

informed adjustments. This data management process can be time-consuming and may burden school staff with additional workload responsibilities.

Resistance to Change: Introducing a new approach like PW-PBS may encounter resistance from some staff members who are accustomed to traditional disciplinary methods. Convincing staff to embrace the proactive and positive nature of PW-PBS can be challenging and may require ongoing support and training.

Consistency and Fidelity: Maintaining fidelity to the PW-PBS approach throughout the entire school and over an extended period can be challenging. As staff members face various demands and pressures, there may be instances of inconsistent implementation, potentially diluting the overall effectiveness of the approach.

• **Strategies to Address the Challenges:**
Despite these challenges, addressing them proactively and collaboratively can help overcome barriers and lead to a successful and sustainable implementation of the PW-PBS approach. It requires a commitment from all stakeholders, including school administrators, teachers, support staff, students, and parents, to create a positive and supportive school culture conducive to long-term success.

1.2. Promising practice: Implementing the PW-PBS for more than one school-year

• **Country of Collection:** *Cyprus*

• **Related Result(s) of the PBS-ECEC + Informational Source:** *R1 & R3*
Sources: PBS-Guide, Needs assessment, Team Reflective Discussions

• **Description of Practice:** *By focusing on positive reinforcement and teaching appropriate social skills, students are more likely to exhibit prosocial behaviours, leading to a reduction in challenging behaviours and disciplinary issues. The PW-PBS approach contributes to the creation of a positive school climate. As students feel supported, respected, and included, the overall atmosphere becomes more conducive to learning and personal growth. Through ongoing data collection and analysis, schools can make informed decisions about the effectiveness of their PW-PBS implementation. This data-driven approach allows for adjustments and improvements over time, leading to more effective strategies. Moreover, PW-PBS emphasises the importance of promoting inclusivity and equity within the school community. By recognising and valuing the diverse needs and backgrounds of students, schools can create a more supportive and equitable learning environment for all.*

• **Implications for Policy:** *In summary, applying PW-PBS for a long time provides numerous benefits, including consistent and predictable environments, skill development, improved relationships, positive culture change, and sustainable improvements in student behaviour and outcomes. A long-term commitment to PW-PBS fosters a positive and supportive school community that contributes to the overall success and well-being of students.*

• **Supporting Materials and Resources:** *Online Modules of PW-PBS Instructional Practices in Early Childhood and Care Settings*
https://pbs-ecec.ese.ipp.pt/login/index.php

1.3. Policy recommendation: Establish policies for supporting PW-PBS long-term implementation in ECEC

• **Recommendations for Decision-makers and Educational Stakeholders:**
Policymakers can consider the following implications to support and promote the sustained use of PW-PBS:

Funding and Resources: Policymakers should allocate adequate funding and resources to support schools in implementing and sustaining PW-PBS over an extended period. This includes financial support for staff training, data collection tools, and ongoing professional development opportunities.

Incentives and Recognition: Policy initiatives can be introduced to recognise schools that demonstrate successful long-term implementation of PW-PBS. Incentives, such as grants or awards, can motivate schools to embrace and sustain the approach.

Evaluation and Monitoring: *Policymakers should encourage the use of evidence-based evaluation and monitoring methods to assess the effectiveness of PW-PBS implementation. Schools can be required to collect data on outcomes related to behaviour, academic performance, and school climate, which can inform future policy decisions.*

Collaboration and Networking: *Policymakers can support collaboration and networking among schools that have implemented PW-PBS successfully. This allows schools to share best practices, strategies, and lessons learned, fostering a community of support and continuous improvement.*

Integration with Other Initiatives: *Policies can be designed to integrate PW-PBS with other educational initiatives and frameworks, such as social-emotional learning (SEL) programs and mental health support services. This ensures a cohesive and comprehensive approach to promoting students' well-being and positive behaviour.*

Sustainability Planning: *Policymakers can require schools to develop sustainability plans as part of their PW-PBS implementation. These plans outline how the school intends to maintain the approach over time, ensuring its continued success.*

By incorporating these implications into educational policies, policymakers can create an environment that encourages and supports schools in adopting and sustaining the PW-PBS approach. This, in turn, can lead to more positive outcomes for students, improved school climates, and greater overall success in promoting social-emotional development and positive behaviour in educational settings.

• Expected Benefits of the Policy Recommendation:

While the benefits of long-term PW-PBS implementation are promising, it is essential to recognise that each school's experience may vary based on specific contexts and challenges. Successful and sustained implementation requires ongoing commitment, collaboration, and a shared vision among all stakeholders involved in the educational community.

Applying PW-PBS for a long time is crucial for several important reasons:

Consistency and Predictability: *Long-term implementation of PW-PBS provides a consistent and predictable environment for students. When students encounter consistent expectations and support in their behaviour, they develop a clear understanding of what is expected of them, leading to increased feelings of safety and security within the school community.*

Skill Development and Generalisation: *Sustained use of PW-PBS allows students to develop and generalise essential social and behavioural skills over time. As they repeatedly engage in positive behaviours and receive reinforcement, these skills become more ingrained and transferable to various situations, both within the school and beyond.*

Building Relationships: *Long-term PW-PBS implementation fosters strong teacher-student relationships. Consistent use of positive reinforcement and support helps build trust between students and educators, creating a positive emotional bond that enhances students' willingness to engage in learning and follow school rules.*

Culture Change: *PW-PBS, when applied over the long term, can lead to a positive culture change within the school. As students and staff consistently embrace the principles of PW-PBS, the focus shifts from reactive discipline to proactive support and positive reinforcement, promoting a nurturing and inclusive school climate.*

Addressing Complex Behavioural Challenges: *Some students may have more complex behavioural challenges that require ongoing and individualised support. Long-term PW-PBS implementation allows for the continuous monitoring of these students' progress and the adjustment of strategies as needed to address their specific needs effectively.*

Data-Driven Decision-Making: Over time, the collection of data on student behaviour and outcomes becomes more robust. This data allows educators to make data-driven decisions, identifying trends and patterns that inform adjustments to interventions and support strategies for optimal effectiveness.

Teacher and Staff Competence: Through long-term use, teachers and staff become more skilled and confident in implementing PW-PBS. With continuous professional development and experience, educators deepen their understanding of the approach and become more adept at effectively supporting student behaviour.

Sustainable Results: Long-term PW-PBS implementation leads to sustainable results in terms of improved behaviour, academic performance, and school climate. Rather than relying on short-term interventions, sustained use of PW-PBS creates lasting positive changes that benefit students year after year.

Institutionalisation: When PW-PBS becomes an integral part of a school's culture and practices, it becomes institutionalised. Institutionalisation ensures that the approach continues to be prioritised and upheld, even when there are changes in school leadership or staff.

• **Supporting Evidence and Resources:** *PBS-ECEC Guide*

Cyprus. Key Idea 3: School – Parent's Collaboration during PW-PBS

1.1. Lessons Learned and Challenges: Parents' participation is essential in promoting socioemotional development and managing challenging behaviours.

• **Related Result(s) of the PBS-ECEC + Informational Source:** *R2 & R3*
Sources: Desk research, Discussions with ECEC Teams and Trainers; Monthly Meetings with ECEC Teachers

• **Description:** *Parents' role is crucial in promoting the socioemotional development of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) children for several significant reasons. Parents are the first and most influential caregivers and role models for young children. Children observe and learn from their parents' social and emotional behaviours, forming the foundation for their own socioemotional development. The quality of the parent-child attachment directly influences a child's socioemotional development. A secure and nurturing attachment with parents fosters a sense of trust and emotional security in children, which positively impacts their ability to form healthy relationships with others. Parents provide emotional support and validation, which helps children develop a strong sense of self-worth and self-esteem. When children feel emotionally supported by their parents, they are more likely to be resilient and confident in handling challenges. Parent-child interactions play a pivotal role in developing language and communication skills in young children. Effective communication with parents enhances children's ability to express their emotions and needs, contributing to their social and emotional competence. In addition, parents actively teach social skills to their children, such as sharing, empathy, and cooperation. These skills are fundamental for positive peer interactions and navigating social situations effectively.*

Establishing consistent and appropriate discipline helps children understand behavioural expectations and consequences. Parents who set clear boundaries and provide consistent discipline support children's self-regulation and behavioural development. Parents are the first to observe any changes or challenges in their child's behaviour. Their involvement in ECEC settings allows for early identification of potential socioemotional difficulties, facilitating timely intervention and support.

Parents' involvement in their children's early education and care reinforces the value and importance of learning. When parents are engaged in their children's educational journey, it positively impacts children's motivation and academic success. Parents pass on cultural values, traditions, and family beliefs that influence children's socioemotional development. These cultural aspects contribute to a child's sense of identity and belonging. Collaboration between parents and educators creates a seamless and supportive learning environment for children. Parents' insights into their child's unique strengths and needs allow educators to tailor their approach to meet individual socioemotional requirements.

• **Importance and Possible Impact:**

Below are some ways in which parents' involvement can make a significant impact:

Modelling Behaviour: *Parents serve as primary role models for their children. By displaying positive social and emotional behaviours themselves, parents can effectively teach children how to handle their own emotions and interact positively with others.*

Establishing a Secure Attachment: *A secure and nurturing parent-child attachment forms the foundation for a child's socioemotional development. When children feel emotionally secure with their parents, they are more likely to develop trust, empathy, and healthy relationships with others.*

Communication and Emotional Support: *Active communication and emotional support from parents create an environment where children feel comfortable expressing their feelings and thoughts. This helps children develop emotional intelligence, self-awareness, and effective communication skills.*

Teaching Social Skills: *Parents can actively teach and reinforce social skills such as sharing, taking turns, and problem-solving. These skills are essential for children to develop positive relationships and navigate social situations successfully.*

Setting Boundaries and Consistent Discipline: *Consistent and appropriate discipline helps children understand behavioural expectations and consequences. Parents who set clear boundaries and use positive discipline strategies contribute to the development of self-regulation and appropriate behaviour in children.*

Collaboration with Educators: *Parents' involvement with educators and schools enhances the continuity of support for children's socioemotional development. Collaborative efforts between parents and educators create a more holistic approach to addressing children's needs and challenges.*

Identifying and Addressing Challenges: *Parents are often the first to notice any changes or challenges in their children's behaviour. Their involvement allows for early identification of socioemotional difficulties, enabling timely intervention and support.*

Encouraging Extracurricular Activities: *Engaging children in extracurricular activities and hobbies can foster their social skills, self-esteem, and sense of accomplishment. Parents' encouragement and support in these endeavours contribute to well-rounded socioemotional development.*

Promoting Mindfulness and Coping Strategies: *Parents can teach children mindfulness techniques and healthy coping strategies to manage stress, anxiety, and emotional challenges effectively.*

Parents' active involvement is indispensable in supporting and fostering their children's socioemotional development. Their guidance, positive role modelling, and emotional support create a nurturing environment that helps children navigate social interactions, develop resilience, and build essential life skills for their overall well-being and success.

• Possible Challenges:

Engaging parents can be challenging due to various reasons. Some of the common challenges include:

Time Constraints: *Many parents have busy schedules, with work and other commitments, which can limit their availability to actively participate in ECEC activities and events.*

Communication Barriers: *Language and communication barriers may exist between parents and educators, particularly in multicultural and multilingual settings. Effective communication may require additional support and resources.*

Parental Involvement Perceptions: *Some parents may perceive ECEC as solely the responsibility of educators and may not fully understand the importance of their involvement in their child's early education.*

Lack of Awareness: *Some parents may not be aware of the benefits of parental engagement in ECEC or the various ways they can contribute to their child's learning experience.*

Cultural Differences: *Cultural differences can influence parental engagement styles and expectations. Understanding and respecting these cultural nuances is essential in promoting effective engagement.*

Parental Confidence: Some parents may lack confidence in their ability to contribute effectively to their child's education, particularly if they themselves have limited education or experience with formal schooling.

Socioeconomic Factors: Socioeconomic disparities can impact parental involvement, as parents facing financial, or housing challenges may have limited resources to actively participate in ECEC activities.

Family Dynamics: Family dynamics and personal circumstances may affect parents' willingness or ability to engage with the ECEC program, particularly in cases of single-parent households or families facing significant stressors.

Fear of Judgment: Some parents may fear judgment from educators or other parents, which can lead to hesitancy in engaging with the ECEC community.

- **Strategies to Address the Challenges:**

Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach that involves collaboration between educators, schools, and families. Some strategies to enhance parental engagement include:

  o *Providing flexible and varied opportunities for involvement that accommodate diverse schedules and preferences.*
  o *Offering resources and workshops to support parents in understanding the benefits of parental engagement and how they can contribute to their child's socioemotional learning.*
  o *Establishing open and welcoming communication channels that facilitate dialogue between parents and educators.*
  o *Promoting cultural sensitivity and inclusivity in all aspects of ECEC, recognizing and valuing the diverse backgrounds of families.*
  o *Creating a positive and non-judgmental environment where parents feel comfortable sharing their perspectives and concerns.*
  o *Collaborating with community organisations and agencies to provide additional support and resources for families facing socioeconomic challenges.*

By actively addressing these challenges and fostering strong partnerships between parents and educators, ECEC programs can maximise the benefits of parental engagement and enhance children's overall learning and development.

1.2. Promising practice: Parent's training on promoting socioemotional development at home

- **Country of Collection:** *Cyprus*

- **Related Result(s) of the PBS-ECEC + Informational Source:** *R1 & R3*
Sources: PBS-Guide, Needs assessment, Team Reflective Discussions

- **Description of Practice:** *Parents can play a crucial role in promoting PW-PBS principles at home, which reinforces the positive behaviours and social skills children learn at school. Teachers need to guide and encourage parents to establish clear expectations and rules for behaviour at home. Consistency between school and home rules helps children understand behavioural expectations across different environments. Also, parents need to know how to use positive reinforcement to acknowledge and celebrate their child's positive behaviours. Praise and rewards for demonstrating desired behaviours can encourage children to continue displaying those behaviours. Parents must model the behaviour they wish to see in their child. Displaying positive social and emotional behaviours sets a powerful example for children to follow. Parents must create an open and supportive environment for their child to express their feelings and thoughts. Encouraging open communication helps children develop emotional intelligence and effective communication skills. Also, teachers need to support parents to help their children develop problem-solving skills to handle challenging situations effectively. Encourage them to think through possible solutions and make positive choices. The use of positive language is also important while avoiding using negative labels or punitive language when addressing behavioural issues is vital. Focus on constructive*

feedback and encourage their child to learn from their mistakes. Parents must maintain open communication with their child's teachers to understand their progress and any specific areas that require support. Collaborating with teachers ensures a consistent approach to behaviour management. In addition, parents must praise their child's efforts and progress rather than solely focusing on outcomes. Celebrating growth encourages a growth mindset and resilience in facing challenges. By incorporating these practices, parents can reinforce the PW-PBS principles taught at school and create a supportive and positive home environment that enhances their child's socioemotional development and overall well-being.

- **Implications for Policy:** *Parents' role in promoting the socioemotional development of ECEC children cannot be overstated. Their guidance and positive interactions lay the groundwork for children's emotional intelligence, self-awareness, and ability to form positive relationships. By working in partnership with educators, parents create a holistic and nurturing environment that supports children's overall well-being and sets them on a path to lifelong success. Long-term PW-PBS implementation often fosters increased parent and community engagement. Parents are more likely to be involved in their child's education, and the broader community may actively support the school's efforts to promote positive behaviour and social-emotional development.*

- **Supporting Materials and Resources:** *Online Modules of PW-PBS Instructional Practices in Early Childhood and Care Settings* https://pbs-ecec.ese.ipp.pt/login/index.php

1.3. Policy recommendation: Inform parents about PW-PBS and empower their involvement in ECEC

- **Recommendations for Decision-makers and Educational Stakeholders:** *Training parents on PW-PBS principles can be a valuable way to ensure a consistent and supportive approach to behaviour management. By providing parents with training and resources on PW-PBS, schools can strengthen the partnership between home and school environments, promoting a consistent and positive approach to behaviour support that benefits children's overall development.*

Parent Information Sessions: Mandate ECEC centres to conduct regular parent information sessions that focus on PW-PBS principles and strategies. These sessions can provide parents with an overview of PW-PBS, its benefits, and practical ways they can support its implementation at home.

Parent Handbooks: Develop and distribute parent handbooks that outline PW-PBS concepts, approaches, and resources. These handbooks can serve as a comprehensive guide for parents to refer to and apply PW-PBS principles in their daily interactions with their children.

Multilingual Resources: Ensure that all information and resources about PW-PBS are available in multiple languages to accommodate the diverse linguistic backgrounds of families in the ECEC community.

Online Learning Platforms: Create online learning platforms or portals where parents can access PW-PBS training modules, videos, and resources at their convenience. These platforms can support parents who may have limited time for in-person training sessions.

Parent-Teacher Collaboration: Promote regular communication and collaboration between parents and teachers regarding PW-PBS implementation. Encourage educators to share information about PW-PBS practices, progress, and challenges during parent-teacher conferences.

Family Workshops and Events: Organise family workshops and events centred around PW-PBS. These events can offer interactive learning experiences for parents and children to understand and practice PW-PBS principles together.

Parent Support Groups: Establish parent support groups focused on PW-PBS where parents can share experiences, seek advice, and learn from each other. These groups foster a sense of community and mutual support among parents.

Parent Ambassadors: Recruit and train parent ambassadors who have experience with PW-PBS and can serve as advocates for its benefits. Parent ambassadors can share their success stories and encourage other parents to get involved.

Collaboration with Community Partners: Collaborate with community organisations and agencies that specialise in family support and education. Partnering with these organisations can enhance parental engagement and access to PW-PBS resources.

Use of Technology: Utilise digital communication tools, such as mobile apps and social media, to share regular updates and tips related to PW-PBS with parents.

Parent Surveys: Conduct regular parent surveys to gather feedback on the effectiveness of PW-PBS initiatives and identify areas for improvement.

Parent Recognition Programs: Implement recognition programs that acknowledge and celebrate parents' efforts in promoting PW-PBS at home. Recognising parents' contributions can further motivate their active involvement.

Inclusive Approach: Ensure that all policy initiatives are inclusive and consider the unique needs and circumstances of diverse families, including those with special needs, low-income backgrounds, and different cultural backgrounds.

By implementing these policy recommendations, ECEC programs can effectively inform parents about PW-PBS, empower their involvement, and create a collaborative and supportive partnership between home and school environments for the benefit of children's socioemotional development.

• Expected Benefits of the Policy Recommendation:

The policy recommendations to inform parents about Positive Behaviour Support and empower their involvement in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) offer numerous benefits for children, parents, and the overall ECEC community. Some of these benefits include:

Enhanced Parental Understanding: The information sessions, handbooks, and online platforms will increase parents' understanding of PW-PBS principles and strategies. Parents will be better equipped to support their child's socioemotional development and reinforce positive behaviour at home.

Cultural Inclusivity: Providing resources in multiple languages and promoting inclusive policies ensures that parents from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds can access and engage with PW-PBS information effectively.

Strengthened Parent-Teacher Partnership: Regular communication and collaboration between parents and teachers foster a stronger partnership focused on the child's well-being. This partnership enhances the consistency of PW-PBS implementation across different environments.

Empowered Parents: Parent workshops, support groups, and recognition programs empower parents to take an active role in their child's education and behaviour development. This sense of empowerment contributes to increased parental engagement and involvement.

Improved Socioemotional Development: Parents who are informed about PW-PBS are better equipped to promote their child's socioemotional development. The application of PW-PBS strategies at home creates a positive and supportive environment for children to learn and grow.

Stronger Community Engagement: By collaborating with community partners, ECEC programs can strengthen their engagement with families and provide a more comprehensive support system for parents.

Convenient Access to Resources: Online learning platforms and digital communication tools make it convenient for parents to access PW-PBS resources at their own pace and according to their schedules.

Peer Support: Parent support groups and workshops offer opportunities for parents to connect, share experiences, and provide peer support. This creates a sense of community and mutual learning among parents.

Tailored Support for Families: Parent surveys provide valuable feedback that allows ECEC programs to tailor their PW-PBS initiatives to better meet the needs of families and address any challenges they may face.

Positive School Climate: Informed and engaged parents contribute to a positive school climate that emphasises collaboration and partnership between parents, educators, and the ECEC community.

Increased Parental Confidence: As parents become more knowledgeable about PW-PBS, they gain confidence in their ability to apply these strategies effectively, leading to more consistent and positive behaviour support for their children.

Long-Term Impact: Empowering parents with PW-PBS knowledge creates a long-term impact as parents continue to apply these strategies as their children progress through different educational stages.

Overall, the policy recommendations promote a collaborative and supportive approach to behaviour support in ECEC settings, leading to enhanced socioemotional development, positive home-school partnerships, and a nurturing environment for children's overall growth and success.

• Supporting Evidence and Resources: *PBS-ECEC Guide*

Cyprus. Key Idea 4: Collaboration between ECEC teachers and mental health professionals

1.1. Lessons Learned and Challenges: _____
• Related Result(s) of the PBS-ECEC + Informational Source: *R1& R3* *Sources: Desk research, Discussions with ECEC Teams and Trainers; Monthly Meetings with ECEC Teachers*
• Description: *Collaboration between ECEC teachers and mental health professionals (i.e. social worker, psychologist therapist, etc) can significantly contribute to promoting the socioemotional development of children, especially children with serious problem behaviour who are in need of Tier 2 PW-PBS implementation. This collaborative approach recognises that children's socioemotional well-being is interconnected with their overall development and learning.*
• Importance and Possible Impact: *Early Identification and Intervention:* ECEC teachers, being in direct contact with children on a daily basis, are often the first to observe any socioemotional challenges or behavioural concerns. By collaborating with mental health professionals, early identification of issues becomes possible, enabling timely intervention and support. *Comprehensive Assessment:* Mental health professionals can conduct more in-depth assessments and evaluations of children's socioemotional needs, helping ECEC teachers gain a deeper understanding of each child's unique strengths and areas requiring additional support. *Customised Support Strategies:* With the expertise of mental health professionals, ECEC teachers can develop tailored strategies to meet the socioemotional needs of individual children. These strategies can be integrated into the daily routines and activities of the classroom. *Professional Development:* Collaboration with mental health professionals provides opportunities for ECEC teachers to participate in professional development sessions focused on socioemotional development and behaviour management for children with special needs or demanding challenging behaviour. This enhances teachers' skills and knowledge in supporting children's well-being. *Creating a Supportive Environment:* Together, ECEC teachers and mental health professionals can work to create a positive and inclusive classroom environment that fosters emotional regulation, empathy, and social skills. *Resource Sharing:* Mental health professionals can provide valuable resources, tools, and materials to support ECEC teachers in addressing specific socioemotional needs in the classroom.

Professional Consultation: ECEC teachers can seek guidance and consultation from mental health professionals on addressing challenging behaviours or complex socioemotional issues that may arise in the classroom.

Inclusive Practices: Collaboration promotes inclusive practices that consider the diverse needs of all children in the classroom, including those with socioemotional difficulties or behavioural challenges.

Monitoring and Progress Evaluation: Mental health professionals can assist in monitoring the progress of children's socioemotional development over time. Regular assessment and evaluation allow for adjustments in support strategies as needed.

By collaborating with mental health professionals, ECEC teachers can create a comprehensive and supportive approach to promoting children's socioemotional development. This collaborative effort addresses the whole child, ensures early intervention when needed, and lays the foundation for their emotional well-being and future success in school and life.

• **Possible Challenges:** *Collaboration between ECEC teachers and mental health professionals can face some challenges, despite its potential benefits. These challenges may include:*

Limited Resources: ECEC centres and schools may have limited access to mental health professionals, especially in certain regions or areas with a shortage of such services.

Time Constraints: ECEC teachers and mental health professionals often have busy schedules, making it challenging to find time for regular collaboration and meetings.

Communication Barriers: Effective collaboration requires open and clear communication between teachers and mental health professionals. However, differences in terminologies and approaches may pose communication barriers.

Privacy and Consent: Respecting and maintaining children's and families' privacy is crucial. Sharing sensitive information requires obtaining proper consent and adhering to confidentiality guidelines.

Different Priorities: ECEC teachers may prioritize academic and classroom management responsibilities, while mental health professionals focus on individual children's socioemotional needs. Aligning priorities can be challenging.

Training and Expertise: ECEC teachers may not have extensive training in understanding and addressing complex socioemotional issues. On the other hand, mental health professionals might not fully understand the context and dynamics of the classroom environment.

Funding and Support: Adequate funding and institutional support are essential to sustain collaborative efforts between ECEC and mental health professionals. Without proper resources, collaboration may be limited.

Parental Consent and Involvement: Involving parents in the collaboration process can be challenging, as some may have reservations or lack awareness about the benefits of such collaboration.

Cultural Sensitivity: Collaborating with mental health professionals from diverse cultural backgrounds requires a culturally sensitive approach to ensure effective support for all children and families.

Interdisciplinary Collaboration: Bridging the gap between education and mental health fields requires fostering an interdisciplinary understanding and shared language between professionals.

Role Clarity: Clearly defining the roles and responsibilities of ECEC teachers and mental health professionals in collaboration is essential to avoid duplication of efforts or confusion.

Scheduling Conflicts: Finding mutually convenient times for meetings and collaborative activities can be challenging, especially when dealing with multiple professionals and busy schedules.

• **Strategies to Address the Challenges:** *Effective collaboration between ECEC teachers and mental health professionals is critical for promoting children's socioemotional development and well-being. Addressing these challenges requires commitment, communication, and a shared vision of providing the best support for children's overall growth and success. Implementing strategies such as regular team*

meetings, professional development opportunities, and strong administrative support can help overcome these obstacles and create a successful collaborative partnership.

1.2. Promising practice: Promote collaboration between educators and mental health professionals

• **Country of Collection**: *Cyprus*

• **Related Result(s) of the PBS-ECEC + Informational Source:** *R1 & R3*
Sources: PBS-Guide, Needs assessment, Team Reflective Discussions, Ongoing communication with teachers.

• **Description of Practice:** *One promising practice for promoting collaboration between ECEC educators and mental health professionals is implementing the "Co-Consultation" or "Consultation Model." This approach encourages regular communication and collaboration between the two groups, allowing them to share expertise and work together to support children's socioemotional development effectively. A co-consultation model includes the appointment of a designated liaison or coordinator within the ECEC centre or school; organising scheduled meetings between ECEC educators and mental health professionals; setting specific goals and objectives for children's socioemotional development and creating personalised action plans; information sharing (i.e. observations, concerns, and strategies); collaboratively problem-solve challenging behaviours or socioemotional issues that arise in the classroom; offering joint professional development opportunities for ECEC educators and mental health professionals; involving parents in the collaborative process when appropriate; collecting data on the effectiveness of strategies and interventions used; emphasising an inclusive approach that considers the diverse needs of all children in the classroom; fostering a culture of mutual respect;*

• **Implications for Policy:** *Implementing the co-consultation model establishes a collaborative and supportive partnership between ECEC educators and mental health professionals. By working together, they can create a comprehensive and holistic approach to promoting children's socioemotional development, leading to improved outcomes for all children in the ECEC setting.*

• **Supporting Materials and Resources:** *PBS-ECEC Guide*

1.3. Policy recommendation: Implementing a co-consultation model establishes a collaborative and supportive partnership between ECEC educators and mental health professionals

• **Recommendations for Decision-makers and Educational Stakeholders**:

Policymakers can encourage collaboration between teachers and mental health professionals to better address the socio-emotional needs of children. Here are some recommendations that policymakers can implement:

Mandate Collaboration*: Enact policies that mandate collaboration between teachers and mental health professionals in ECEC centres. These policies should emphasise the joint responsibility of both parties in supporting children's socio-emotional development.*

Incentives and Recognition*: Offer incentives and recognition programs to ECEC centres and professionals who demonstrate effective collaboration in addressing socio-emotional needs. This could include awards, grants, or professional development opportunities.*

Professional Development: *Allocate resources for joint professional development opportunities that focus on enhancing collaboration skills and understanding each other's roles and expertise. These training programs should emphasise evidence-based practices in socio-emotional support.*

Co-Location of Services*: Consider co-locating mental health services within or near ECEC centres. Physical proximity can facilitate regular communication and collaboration between teachers and mental health professionals.*

Data Collection and Evaluation: Develop standardised data collection tools and evaluation measures to assess the effectiveness of collaborative interventions. Use the data to inform policy decisions and continuous improvement.

Community Partnerships: Foster partnerships between ECEC centres, mental health agencies, and community organisations. These partnerships can expand access to specialised services and resources for children with complex socio-emotional needs.

Funding Allocation: Allocate sufficient funding to support the implementation of collaborative efforts, including resources for training, meetings, and interventions. Adequate funding shows a commitment to the importance of collaboration in addressing socio-emotional needs.

• Expected Benefits of the Policy Recommendation:
By implementing these strategies, policymakers can create an enabling environment that fosters collaboration between teachers and mental health professionals. This collaborative approach will strengthen the support system for children's socio-emotional development and promote their overall well-being in ECEC settings.

• Supporting Evidence and Resources: *PBS-ECEC Guide*

IRELAND

Ireland. Key Idea 1: Promoting Continuous Professional Development

1.1. Lessons Learned and Challenges: *For effective implementation of any new behaviour strategy, including PW-PBS, all professionals working in ECEC settings must be given an opportunity to take part in regular Continuous Professional Development (CPD)*

• Related Result(s) of the PBS-ECEC + Informational Source: *Related results: R1 and R3. Source: needs assessment, meetings with R3 participants, team reflection.*

• Description: *CPD plays a crucial role in enhancing the skills and abilities of early childhood education and care professionals in Ireland. By participating in CPD, these professionals have the opportunity to stay updated on the latest research, trends, and best practices in their field. This enables them to implement novel strategies aimed at mitigating challenging behaviour and promoting the socioemotional competencies of young children.*

• Importance and Possible Impact: *CPD equips professionals with a deeper understanding of child development, effective communication techniques, and evidence-based interventions. This, in turn, enables them to create nurturing environments, establish positive relationships with children, and provide tailored support that meets the unique needs of each child. Ultimately, investing in CPD for early childhood education and care professionals benefits the overall development and well-being of young children in Ireland.*

• Possible Challenges: *Early childhood educators in Ireland face several challenges when it comes to accessing CPD. One significant challenge is the limited availability of affordable and accessible CPD programmes. Many educators may not have the financial resources to enrol in training courses or attend conferences, and even if they do, the geographical proximity of such opportunities can be an obstacle, especially for those in rural areas. Additionally, the lack of dedicated time for professional development within their work schedules can make it difficult for educators to participate in CPD activities. These challenges have implications for the professional growth and effectiveness of early childhood educators. Without access to CPD, educators may struggle to keep up with evolving research, pedagogical approaches, and best practices. This, in turn, can hinder their ability to provide high-quality care and education to young children, potentially impacting children's learning outcomes and socioemotional development. It is crucial to address these challenges and ensure equitable access to CPD opportunities*

for early childhood educators in order to promote their professional development and enhance the overall quality of early childhood education in Ireland.

Strategies to Address the Challenges*: To overcome the challenges related to access to CPD for early childhood educators in Ireland, several strategies can be implemented:*
Funding support: Providing financial assistance or subsidies for educators to attend CPD programmes can make them more affordable and accessible. Government funding, grants, or scholarships specifically designated for professional development can help alleviate the financial burden for educators.
Online and distance learning: Emphasising the availability of online CPD courses and webinars can address geographical limitations. Online platforms and virtual learning environments enable educators to access professional development opportunities from anywhere, eliminating the need for travel and reducing costs.
Flexible scheduling: Employers and educational institutions should prioritise and allocate dedicated time for professional development. This can be done by incorporating regular CPD sessions into work schedules or implementing flexible hours to accommodate educators' participation in training programmes.
Collaborative partnerships: Establishing partnerships between educational institutions, organisations, and early childhood centres can enhance access to CPD. These collaborations can facilitate the delivery of training programmes, workshops, or conferences in local communities, making them more convenient and accessible for educators.

1.2. Promising practice: *Preschool managers' willingness to provide CPD opportunities for their staff*

• **Country of Collection:** *Ireland*

• **Related Result(s) of the PBS-ECEC + Informational Source:** *Interest in participation in R3 shown by many preschools, meetings with leadership teams in preschools and feedback provided through the questionnaires of R3.*

• **Description of Practice:** *The vast interest in involvement in R3 of the PBS-ECEC project displays the willingness of preschool management teams to take part in CPD, as well as their wish to provide CPD opportunities to their staff and colleagues. Discussions held during online sessions with leadership teams during R3, as well as the feedback provided by trainers and teachers teams in their questionnaire responses during this result, also clearly highlight that CPD opportunities are sought out by early years educators in Ireland, but that they often face challenges like lack of time, lack of financial support, and lack of staffing resources. In contrast, primary school teachers are in a much better position in terms of primary qualifications and additional professional development than preschool staff. It is not compulsory for primary school teachers to take part in CPD courses; however, many feel it is their responsibility to do so and they actively and regularly enrol in additional courses (McMillan et al., 2016). Primary school teachers also receive the incentive of Extra Personal Vacation (EPV) days, which they can claim after completing an EPV-approved CPD course. However, despite not being eligible for similar incentives, the willingness that preschools displayed in taking part in R3 of the PBS-ECEC project showcases their understanding of the importance of taking part in CPD initiatives.*

• **Implications for Policy:** *CPD equips professionals with a deeper understanding of child development, effective communication techniques, and evidence-based interventions. This, in turn, enables them to create nurturing environments, establish positive relationships with children, and provide tailored support that meets the unique needs of each child. Ultimately, investing in CPD for early childhood education and care professionals benefits the overall development and wellbeing of young children in Ireland.*

• **Supporting Materials and Resources:** *McMillan, D. J., McConnell, B., & O'Sullivan, H. (2016). Continuing professional development–why bother? Perceptions and motivations of teachers in Ireland. Professional development in education, 42(1), 150-167.*

1.3. Policy recommendation: Promotion and funding of Continuous Professional Development opportunities for early years educators
• Recommendations for Decision-makers and Educational Stakeholders: *At the micro classroom/centre-level, prioritise the establishment of a supportive learning culture. Encourage early years educators to engage in reflective practices, self-assessment, and goal-setting to identify their professional development needs. Provide dedicated time and resources for educators to attend workshops, training sessions, and conferences that align with their interests and areas of growth. Foster a collaborative environment where educators can share their knowledge and experiences, engage in peer learning, and support each other's professional growth.*   *At the meso-level, enhance collaboration between educational settings, support organisations, and higher education institutions. Create partnerships and networks that promote the sharing of best practices, research, and resources related to early years education. Develop mentorship programmes where experienced professionals can guide and support novice educators. Establish mechanisms for ongoing dialogue and exchange of ideas, such as regular forums, seminars, or online platforms, that facilitate discussion and dissemination of CPD opportunities.*   *At the macro-level, policymakers and educational stakeholders should prioritise the recognition and investment in CPD for early years professionals. Develop comprehensive national strategies that emphasise the importance of continuous learning and growth in the early years sector. Allocate sufficient funding to support quality CPD initiatives, including scholarships, grants, and subsidies for educators to access training programmes. Ensure that policies and regulations promote and incentivise participation in CPD activities, such as incorporating CPD requirements into professional accreditation and licensing processes.*   *Furthermore, establish partnerships with relevant professional bodies and associations to align CPD programmes with industry standards and advancements. Regularly review and update curriculum frameworks and guidelines to reflect the evolving needs and priorities of early years education. Foster collaboration between policymakers, researchers, and practitioners to bridge the gap between research and practice and ensure that CPD opportunities are evidence-informed and meet the current needs of early years professionals.*
• Expected Benefits of the Policy Recommendation: *Implementing a policy that promotes continuous professional development (CPD) for early years professionals in Ireland can have a range of positive effects. It can enhance the quality of early years education by incorporating evidence-informed practices, increase professional competence and confidence among educators, foster collaboration and knowledge sharing, and ultimately lead to improved student outcomes. The beneficiaries of such a policy include early years educators, children, families, early years settings, and the education system as a whole.*

Key Idea 2: Creating Continuity and Promoting Communication Between Early Years Settings and Primary Schools in Ireland

2.1. Lessons Learned and Challenges: For the effective and sustainable implementation of PW-PBS, collaboration and communication between early years settings and primary schools in Ireland need to be promoted
• Related Result(s) of the PBS-ECEC + Informational Source: *Related results: R1 and R3. Source: needs assessment, meetings with R3 participants, team reflection.*
• Description: *Unlike children in Portugal, Greece and Cyprus, children as young as 4 years can enter primary schools in Ireland, some never having encountered formal education before or only attending early years settings for a short period of time. For this reason, effective PW-PBS implementation must*

include appropriate communication and collaboration channels between early years settings and primary schools to ensure a smooth transition and the continuity and sustainability of the approach.

• **Importance and Possible Impact:** *Effective communication and collaboration between early years settings and primary schools in Ireland is of utmost importance, particularly considering that Irish children enter primary school at an earlier age compared to many European countries. Maintaining a strong connection between these two educational stages ensures continuity of practices and a seamless transition for children. Collaboration allows for the sharing of valuable information, such as strategies used to mitigate challenging behaviours and promote socioemotional learning in preschool. By working together, early years settings and primary schools can build upon the foundations laid in preschool, ensuring that children's development and learning experiences are supported consistently throughout their educational journey.*

• **Possible Challenges:** *Several challenges arise in maintaining effective communication and collaboration between early years settings and primary schools in Ireland. Firstly, the difference in educational structures and curricula between the two settings can pose challenges in aligning practices and ensuring continuity for children. Additionally, varying policies, procedures, and priorities can create barriers to seamless collaboration. Limited opportunities for formal information sharing and time constraints for communication can further hinder effective collaboration. Lastly, differences in organisational cultures, resources, and professional development opportunities may impact the level of collaboration and shared understanding between the two sectors.*

• **Strategies to Address the Challenges:** *Overcoming the challenges mentioned above requires ongoing efforts to foster strong partnerships between early years settings and primary schools. This involves establishing regular communication channels and platforms that facilitate the exchange of information, such as transition meetings, joint training sessions, and shared documentation. Open channels of communication enable educators to discuss children's individual needs, progress, and strategies for supporting socioemotional development. Moreover, promoting mutual understanding through collaborative problem-solving and shared decision-making helps build a shared vision and common goals. By continuously fostering these partnerships, maintaining open lines of communication, and promoting mutual understanding, the smooth transition and consistent support for children's socioemotional development and learning can be ensured across the early years and primary school settings.*

2.2. Promising Practice: Efforts made by Irish preschools to communicate and collaborate with primary schools

• **Country of Collection:** *Ireland*

• **Related Result(s) of the PBS-ECEC + Informational Source:** *Discussions with preschool educators during R1 and R3 related to their efforts to communicate and collaborate with primary schools.*

• **Description of Practice:** *A number of preschool educators who took part in the PBS-ECEC project across results 1 and 3 described their efforts to communicate and collaborate with local primary schools. Some examples described included: initiating communication with primary schools well in advance, preferably during the enrolment period, establishing a designated liaison person from each institution to coordinate and facilitate the transition process, and creating individualised transition plans for students with SEN in collaboration with the primary school. These are certainly promising practices in relation to smoothing transitions and ensuring the continuity of PW-PBS approaches, but unfortunately, they are not widely adapted in Ireland.*

• **Implications for Policy:** *There is a need for greater recognition and support for these collaborative approaches in official educational policies and guidelines. By acknowledging the importance of effective communication and collaboration between preschools and primary schools, policymakers can encourage and promote the widespread adoption of such practices. This may involve providing resources, training,*

and incentives to facilitate and enhance communication, collaboration, and the continuity of positive behaviour support approaches during transitions for young children.

• **Supporting Materials and Resources:**
https://ncca.ie/media/1504/transition_to_primary_research_report_19.pdf

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2.3. Policy recommendation: Foster a culture of collaboration, communication and continuity

• **Recommendations for Decision-makers and Educational Stakeholders:**
At the micro classroom/centre-level, foster a culture of collaboration, communication, and continuity. Establish clear communication channels and protocols to facilitate the sharing of information, progress updates, and student records between preschools and primary schools. Encourage regular meetings and discussions to align philosophies, practices, and goals. Develop shared resources and materials that support a seamless transition and continuity in children's learning experiences. Acknowledge and celebrate successes in collaboration and evaluate practices to identify areas for improvement and set new goals.

At the meso-level, establish effective partnerships between preschools, primary schools, policymakers, researchers, professionals, and families. Create mechanisms for ongoing collaboration and communication through regular meetings, workshops, and conferences. Encourage the exchange of perspectives and expertise to inform decision-making processes and ensure alignment between policies, research, and best practices. Promote the active involvement of all stakeholders in developing strategies and initiatives that enhance collaboration, communication, and continuity between preschools and primary schools.

At the macro-level, develop policies that explicitly recognise and emphasise the importance of collaboration, communication, and continuity between preschools and primary schools. Include language in relevant documents such as curricula, curriculum guidelines, and legislation that highlights the significance of these practices. Foster a team-based approach to positive behaviour support and socio-emotional learning, emphasising collaborative practices among all early childhood education and care (ECEC) professionals, coordinators, directors, and other stakeholders. Support the creation of comprehensive frameworks that guide the implementation of effective communication strategies, collaboration models, and mechanisms for ensuring continuity across the preschool to primary school transition.

• **Expected Benefits of the Policy Recommendation:** *Implementing the aforementioned policy recommendations to promote collaboration, communication, and continuity between preschools and primary schools in Ireland could yield several benefits. Firstly, it could ensure smooth transitions for children, providing them with a seamless educational journey from preschool to primary school. This continuity enhances their social, emotional, and cognitive development, leading to improved learning outcomes. Secondly, effective collaboration and communication foster a shared understanding and alignment between educators, promoting consistent pedagogical approaches, assessment practices, and support strategies. This strengthens the overall quality of education and ensures that children receive consistent, tailored support based on their individual needs. Additionally, establishing partnerships between stakeholders, such as policymakers, researchers, professionals, and families, encourages the exchange of expertise, research findings, and best practices. This collaboration facilitates evidence-informed decision-making, enhances professional development opportunities, and leads to a more holistic and effective educational system. Ultimately, the implementation of these policy recommendations supports the wellbeing and success of children, empowers educators, and fosters a collaborative educational environment in Ireland.*

IRELAND Key Idea 3: Mitigating Time Constraints

3.1. Lessons Learned and Challenges: *For effective implementation of PW-PBS, time constraints, which often pose a challenge to early years educators, should be mitigated*
• **Related Result(s) of the PBS-ECEC + Informational Source:** *Related results: R1 and R3. Source: needs assessment, meetings with R3 participants, team reflection.*
• **Description:** *Time constraints can pose significant challenges, hindering the educators' ability to fully engage in professional development, learn new strategies, and effectively implement PBS practices. By addressing these time constraints, educators can have dedicated time to training sessions, workshops, and collaborative planning with colleagues. Providing adequate time for learning and implementation allows educators to develop a deeper understanding of PBS principles and techniques, tailor interventions to individual children's needs, and consistently apply positive behaviour strategies.*
• **Importance and Possible Impact:** *By allocating dedicated time for professional development, educators can deepen their knowledge and skills, leading to greater confidence and competence. Consistent implementation of PBS strategies becomes possible, allowing for personalised interventions tailored to individual children's needs. Collaboration with families and other professionals becomes more feasible, promoting a team-based approach to supporting children's behaviour. Ultimately, this helps create positive learning environments, enhances social-emotional development, and improves outcomes for children.*
• **Possible Challenges:** *Early years educators in Ireland face significant challenges related to time constraints. Balancing the demands of curriculum delivery, administrative tasks, and meeting the individual needs of children within limited time frames can be overwhelming. Time constraints often limit opportunities for professional development and training, preventing educators from staying updated on best practices and evidence-based approaches. Additionally, the need to fulfil administrative responsibilities and adhere to curriculum guidelines can leave educators with limited time for individualised instruction and interventions. These time pressures can impact the implementation of positive behaviour support strategies, hindering educators' ability to provide consistent and targeted support for children's social-emotional development.*
• **Strategies to Address the Challenges:** *Addressing the time constraints faced by early years educators in Ireland requires a comprehensive approach that values and prioritises time allocation for professional development, collaboration, and personalised interventions. Providing dedicated time for educators to engage in ongoing professional development ensures they have the knowledge and skills to effectively support children's learning and wellbeing. Fostering a culture of collaboration enables educators to share best practices, learn from one another, and collectively problem-solve to address challenges. Moreover, allocating time for personalised interventions allows educators to tailor their approach to meet the unique needs of each child, fostering individual growth and development. By recognising the importance of time in these key areas, early years education can be enriched, leading to improved outcomes for children and a more supportive and effective learning environment.*

3.2. Promising practice: Online training of PBS-ECEC project participants allowing for more flexibility
• **Country of Collection:** *Ireland*
• **Related Result(s) of the PBS-ECEC + Informational Source:** *The participants of R3 of the PBS-ECEC project were trained online and were given access to online learning resources which they evaluated positively.*
• **Description of Practice:** *The training being conducted online has provided a valuable opportunity for greater time flexibility. Educators can engage in training sessions at their own pace and convenience, allowing them to balance their professional responsibilities with their personal commitments. This flexibility has enabled educators to allocate time specifically for training and implementation, while also supporting their colleagues in finding suitable time slots to participate. By embracing online training, early*

years educators in Ireland have demonstrated their willingness to invest in their professional growth, overcome time constraints, and actively collaborate to create a positive and supportive learning environment for children.

• **Implications for Policy:** *The implications for policy related to the information on online training of early years educators are significant. Policymakers should recognise the value of online training as a flexible and accessible mode of professional development. This realisation can lead to the formulation of policies that support and promote the availability of high-quality online training opportunities for early years educators. Providing adequate resources and infrastructure to facilitate online training, such as access to reliable internet connections and appropriate digital tools, becomes crucial.*

3.3. Policy recommendation: Mitigate time constraints by embracing online learning

• **Recommendations for Decision-makers and Educational Stakeholders:**

At the micro classroom/centre-level, embrace online training as a means to mitigate time constraints. Educators should be encouraged to engage in online professional development courses that offer flexibility in scheduling, allowing them to learn at their own pace. Establish communication channels and guidelines to facilitate the sharing of information and resources related to online training opportunities. Acknowledge and celebrate successes in completing online training programmes and evaluate their effectiveness in enhancing educators' skills and knowledge. Set new goals for ongoing professional development through online platforms.

At the meso-level, establish effective partnerships with stakeholders to promote online learning opportunities. Collaborate with policymakers, educational settings, researchers, professionals, and families to create mechanisms that support and incentivise participation in online training. Foster systematic discussions and the exchange of perspectives to identify the specific training needs of early years educators. Encourage decision-making processes that ensure policies align with current research and best practices in online training for mitigating time constraints.

At the macro-level, develop policies that explicitly recognise and prioritise the importance of online training for early years educators. Ensure that documents, such as curricula, curriculum guidelines, and legislation, include language emphasising the value of online training to mitigate time constraints. Policies should highlight the benefits of flexible learning schedules, access to digital resources, and support for educators in engaging with online training platforms. Foster collaboration among all stakeholders, emphasising the role of coordinators, directors, and other professionals in supporting and promoting the use of online training to address time constraints effectively.

• **Expected Benefits of the Policy Recommendation:** *Implementing the above policy recommendations to mitigate time constraints through online training holds several potential benefits. Firstly, it allows early years educators to engage in professional development at their own pace and convenience, fostering a culture of lifelong learning. This flexibility promotes continuous growth and enhances educators' knowledge and skills, ultimately benefiting children's learning experiences. Secondly, establishing effective partnerships and collaborative mechanisms at different levels ensures alignment between policies, research, and best practices in online training. This collaborative approach encourages the exchange of perspectives, fosters innovation, and promotes evidence-informed decision-making. Lastly, developing policies that explicitly recognise and prioritise online training for early years educators demonstrates a commitment to addressing time constraints and supporting professional development. This recognition can lead to increased resources, improved access to online platforms, and the integration of digital tools, ultimately enhancing the overall quality of early years education in Ireland.*

4.1. Lessons Learned and Challenges: *For effective implementation of PW-PBS, a diligent and engaged leadership team is necessary*

• **Related Result(s) of the PBS-ECEC + Informational Source:** *Related results: R3. Source: meetings with R3 participants, feedback provided through R3 questionnaires, team reflection.*

• **Description:** *The leadership team plays a crucial role in the successful implementation of PW-PBS in early years settings. Comprised of knowledgeable and dedicated individuals, the leadership team provides guidance, direction, and support to educators throughout the process. They establish a clear vision and mission for the implementation, ensuring that PW-PBS aligns with the values and goals of the setting. The team collaboratively develops strategies, policies, and procedures that facilitate the integration of PBS into daily practices. They provide ongoing professional development, training, and resources to educators, fostering a shared understanding of PBS principles and techniques.*

• **Importance and Possible Impact:** *Through their expertise, commitment, and effective communication, the leadership team drives the successful adoption and sustainability of PBS practices, creating a positive and supportive learning environment for children.*

• **Possible Challenges:** *Preschools face several challenges when forming a leadership team for PW-PBS implementation. One significant challenge is staff shortages, which can limit the pool of available individuals to take on leadership roles. With limited personnel, identifying educators who possess the necessary skills, knowledge, and commitment to lead the implementation becomes a challenge. Additionally, time constraints pose another obstacle. Educators in preschools often have multiple responsibilities, including classroom management, curriculum delivery, and individualised support for children. These time constraints can make it difficult for educators to dedicate sufficient time and effort to serving on the leadership team.*

• **Strategies to Address the Challenges:** *Overcoming the challenges of staff shortages and time constraints in forming a leadership team for Positive PW-PBS implementation necessitates a deliberate and collaborative approach. Careful planning is crucial to identify potential leaders and assess their qualifications and abilities to guide the implementation process effectively. Prioritisation is essential in ensuring that leadership development receives the necessary attention and resources amidst competing demands. A shared commitment among stakeholders, including administrators, educators, and support staff, is vital in providing support to emerging leaders, fostering a culture of professional growth, and allocating dedicated time for leadership development activities. Developing strategies such as mentorship programmes, targeted professional development opportunities, and collaborative decision-making processes can further promote the cultivation of leadership skills within the preschool setting.*

4.2. Promising practice: Forming smaller leadership teams

• **Country of Collection:** *Ireland*

• **Related Result(s) of the PBS-ECEC + Informational Source:** *Related results: R3. Information source: Discussions with leadership teams and questionnaire feedback.*

• **Description of Practice:** *Where staff shortages in preschools were an issue, leadership teams of the R3 result were made up of a small number of staff members. In some instances, only one staff member (usually the preschool owner or manager), became the "leadership team" on behalf of the preschool. While staff shortages in ECEC in Ireland are an issue, some preschool settings simply operate on a very small scale, therefore the suggestion of setting up a leadership team consisting of 4-5 members of staff may simply not be feasible.*

• **Implications for Policy:** *Policy guidelines should acknowledge the diversity of preschool settings and consider context-specific factors, such as the size, resources, and operational capacity of each preschool. Providing differentiated guidance that takes into account the unique characteristics of individual*

93

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preschools can ensure that the implementation of PW-PBS remains realistic, feasible, and aligned with the available resources.

4.3. Policy recommendation: Focus on addressing staff shortages and allow for flexibility in determining the composition of leadership teams
• **Recommendations for Decision-makers and Educational Stakeholders:** *At the micro classroom/centre-level, there should be a focus on addressing staff shortages and resulting leadership challenges within individual preschools. Policymakers should recognise the realities of staff shortages in the early childhood education and care (ECEC) sector and take steps to increase the number of qualified professionals. This can be achieved through expanded training programmes, incentives to attract individuals to the profession, and support for ongoing professional development opportunities. By investing in the ECEC workforce, it becomes more feasible to establish effective PW-PBS leadership teams within preschool settings. Additionally, PW-PBS implementation should allow for flexibility in determining the composition of leadership teams, particularly in small-scale preschools where establishing a larger team may be impractical. Alternative leadership structures, such as assigning the existing staff members, such as the preschool owner or manager, as the leadership team, should be considered. These individuals should be provided with targeted training and resources to enhance their capacity in implementing PW-PBS strategies and managing behaviour support plans.* *Additionally, PW-PBS implementation should allow for flexibility in determining the composition of leadership teams, particularly in small-scale preschools where establishing a larger team may be impractical. Alternative leadership structures, such as assigning the existing staff members, such as the preschool owner or manager, as the leadership team, should be considered. These individuals should be provided with targeted training and resources to enhance their capacity in implementing PW-PBS strategies and managing behaviour support plans.* *At the macro-level, policymakers should provide context-specific guidance that acknowledges the diversity of preschool settings. Recognising the operational capacity and available resources of each preschool, policy guidelines should be adaptable and flexible. Policymakers should offer differentiated guidance that considers the unique characteristics of small-scale preschools, ensuring that the implementation of PW-PBS remains realistic and feasible for all preschools, regardless of their size. This context-specific approach can help preschools overcome staffing and leadership challenges while effectively implementing PW-PBS strategies.*
• **Expected Benefits of the Policy Recommendation:** *The recommended policies and actions have several expected benefits. Firstly, increasing the number of qualified professionals in the ECEC sector and providing targeted training and resources to existing staff members will enhance their capacity to implement PW-PBS strategies and effectively manage behaviour support plans. This will result in improved behaviour management and a more positive learning environment for preschool children, promoting their social-emotional development and overall wellbeing. Secondly, fostering collaborative partnerships among preschools and stakeholders will allow for the sharing of resources, best practices, and support, ultimately leading to a more sustainable implementation of PW-PBS programmes. This collaborative approach will leverage collective expertise and enhance the quality of behaviour support across preschool settings. Lastly, providing context-specific guidance and continuous evaluation of PW-PBS implementation will ensure that strategies are tailored to the diverse needs and capacities of preschools. This will promote realistic and feasible implementation, leading to increased programme effectiveness and positive behavioural outcomes for children in the long run.*

GREECE

Greece Key Idea 1: The promotion of positive behaviour in the Greek Curriculum for Early Childhood Education

1.1. Lessons Learned and Challenges: The introduction of the Curriculum for Early Childhood Education in Greece (2023) and its relation to the PBS-ECEC project
• **Related Result(s) of the PBS-ECEC + Informational Source:** Result 1, R1.A2.1 & R1.A2.3 Literature Review Ministry Decision Y.A 13646/D1/10-2-2023. Curriculum for Early Childhood Education 2023. Official Government Gazette of the Government of the Hellenic Republic (Government Gazette 687/B/10-2-2023).
• **Description:** The former Greek Early Childhood National Curriculum for kindergarten was introduced in 2003. The curriculum was designed to cover five learning areas: literacy, mathematics, science and environment, creation and expression, and computer science. However, it adopted a holistic approach, as it aims to promote children's physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development (Greek Ministry of Education – Greek Pedagogical Institute, 2002). From this holistic perspective of children's development, the development of social-emotional skills was diffused in all learning areas in the national curriculum for early childhood education. Special emphasis on social and emotional learning was placed in the section on human environment and interaction. Later in 2014 the curriculum for the kindergarten (Greek Ministry of Education - Greek Pedagogical Institute, 2014) introduced the section on personal and social development as a separate learning area of the programme emphasising the development of children's social competencies. Some of the basic principles of the Greek national curriculum for kindergarten regarding socioemotional development were to support children "delimit their behaviours" (p. 72), "resolve conflicts" (p. 76), "follow the rules" (p. 77), "to promote children's autonomy" (p. 76) and "to support children's self-regulation" (p. 70). Thus, the Greek curriculum for kindergarten was implying the importance of promoting children's socioemotional development. Recently, in February 2023, it was introduced in the Greek educational system the newly developed curriculum for kindergarten (Ministry Decision for the Curriculum for Early Childhood Education in Greece. Y.A 13646/D1/10-2-2023). In line with the former curriculum, the promotion of children's social and emotional development remains at the core of the curriculum. However, the novelty lies in the explicit reference to the need for promoting positive behaviours in kindergarten, a concept that was previously implied but not explicitly stated. For instance, one of the foundational principles on which the curriculum is grounded is that "the child learns to develop as he or she comes into contact with the environment, the objects and situations; and interacts with significant others. Positive and supportive relationships are the key elements in this process, as the social nature of learning being recognised". Within this context, learning is organising in four thematic fields and the thematic units they include. The thematic field "Child, Self and Society" and its thematic unit "Personal and Social-Emotional Development" are closely linked to the PBS-ECEC framework. This revised curriculum reflects a more explicit and intentional focus on fostering positive behaviours and socioemotional development, thereby reinforcing the importance of a nurturing and supportive learning environment for young children.
• **Importance and Possible Impact:** The introduction of the thematic unit "Personal and Socio-Emotional Development" in the revised Curriculum for Early Childhood Education in Greece with emphasis given in the promotion of positive behaviours, demonstrates a close alignment and direct support of the objectives set forth by the PBS-ECEC project, which aims to support ECEC professionals to promote socioemotional development and positive behaviours in ECEC settings.

The integration of the PBS-ECEC framework into the revised official curriculum for ECE can provide a more holistic and comprehensive approach to early childhood education, which will contribute to the creation of a supportive and positive classroom environment, enhancing the overall learning experience for children and professionals.

• Possible Challenges:

In the context of a rapidly evolving modern society, which presents continual challenges to individuals and communities at local, national, and global levels, it is imperative to provide support and guidance to preschool-age children. Equipping these young learners with a positive self-perception, an understanding of their environment, and effective strategies to address diverse challenges becomes crucial. Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) settings hold significant potential in shaping responsible and engaged citizens, fostering values rooted in humanism, and promoting social justice.

The integration of the PW-PBS framework into the recently developed Greek curriculum for ECEC can offer a valuable opportunity for children to understand the interconnections between themselves and others, to comprehend their own and others' different levels of social behaviour and the context of everyday experience. It can also contribute to the elaboration of issues of concern in relation to personal development and action, individually and collectively, in order to be able to set goals aimed at sustainable development, personal, social and environmental awareness and well-being.

• Strategies to Address the Challenges:

Future trainings in Greece should make reference on the links among PBS-ECEC objectives and the thematic fields and units of the recently developed curriculum for ECEC.

1.2. Promising practice: A proposed practice for social, emotional and behavioural management at preschool

• Country of Collection: Greece

• Related Result(s) of the PBS-ECEC + Informational Source:

Result 1, Result 3

• Description of Practice:

Context: Every day and occasional situations can develop into a rich learning experience when they are used by ECEC professionals to develop a bridge between the curriculum, children's interests and important events in their lives.

Goal: To help children recognise appropriate and acceptable ways of managing and releasing emotions

Key Components: Social emotional and behavioural management

Implementation: In relation to situations that cause negative emotions which reported by their peers, children make suggestions on how they can feel better. In small groups, they design a circle (a wheel of options), which they divide into equal parts and write down in their own way (e.g. with drawings, pictures, etc.) practices of managing emotions and behaviour in relation to issues they face in the classroom.

Impact: This practice may gradually have an impact on the development of children's skills to anticipate the consequences of specific behaviours and devise strategies for emotional discharge; adapt emotional responses according to the context and communication situations; and to manage failure and adjust their goals.

Next Steps: Children can make an individual emotion or behaviour management wheel to take home and utilise with their parents. Moreover, they engage in discussions about their experience after a few days at school. Children can also collaborate with children from other preschool classes to develop posters addressing the management of emotions and behaviours in the preschool environment.

Evaluation: To assess their emotional experiences at school, children reflect on their day using the "emotion thermometer," describing and explaining their feelings (Harju et al., 2019).

• Implications for Policy:

Through the implementation of developmentally appropriate learning experiences, such as the proposed practice, children will have the opportunity to gradually foster a positive self-conception and an accurate understanding of their capabilities. Moreover, they can acquire the ability to effectively regulate their emotions and behaviour, while cultivating a positive attitude towards the learning process.

• Supporting Materials and Resources:

Harju, E., Michel, G., & Roser, K. (2019). A systematic review on the use of the emotion thermometer in individuals diagnosed with cancer. *Psycho-Oncology, 28*(9), 1803-1818. https://doi.org/10.1002/pon.5172

Ministry Decision Y.A 13646/D1/10-2-2023. Curriculum for Early Childhood Education 2023. Official Government Gazette of the Government of the Hellenic Republic (Government Gazette 687/B/10-2-2023).

Penteri, E., Chlapana, E., Meliou, K., Filippidi, A., & Marinatou, T. (2022). *Curriculum for the Early Childhood Education - Expanded Version (2nd Edition, 2022 IEP)*. Action for the Upgrading of Curricula and Creation of Educational Materials for Primary and Secondary Education" of the IEP with MIS 5035542.

1.3. Policy recommendation: Integrating Social-Emotional and Behavioural Management Practices in ECEC Curriculum

• Recommendations for Decision-makers and Educational Stakeholders:

Policy recommendations at national level: Early childhood education curricula should focus on promoting the integration of social-emotional and behavioural management practices. This entails incorporating comprehensive guidelines and standards that underscore the significance of fostering emotional intelligence and self-regulation skills in young children. The Greek Curriculum for Early Childhood Education (2023) has integrated such guidelines.

Policy recommendation at centre-level: ECEC professionals should be trained and encouraged to create a supportive and nurturing environment that values children's socio-emotional development. They can allocate time and resources for professionals to collaborate and design learning activities ensuring that socio-emotional learning is integrated into the daily programme. Regular assessment and evaluation of the practice's impact on children's development should also be encouraged.

• Expected Benefits of the Policy Recommendation:

ECEC members will acquire social skills such as empathy, cooperation and conflict resolution, which will enable them to build healthier relationships. In addition, they will acquire skills in self-regulation, coping with difficult situations and building resilience, which are considered essential to cope with the challenges of modern societies.

• Supporting Evidence and Resources:

Ministry Decision Y.A 13646/D1/10-2-2023. Curriculum for Early Childhood Education 2023. Official Government Gazette of the Government of the Hellenic Republic (Government Gazette 687/B/10-2-2023).

Penteri, E., Chlapana, E., Meliou, K., Filippidi, A., & Marinatou, T. (2022). *Curriculum for the Early Childhood Education - Expanded Version (2nd Edition, 2022 IEP)*. Action for the Upgrading of Curricula and Creation of Educational Materials for Primary and Secondary Education" of the IEP with MIS 5035542.

Greece Key Idea 2: Time of Implementing PW-PBS framework for Sustainable Impact

2.1. Lessons Learned and Challenges: The short timeline for the trainings and pilot implementations of the PW-PBS framework

• Related Result(s) of the PBS-ECEC + Informational Source:

The present Key Idea is related to Result 3 of the PBS-ECEC.
The information was obtained from the data collected through the completion of three questionnaires, which are thoroughly outlined in the R3/A3: Case Study Report from Greece. Additionally, valuable feedback was gathered through meetings with trainers and Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) educators.

• Description:
The key lesson learned from the implementation of "Result 3 – Impact assessment study and practice recommendations" in Greece is that a longer implementation time significantly would probably enhances the potential for sustainable impact on children's socioemotional development and positive behaviours. Findings of the three questionnaires distribution in Greece showed a gradual reduction in the percentages of children's behavioural problems and socio-emotional difficulties before and after the use of PW-PBS practices. These practises that initially ran for only four months demonstrated modest improvements, but it was observed that the full benefits of the interventions emerged gradually over time. Extending the implementation to a year or more would allow for deeper internalisation of the practices and more profound changes in children's behaviour, social skills, and emotional well-being.

• Importance and Possible Impact:
The importance of extending the implementation time lies in providing children with sufficient exposure and practice of the positive behaviour support strategies. This prolonged engagement would allow the interventions to become embedded in ECEC centres' daily routines and thought processes, leading to lasting effects on children's socioemotional development. Moreover, an extended timeframe would enable educators to train in depth, refine their PW-PBS practices, and adapt to the evolving needs of children.

• Possible Challenges:
Challenges identified during the PBS-ECEC project encompassed the endeavour to sustain engagement from certain educators. A decline in educators' participation was observed from the beginning to the end of the pilot implementation. Furthermore, staff turnover across the ECEC centres and upholding consistency within the preschool, even during the school year, emerged as areas of concern, based on participants feedback. PBS-ECEC is designed to facilitate the development of a school culture that is unequivocal, positive, and unwavering, necessitating the involvement of all preschool members to achieve this objective. This challenge implicates inevitably additional time for ECEC members to adapt their practices accordingly.

• Strategies to Address the Challenges:
Preschool centres effectively addressed this challenge by conducting meetings at both the individual preschool centre level and the broader preschool level, under the supervision and guidance of regional inspector responsible for preschool matters in the respective location of the preschools. According to participants feedback these meetings enhanced their collaboration and gave them the opportunity to exchange their concerns, ideas and suggestions on the implementation of the PW-PBS practices. In addition, the asynchronous training through the online modules provided them the flexibility to manage time issues.

2.2. Promising practice: Extending Implementation Time for Sustainable Impact
• Country of Collection: Greece
• Related Result(s) of the PBS-ECEC + Informational Source: Result 3 R3/A3: Case Study Report from Greece Participants' feedback

Team reflection
• **Description of Practice:** Context: The practice can be implemented in multiple preschools over a span of one year. Goal: The primary objective will be to implement the PW-PBS framework during a school year to foster positive behaviours and socioemotional development in preschools. Evaluation tools will be used to assess possible changes during the school year. Key Components: The practice will involve teacher training, behaviour support planning, family engagement, and continuous mentorship. Rationale: Research indicates that longer intervention periods are associated with more lasting positive impacts on children's socioemotional well-being. In addition, the pilot implementation in Greece under the Result 3 showed a slight reduction of children's behavioural problems and socio-emotional difficulties. Moreover, educators were satisfied by the training and the training modules, they found them helpful and supportive for their own socioemotional needs and their daily practice at preschools (R3/A3: Case Study Report from Greece). Implementation: The programme will begin at the first days of the school year. Coaches will train the trainers and trainers will in turn train the teachers. Overall, the proposed practise will follow the PBS-ECEC methodology subject to the following modifications: a) give more time for the trainees to familiarise themselves with the training modules and material; b) provide evaluation tools to teachers, children and parents at three points in time during the school year to assess any variations in children's behaviour and socio-emotional well-being. Results: Consistent with the previous results of the PBS-ECEC pilot in Greece, children are expected to show improvements in behaviour, social skills and emotional regulation, with a significant reduction in challenging behaviours. However, the use of assessment tools in the context of a longitudinal study will allow for in-depth identification of points of potential differentiation and the multiple factors that may be causing the changes. Next Steps: The project can expand to additional preschools and assess the long-term effects as the children transition to elementary school. Evaluation: Ongoing data collection and analysis will be conducted to monitor progress and assess the long-term impact of the intervention.
• **Implications for Policy:** Extending the implementation time in PBS-ECEC projects has the potential to become a best practice. It can offer a more holistic and sustained approach to promoting socioemotional development in early childhood, leading to long-term positive outcomes.
• **Supporting Materials and Resources:** R3/A3: Case Study Report from Greece

2.3. Policy recommendation: Extending Implementation Time for Sustainable Impact
• **Recommendations for Decision-makers and Educational Stakeholders:** National Level: Implementation of the PBS-ECEC projects at national level, recognising the value of its long-term impact on children's development. Local Level: Foster collaborations between educational stakeholders and community organisations to support longer-term outcomes for preschools. Centre-Level: Allocate resources for sustained implementation of the PBS-ECEC framework, including professional development for staff and family engagement activities.

• **Expected Benefits of the Policy Recommendation:**
    o   Greater positive changes in children's socioemotional development and behaviour.
    o   Enhanced teacher expertise and commitment to evidence-based practices.

- o   Strengthened partnerships between preschools, families, and the community.
- o   Long-term benefits on children's academic success and overall well-being.

• Supporting Evidence and Resources: *Add links, documents, references, etc*.
R3/A3: Case Study Report from Greece

Greece Key Idea 3: Evaluation of the PW-PBS practices at ECEC centres

3.1. Lessons Learned and Challenges: *Limited opportunities for using assessment and monitoring methods in ECEC centres during the pilot implementation*
• Related Result(s) of the PBS-ECEC + Informational Source: Result 1, R1/A2.2: Focus Group – Report from Greece Result 3, R3/A3: Case Study Report from Greece Participants' feedback, Team reflection
• Description: The matter of evaluation was raised by the participants in Greece during both R1 and R3. Specifically, in the focus group conducted under R1, participants mentioned several practices they employ to prevent challenging behaviours and address behaviour difficulties. One approach involved utilising an initial diagnostic evaluation at the beginning of the school year to assess children's social-emotional development maturity, thereby informing the design of corresponding practices. Furthermore, under R2, during the meetings with the trainers, ECEC professionals also noticed the importance of employing assessment tools to monitor both the effectiveness of practices and children's developmental progress. In response to the question "what did you enjoy most about the learning content?" in Questionnaire 2 - Post-Training Questionnaire, some representative answers included "module 5: assessment and monitoring methods" and "the list of examples of assessment tools in module 5" (R3/A3: Case Study Report from Greece). However, during the meetings, participants also expressed concerns regarding the practical application of the proposed assessment tools, particularly within the constraints of a relatively short timeframe.
• Importance and Possible Impact: This lesson refers to the importance of measuring changes in ECEC professionals' and children's positive behaviours and socio-emotional development before and after PW-PBS practices implementation. By employing assessment instruments and data-driven evaluations, the professionals will gain valuable insights into the effectiveness of the interventions and identified areas for improvement.
• Possible Challenges: Several assessment tools have been created specifically with primary or secondary schools. A few tools are for early years. The proposed assessment tools are not translated in Greek. In addition, their psychometric properties are not yet evaluated in Greece. An exception is the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) (Bimbou-Nakou et al., 2001).
• Strategies to Address the Challenges: ECEC professionals have to adjust the tools (Fox & Perez Binder, 2015) Use alternative evaluation methods, for instance, observations, portfolios, educator's and parent's ratings.

3.2. Promising practice: *Focusing on the evaluation of the impact of PW-PBS practices on children's socio-emotional development and behaviours*
• Country of Collection: Greece
• Related Result(s) of the PBS-ECEC + Informational Source: Result 2 – Online Modules of PW-PBS Instructional Practices in Early Childhood and Care Settings Result 3 – Impact assessment study and practice recommendations

- **Description of Practice:**
Context: The practice can be implemented in a preschool centre during a school year.
Goal: The primary objective will be to assess the impact of PW-PBS implementation on children's socioemotional learning and challenging behaviours. To achieve this goal the preschool educator can choose an appropriate assessment tool from module 5 of the PBS-ECEC platform or use the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) (Bimbou-Nakou et al., 2001), which is already standardised in the Greek educational context.
Key Components: Use the training modules of the PBS-ECEC project for implementing the PW-PBS framework and an assessment tool.
Evidence: The use of monitoring and evaluation methods consist of an integral part of the PW-PBS framework. ECEC professional should use valid and reliable assessment tools to identify which children are in need of more targeted support. However, in practice preschool educators often do not have the time or training to formally test children's knowledge (Sutcher et al., 2019). In addition, qualitative findings from Greece under the R3 showed that ECEC professional did not have the time to apply any assessment method during the implementation.
Rationale: The rationale behind this practice is to highlight the critical importance of using evaluation methods and tools in practice.
Implementation: This practice can begin at the first days of the school year. ECEC team will collect evidence-based data by using the assessment tools during the implementation of the PW-PBS practices. After analysing the gathered data, ECEC teams should identify successes, ongoing challenging behaviours, and their potential causes. Once the areas of improvement for continuing challenging behaviours are recognised, the practices should be reviewed and adjusted accordingly.
Results: Data from the evaluation tools can help ECEC professionals identify children's needs at an early stage and design tailored support. They can also inform their choices about the most effective practices.
Next Steps: Using the evaluation from a holistic perspective, ECEC professionals can use the tools to assess other aspects of children's development and include data from parent's reports.

- **Implications for Policy:**
The use of evaluation tools is essential for providing targeted support, evidence-based decision-making, and monitoring progress.

- **Supporting Materials and Resources:** *Add links, documents, references, etc.*
Fox, L., & Perez Binder, D. (2015). *Getting Preschool Classrooms on Board with School-Wide Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (SW-PBIS)*. https://challengingbehavior.org/docs/Get-on-board-SW-PBIS.pdf
PBS-ECEC (2023). Module 5 - Assessment and monitoring methods. Retrieved from: https://pbs-ecec.ese.ipp.pt
Sutcher, L., Darling-Hammond, L., & Carver-Thomas, D. (2019). Understanding teacher shortages: An analysis of teacher supply and demand in the United States. Education policy analysis archives, 27(35).
Bimpou-Nakou, I. Stoyanidou, A., Kioseoglou, G. & Papageorgiou, V. (2002). *Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire.* In Stalikas, A., Triliva, S. & Roussis, P. (eds.) Psychometric tools in Greece (pp. 411-413). Hellenic Letters.

3.3. Policy recommendation: *Incentives for using evaluation*

- **Recommendations for Decision-makers and Educational Stakeholders:**
National Level: Advocate for the incorporation of evaluation tools in early childhood education policies, emphasising their role in promoting evidence-based practices and enhancing programme quality.
Local Level: Provide resources (e.g., free standardised assessment tools) and training for professionals to use evaluation tools and data analysis techniques.

Centre-Level: Establish mechanisms for regular data collection and evaluation, encouraging a culture of reflection and data-driven decision-making.

• Expected Benefits of the Policy Recommendation:

Applying the evaluation methods is essential for refining intervention strategies and optimising outcomes. Moreover, comprehensive evaluation can serve as a foundation for promoting evidence-based practices and enhancing the overall quality of early childhood education.

• Supporting Evidence and Resources:

Grammatikopoulos, V., Gregoriadis, A., Zachopoulou, E. (2018). Self-evaluation as a means to improve practice: An alternative approach for the professional development of early childhood educators. In A. Gregoriadis, V. Grammatikopoulos, E. Zachopoulou (Eds.). *Professional Development and Quality in Early Childhood Education: Comparative European Perspectives,* Chapter 10, (pp. 116-125) Palgrave Macmillan, ISBN: 978-3-319-64211-6

Grammatikopoulos, V., Gregoriadis, A., Zachopoulou, E. (2015). Evaluation of early childhood education environments and professional development: Current practices and implications. In: O. N. *Saracho* (Ed.). *Contemporary perspectives on research in testing and evaluation in early childhood education*. (Part III, pp. 153-172). Information Age Publishing.

Greece Key Idea 4: Good Practices - Practical Applications from the Greek preschool centres

4.1. Lessons Learned and Challenges: Need for practical activities on how to promote positive behaviours at preschools
• Related Result(s) of the PBS-ECEC + Informational Source: Result 2 + Result 3, R3/A3: Case Study Report from Greece Participants' feedback
• Description: The vast majority of professionals who took part in the PBS-ECEC project across result 3 and completed the questionnaire 2, when asked "what did you enjoy most about the learning content?", their responses highlighted the examples and the practical activities for exercising and better understanding the theoretical concepts. Conversely, in response to the query "Is there something that should be included in the learning content? If yes, what is it?", a considerable number of participants requested a greater emphasis on additional practical activities suitable for classroom implementation. Specifically, they sought more examples tailored to preschool children and indicative activities that would offer deeper insights into the application of programme concepts in the classroom setting with children. Based on these findings, a topic, which was discussed in depth in the following meetings with the participants, included the practical applications. The coaches facilitated the discussion and the ECEC professionals exchanged several ideas for activities that they implemented in their classrooms. This formed a "source of activities" that was spread across all the preschool centres participating in the project.
• Importance and Possible Impact: A professional development programme for ECEC professionals should include activities aimed at both professionals and children. By incorporating activities focused on both educators and children fosters a holistic and comprehensive approach to professional development, resulting in improved educational outcomes (Gregoriadis et al., 2014). The inclusion of practical activities aimed at preschool professionals themselves is crucial as it allows educators to deepen their understanding of educational content and instructional techniques. The inclusion of activities aimed at children reinforces the significance of child-centred education and opens channels for ongoing feedback and assessment. Through such practices, ECEC teams can assess the impact of their instructional practices on children's learning and make

necessary adjustments to improve outcomes continually. This iterative process of learning and adapting ensures that educators' practical applications align with the program's goals and desired outcomes.

• Possible Challenges:

The online modules under Result 2 included several theoretical tips aimed at preschool professionals on how to promote positive behaviours and social and emotional skills. However, only a limited number of activities were explicitly tailored for classroom application with children. As a consequence, some educators may experience uncertainty when attempting to effectively implement these activities within their own classrooms. The implication is that a lack of confidence and expertise in using the strategies might hinder their successful application. Providing good practices and examples for classroom application in combination with ongoing training and support for educators can address this challenge, helping them build confidence in using the recommended techniques.

• Strategies to Address the Challenges:

Providing ongoing professional development, resources, and support tailored to each preschool's context can help overcome these hurdles and create a conducive environment for successfully implementing practical activities aimed at promoting positive behaviours and social-emotional skills. By addressing these challenges, the PBS-ECEC project can enhance its impact and support the holistic development of young children in preschool settings.

4.2. Promising practice: Good practice for promoting collaboration among peers

• Country of Collection:

Greece

• Related Result(s) of the PBS-ECEC + Informational Source:

Result 2, Result 3

• Description of Practice:

The following best practise includes three activities, which were implemented in a preschool classroom for promoting collaboration. The age group was 3 – 3,5 years old.

Activity 1

Context: Classroom

Goal: Highlighting the importance of promotion of cooperation among peers

Key Components: Social emotional and behavioural management

Material: A glove. Each finger represents a different face

Strategy: role-playing

Implementation: The educator plays puppetry with the glove. The fingers fight over which one is better. The scenario concludes that neither finger is better than the other because one needs the other for the hand to work

Next Steps: Discussion with the children to reflect on the scenario and its implications.

Activity 2:

Context: Classroom, courtyard

Goal: Collaboration to move the balls from the baskets to the boxes

Key Components: Highlighting the importance of promotion of cooperation among peers / Social emotional and behavioural management

Material: Hula Hoops, 2 baskets, 2 boxes, balls, music

Strategy: Playful activity

Implementation: Children are divided into two groups. The Hula Hoops are settled on the floor in a raw. In the first (start) Hula Hoops are settled the baskets including the balls. In the last (finish) Hula Hoops are settled the boxes, which are empty. Each child stands in a hula hoop. The children are standing inside each hula hoop form a "chain". When the music starts, the children work together and try to move the

balls from the baskets to the boxes, passing the ball to the person next to them. The winner is the team which places faster all the balls in the box.

Activity 3:

Context: Classroom, courtyard

Goal: Helping their friend to complete his/her drawing, have fun playing with friends

Key Components: Highlighting the importance of promotion of cooperation among peers / Social emotional and behavioural management

Material: chairs, drawing material (crayons, papers), music

Strategy: Playful activity, drawing

Implementation: The chairs are in a circle; on each chair, there is a piece of paper and some markers; while the music is playing the children move around the chairs. When the music stops the children stop at the chair in front of them and continue to draw their friend's paintings. The final paintings result from everyone's contribution. The drawings are collected, and the class poster is created.

Results: The children had fun. The majority of them understood that we need each other; that we accept each other as they are, with their strengths and weaknesses, in order to achieve the common goal. Cooperation and the promotion of healthy rivalry were strengthened. Children often asked their teacher to play these activities again.

Next Steps: Educators can gradually introduce activities to promote several values, e.g., kindness, respect etc.

Evaluation:
- o Taking notes on how children respond to the activities, any challenges encountered, and their overall enjoyment.
- o Engaging in a group discussion with the children to gather their thoughts and feelings about their experience.
- o Gather insights about any changes they observed in the classroom dynamic and peer relationships.

- **Implications for Policy:**

The proposed activities are developmentally appropriate and applicable for preschool children to promote collaboration among them. Involving administrators, colleagues, and other school staff in the evaluation process of this practice could help to gather multiple perspectives on the activities' effectiveness. Their input could also be used to assess how the activities align with the school's overall goals and educational philosophy.

- **Supporting Materials and Resources:**

Participant's feedback

Team reflection

4.3. Policy recommendation: Providing suggested activities on how to implement PW-PBS at preschools

- **Recommendations for Decision-makers and Educational Stakeholders:**

At national level policy makers can take the lead in developing a national policy framework for PW-PBS implementation in preschool centres. They can collaborate with experts in early childhood education to create guidelines and recommended activities for ECEC professionals and educators.

Following the example of ECEC professionals from Greece, who collaborated to exchange practical activities for implementing elements of the PW-PBS in their classrooms, preschool administrators and

educational leaders at local level, should provide opportunities for educators to bring them together for discussing their concerns, exchange ideas, good practices etc.

At centre level preschool staff should follow a team-based approach and create a culture of collaboration and communication to work together towards a common goal and ensure consistency in the implementation of behavioural strategies.

• Expected Benefits of the Policy Recommendation:

The primary beneficiaries of this policy recommendation will be preschool children who will experience an enriched learning environment that fosters their social, emotional, and behavioural development, setting a strong foundation for their future education. In addition, preschool professionals will benefit from increased professional development opportunities, access to evidence-based practices, and a supportive network of colleagues. This will enhance their teaching skills, job satisfaction, and overall effectiveness in supporting children's growth.

• Supporting Evidence and Resources:

Gregoriadis, A., Zachopoulou, E., Grammatikopoulos, V., Liukkonen, J., Leal, T., Gamelas, A., … Ciolan, L. (2014). *Good practices in early childhood education: Looking at early educators' perspectives in six European countries*. Thessaloniki, Greece: Christodoulidi Publishers. ISBN 978-960-8183-88-9.

PORTUGAL

Portugal Key Idea 1: Team Collaboration

1.1. Lessons Learned and Challenges: *For an effective implementation of PW-PBS, all professionals working in schools must be included from the start*

• Related Result(s) of the PBS-ECEC + Informational Source: *R1 and R3.*
Source: meetings with participants, team reflection, PBS-ECEC Guide.

• Description: *Collaborative work involving teachers and other professionals is crucial for successful implementation of PW-PBS. Collaborative work may occur at the classroom, centre, and community levels. This means that the assessment, training, and implementation phases must be inclusive of all professionals working with children, irrespective of their role and position.*
In the context of implementing PW-PBS in ECEC, it is essential for the whole team to identify and examine the beliefs and values of the staff. Developing a shared philosophy and vision will enable all members of the preschool to promote children's positive behaviours and socioemotional skills, sustaining their actions in a coherent and solid background.

• Importance and Possible Impact: *Effective communication and collaboration among all professionals involved in child education and care ensures consistency in pedagogical strategies and support positive behaviours across school settings and daily routines. Team collaboration is needed for a programme-wide implementation, maximising the outcomes for child development.*

• Possible Challenges: *Different understandings of PW-PBS; incompatible communication styles; staff turnover; frequent conflicts within the team; limited time for teamwork; staff disengagement; staff low interest in professional development and reflexive practices. These challenges may disrupt the consistency and implementation processes of the PW-PBS approach resulting in negligible effects of the strategies and practices put in place.*

• Strategies to address the challenges:
Teamwork skills training, assertive communication and problem-solving skills training, effective leadership practices, constructive information sharing, creating shared goals and values among team members, empowerment of professionals by investing in personal skills development and establishing clear roles for each professional; adapting training materials according to professionals' specific needs and previous skills and knowledge.

1.2. Promising practice: *Effective team collaboration around a shared purpose.*
• **Country of Collection:** *Portugal*
• **Related Result(s) of the PBS-ECEC + Informational Source:** *R3; Source: data from a session/meeting with leadership team in a preschool.*
• **Description of Practice:** *In a large preschool, the leadership team has systematically involved all the professionals from the beginning, despite their different roles, in the identification of a shared purpose, guided by clear institutional goals regarding the implementation of PW-PBS. This concerted effort was based on open communication with all professionals. For example, the leadership team started by involving the staff in the definition of their guiding values and desired behaviours, and, for the training sessions, they have adapted the training materials to effectively include, engage and empower all staff members. Additionally, they have collectively identified the necessary pedagogical strategies for achieving their pedagogical goals and the individual contributions of each professional during their daily tasks and activities. Staff also received training in ways to document and discuss daily challenges with their colleagues and make decisions based on the agreed practices and strategies. This created a sense of belonging and collective direction that facilitates the implementation of PW-PBS strategies and helps create a positive school culture. These efforts imply an investment in time for team meetings and tasks, investment in communication skills/strategies among staff members, opening institutional avenues for open and clear communication, and, the continuous assessment of difficulties experienced by each professional, each individual's level of engagement with the implementation, and the clarity of his/her role in the process in order to make the necessary adjustments.*
• **Implications for policy:** *An effective and collaborative workforce is at the base of the pyramid model and PW-PBS approach. All staff members must positively contribute to the success of PW-PBS implementation in preschools and be engaged in the complex processes of change that entails such implementation. Highly dynamic, collaborative teams have the potential to create and maintain the systems and resources necessary for a successful PW-PBS implementation.*
• **Supporting Materials and Resources:**   *PBS-ECEC Guide (pages 31-32, 38-40, 45, 59, 64, 65)*   *https://pbs-ecec.eu/wp-content/uploads/outputs/PBS-ECEC_Guide_EN.pdf*   *Practice-Based Coaching (PBC), by the National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations (NCPMI)*   *https://challengingbehavior.org/implementation/coaching/pbc/;*

1.3. Policy recommendation: *Promotion of collaborative practices among all ECEC professionals.*
• **Recommendations for Decision-makers and Educational Stakeholders:**   • *Effective communication, collaborative climate and democratic leadership at the classroom/centre-level: define communication channels (to assure ongoing communication between the professionals who work in the same classroom and with the whole team within the centre and/or institution about ideas, concerns and experiences related to the implementation of the PW-PBS strategies and other topics, discuss common philosophy and purpose, establish leadership team and roles, share resources, acknowledge successes, identify challenges collaboratively and discuss appropriate strategies for effective interventions, evaluate practices and set new goals. Investment in effective teamwork involving the whole team (directors and/or pedagogical coordinators, ECEC teachers, teacher assistants, psychologists and other practitioners) implies allocating the needed time and resources for teams to work properly. A democratic leadership style, promoting open participation within the team, has the potential to strengthen teamwork. Mutual support is foundational for creating a supportive and inclusive educational environment. For example, a motivated and highly engaged leadership team is crucial for an effective implementation of a PW-PBS approach (involving and training all professionals, settings goals, managing resources, overcoming barriers, making the implementation sustainable).*

- *Establish effective partnership with stakeholders: create mechanisms to promote collaboration between policymakers, educational settings, researchers, professionals, and families. Encourage systematic discussions, exchange of perspectives, and foster participation in decision-making processes to ensure alignment between policies and current research and best practices.*
- *Policies for ECEC have the potential to frame and foster team collaboration. Different documents (curricula, curriculum guidelines, legislation, etc.) at the policy level may explicitly recognise the importance of team collaboration in the implementation of positive behaviour support and SEL in ECEC settings. The content of these documents can include language emphasising the importance of collaborative practices among all ECEC professionals, coordinators/directors, and other stakeholders, and to further support working conditions that foster teamwork, staff well-being and professional development opportunities. Allocation of resources is crucial to support the implementation of PW-PBS initiatives in ECEC on a wider scale.*

• Expected Benefits of the Policy Recommendation:
For children, the involvement of the entire team is expected to bring better outcomes regarding socioemotional learning (SEL) and the prevention of behaviour challenges. For practitioners, this leads to increased commitment, improved wellbeing and better job satisfaction. At the national level, this results in strategies that are more aligned with the needs of ECEC contexts and potentially to higher levels of quality.

• Supporting Evidence and Resources:
Cumming, T., Wong, S., & Logan, H. (2021). Early childhood educators' well-being, work environments and 'quality': Possibilities for changing policy and practice. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood, 46*(1), 50–65. https://doi.org/10.1177/1836939120979064

Heikkinen, K.-M., Ahtiainen, R., & Fonsén, E. (2022). Perspectives on leadership in early childhood education and care centers through community of practice. SAGE Open, *12*(2). https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440221091260

Peleman, B,. Lazzari, A., Budginaitė, I., et al. (2018). Continuous professional development and ECEC quality: Findings from a European systematic literature review. *European Journal of Education, Research, Development and Policy, 53*, 9-22. https://doi.org/10.1111/ejed.12257

National legislation or guidelines stressing the importance of teamwork and communication among professionals and other stakeholders: https://www.dge.mec.pt/ocepe/sites/default/files/Orientacoes_Curriculares.pdf (Portugal)

Program-Wide Supports for Pyramid Model Implementation. Leadership teams: https://challengingbehavior.org/docs/LeadershipTeam_ImplementationGuide.pdf

PBS-ECEC Guide: https://pbs-ecec.eu/wp-content/uploads/outputs/PBS-ECEC_Guide_EN.pdf

PBS-ECEC Online Modules of PW-PBS Instructional Practices in Early Childhood and Care Settings - Module 3

Portugal Key Idea 2: Family-ECEC partnerships

2.1. Lessons Learned and Challenges: *Children´s socioemotional learning and the prevention of challenging behaviours can be optimised through positive and effective family-ECEC partnerships*

• Related Result(s) of the PBS-ECEC + Informational Source: *R1, R2 and R3*
Sources: meetings with participants, team reflection, international literature, PBS-ECEC Guide.

• Description: *Children´s socioemotional learning and the prevention of challenging behaviours can and should be optimised through effective family-ECEC partnerships. According to the European Commission (2014), parents are the most important educational partners and their participation in ECEC is an essential indicator of quality. Parents exert critical influences on child development and the environment they create at home, as well as parent-child interactions in a variety of social settings, can bolster children´s*

socioemotional skills. Additionally, the multi-tier model of positive behaviour support includes the active participation and involvement of families as a common practice in all tiers of intervention, putting it at the centre of the PW-PBS approach. Thus, the impact of the PW-PBS approach can be magnified by positive parental involvement and partnership in the endeavours of ECEC institutions. However, these partnerships are not easily achieved and sustained and, thus, must be systematically promoted. Therefore, there is a need to support staff in developing and enhancing skills that maximize family engagement and support the establishment of genuinely positive and productive partnerships in ECEC settings.

- **Importance and Possible Impact:** *Parents and professionals working in partnership benefit children. Positive and effective family-ECEC partnerships work bidirectionally because preschools and parents can share/exchange valuable resources, information and strategies: families/parents can complement (at home or in other social contexts) the efforts put in place by schools in the implementation of PW-PBS and the promotion of socioemotional learning, and preschools can support and expand families efforts to meet the health and educational needs of their children (e.g., guidance and support in child rearing, access to community services, parent education, etc.). This impacts the well-being of children and their socioemotional growth through the enhancement of both family and school concerted inputs to children´s learning and development. It also increases the capacity to create an inclusive learning environment in ECEC settings.*

- **Possible Challenges:** *Some of our leadership teams reported experiencing difficulties in creating positive family-ECEC partnerships; some reasons included a lack of time from staff members, negative parental behaviour, or disengagement from families. However, there are several additional barriers/constraints to family engagement and the establishment of sustainable partnerships in ECEC, which include among others, the following:*
  - o *different expectations and understandings regarding early education and care between ECEC professionals and families;*
  - o *inexistence of a system supporting family-school sustainable partnerships;*
  - o *poorly designed communication channels;*
  - o *negative attitudes towards the preschool and staff as well as "help seeking";*
  - o *lack of time/transportation, or conflicting schedules;*
  - o *lack of time and resources to effectively communicate with families;*
  - o *families' participation in ECEC is not valued or understood as relevant;*
  - o *low parental participation rates in meetings and/or activities at school;*
  - o *lack of knowledge about families´ needs and how to positively include parents;*
  - o *previous negative family experiences in ECEC and other child/family services;*
  - o *family characteristics such as socioeconomic status or single parent status;*
  - o *family stress, parental stress, isolation;*
  - o *negative past experiences of parental involvement in the school/classroom activities;*
  - o *lack of opportunities for school/programme staff to build the capacity for partnerships.*

- **Strategies to Address the Challenges:**
Engaging families and building sustainable partnerships in ECEC settings entails, among others, the following strategies:
  - o *creating a system with organisational conditions (resources, infrastructure) to build, enhance, and sustain the capacity of staff/families for partnerships;*
  - o *building positive and respectful relationships and engaging in two-way communication / sharing relevant information and focusing on effective problem-solving;*
  - o *ensuring equitable family representation and making decisions with families / building collaborative teams to support individual children (Tier 2 and 3);*
  - o *creating easy and accessible communication channels for families and program staff;*

- o *defining the roles of all stakeholders very clearly (balance of power) and considering "opening" new roles for parents and families (e.g., decision-maker, advocate, supporter, organiser, etc.) / recruit and organise parent help and support;*
- o *helping build positive beliefs, attitudes and competences that favour parental participation and inclusion in ECEC settings;*
- o *aligning the goals of parents and school, considering the developmental and educational needs of all children;*
- o *building a school culture that involves families as a crucial resource for the socioemotional development of children.*

2.2. Promising practice: *Sharing PW-PBS practices and involving parents in the generalization to children´s daily life contexts*

• **Country of Collection:** *Portugal*

• **Related Result(s) of the PBS-ECEC + Informational Source:** *R3 (observational data, meeting with participants)*

• **Description of Practice:**

Practice example 1 - In one participating school, an effective communication strategy with families was established using a diary app, with very good results in terms of communication efficacy and parental satisfaction. This app is used by parents and professionals as a two-way communication tool to share information about the child´s behaviour and well-being, the activities the child participates, share practices and strategies that can be replicated at home, as well as programs and activities being developed at school, among others. The leadership team plans to use this tool as a basis for the involvement of parents in the implementation of PW-PBS during the next school year (e.g., share the desired behaviours, activities implemented to teach specific socioemotional skills, etc.) primarily because it makes it very easy to involve the majority of families and inform them about the everyday life of the school.

Practice example 2 - A monthly activity "Coffee with Parents" developed in one participating preschool is helping the implementation of the PW-PBS approach. The leadership team asks parents about their preferred themes on early childhood learning and care, which serve as a motif for the monthly gathering of staff/teachers and parents (sometimes with a guest which can be a specialist in a specific area). In these gatherings, they focus on a specific theme that can be related to SEL, child health and behaviour, pedagogical practices/programs being implemented at the school, among others. These moments help participants share relevant information, build a sense of belonging and community, empower families to provide better care, and also inform the pedagogical strategies and choices of teachers. Additionally, this activity helps the leadership/staff engage parents and align parental behaviour with PW-PBS practices.

• **Implications for Policy:** *Both these practices indicate the importance of engaging families and building positive and productive partnerships that will benefit the socioemotional learning of children and help prevent challenging behaviours. Team capacity building for delivering this outcome is needed.*

• **Supporting Materials and Resources:**

Online resources collected by McKay: Engaging Families Toolkit http://staging.nysecac.org/application/files/3415/5494/3236/McKay-_Engaging_Families__Supporting_Young_Children_Training_Tool_Kit_FINAL.pdf

PBS-ECEC Online Modules of PW-PBS Instructional Practices in Early Childhood and Care Settings - Modules 3 and 4

2.3. Policy recommendation: *Building ECEC team´s capacity for effective family partnerships.*

• **Recommendations for Decision-makers and Educational Stakeholders:**

Effective family partnerships in ECEC settings are crucial for promoting positive child development and educational outcomes. Building ECEC teams' capacity to foster strong family partnerships can enhance the overall quality of early education.

At the centre-level:

Invest in comprehensive and ongoing professional development and training for ECEC professionals on family engagement strategies and effective communication skills to enhance their abilities to build positive relationships with families from diverse backgrounds, understand cultural differences, and address the needs of parents and caregivers effectively;

Promote parent empowerment programmes that provide opportunities for parents to actively participate. These programmes could involve workshops, support groups, and opportunities for parents to participate in decision-making processes at the ECEC centre;

Provide ECEC teams with resources and materials that facilitate family partnerships, including multilingual communication tools, informative brochures, and interactive platforms/apps that keep families informed about their child's progress, upcoming activities, and ways to get involved in their child's education;

Offer flexible scheduling options and various communication methods to accommodate the diverse needs and preferences of families. This may include virtual meetings, home visits, and evening social events, which tend to increase family participation;

At the policy-level:

Encourage centres to collaborate with community organisations and local agencies to establish strong networks of support for families. This can include partnerships with health providers, social service agencies, and community centres, which can offer additional resources and services to families in need;

Offer incentives and recognition programs for centres that demonstrate exemplary family engagement practices. Recognising and celebrating successful family partnerships can motivate other centres to improve their approaches;

Invest in research initiatives that explore effective family engagement practices and evaluate their impact on children's development; regularly updating policies based on evidence-based research will ensure that ECEC teams are equipped with the latest knowledge and best practices;

Allocate adequate funding and resources to implement these policy recommendations effectively (prioritize family engagement initiatives in ECEC centres).

• **Expected Benefits of the Policy Recommendation:** *By implementing these policy recommendations, ECEC teams can build their capacity for effective family partnerships, leading to improved child outcomes, enhanced parent involvement, and a more robust implementation of PW-PBS within ECEC settings. Additionally, the knowledge base can be improved on how ECEC teams build and sustain positive partnerships with families, a central component of PW-PBS.*

• **Supporting Evidence and Resources:**

European Commission (2014). *Proposal for Key Principles of a Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care*. Report of the Working Group on Early Childhood Education and Care under the auspices of the European Commission. Retrieved from http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework/archive/documents/ecec-qualityframework_en.pdf

PBS-ECEC Online Modules of PW-PBS Instructional Practices in Early Childhood and Care Settings - Modules 3 and 4

https://www.pbis.org/topics/family

https://challengingbehavior.org/implementation/program-wide/components/

http://www.dge.mec.pt/ocepe/index.php/node/66

Pugh, G. (2010). Principles for engaging with families: A framework for local authorities and national organisations to evaluate and improve engagement with families. London: NCB.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qjl1dVBbJNU

Kernan, M. (2012). Parental Involvement in Early Learning: A review of research, policy and good practice. Online resources collected by McKay: Engaging Families Toolkit http://staging.nysecac.org/application/files/3415/5494/3236/McKay-_Engaging_Families__Supporting_Young_Children_Training_Tool_Kit_FINAL.pdf

Portugal Key Idea 3: Inclusive Education

3.1. Lessons Learned and Challenges: *An educational system that promotes inclusive education benefits from, and supports, the implementation of PW-PBS*
• **Related Result(s) of the PBS-ECEC + Informational Source:** *R1 and R3. Source: PBS-ECEC Guide, team reflection, meetings with participants*
• **Description:** *The Portuguese educational system was recently (2018) reorganised, favouring an approach that intends to promote Inclusive Education in all in all cycles of education and all types of schools/preschools (Decree-law no. 54/2018). From the many facets of this reorganisation, some of them are relevant to the implementation of PW-PBS Practices:*   *Every school has the responsibility to address the diversity of needs of their students, assuming that success is within the reach of all students through increased participation in academic and social school life.*   *The separation between a regular and a special education system was abolished, promoting a flexible organisation of the supports available in schools. Supports are organised into a multi-tiered system, including a universal level, addressing all the children, including those that receive support from the other two levels; a selective level, including supports that complement the universal measures; and an additional level, when the children's difficulties are significant and persistent and involve communication, interaction, cognition and learning, and the previous two levels of support are not enough to achieve success.*   *The Decree-law no. 54/2018 assumes a positive approach to the education of all children, focused on the development of multiple levels of competences (e.g., cognitive, behavioural, socioemotional). It also presupposes the organisation of a multi-tiered school-wide system of supports that can contribute to the development of all children, changing the focus from a remediative or compensatory approach to a preventive and constructive one (Santos et al., 2021).*
• **Importance and Possible Impact:** *The implementation of the Portuguese inclusive education law depends on the ability of the schools to organise the available supports into a multi-tiered system, addressing several competences. PW-PBS is an example of a multi-tiered system of supports, aiming to help preschools to promote children's developmental social and emotional competencies, establishing positive school cultures and create supportive environments.*
• **Possible Challenges:** *Difficulties in overcoming the need to classify the children, and to understand that all children are supposed to participate in the universal tier; the lack of resources (including human resources and instruments) to define and implement secondary and tertiary tier supports, to complement the universal tier.*
• **Strategies to Address the Challenges:** *Support the schools in the organisation and implementation of multi-tiered systems; training all the professionals in the school system to understand the meaning of an inclusive approach and the practical processes and procedures to implement it.*

3.2. Promising practice: *The inclusion of one child involves the whole school.*
• **Country of Collection:** *Portugal*
• **Related Result(s) of the PBS-ECEC + Informational Source:** *R3; Source: observational data, meeting with participants.*

• Description of Practice:

The leadership team from a participating school had organised all the supports needed, using an inclusive multi-tiered systems approach, for a child with an autism spectrum disorder attending one of its classrooms. Firstly, the child participated in all the activities of the classroom, in which she had the opportunity to learn new skills and interact with her peers. These activities involved everyday activities such as play, storytelling and painting, but also those related specifically to socioemotional learning and the implementation of PW-PBS (e.g., training a new skill such as controlling the tone of voice and using sign language to convey ideas among children and adults). Because some PW-PBS practices include the use of visual information (pictures, gestures, drawings, signs, objects/toys), this also contributes for the child to feel secure and included in the daily life of the preschool, benefitting all children at the same time. Also, a very careful preparation of the routines and transitions with the group of children was very helpful in handling any anxiety that could arise. All the professionals in the preschool received training or were briefed on the best ways to include the child in the preschool routines. Additionally, one adult was constantly monitoring the behaviour of the child and provided the cues needed to help guiding the child´s participation in and active involvement in the activities. Everyone in the classroom (both teachers and children) already knew the signs that indicated when the child was feeling anxious or frustrated and they had strategies to help her cope with her feelings in those moments (e.g., invite the child to go visit the older children´s classroom, play with her favourite toy, or help an adult do a chore outside the classroom). Sometimes the child would prefer to be alone in one area of the classroom to relax, but that did not interfere with the normal routines of the group and was understood by her peers. Also, the child received additional support from specialised professionals who organised sessions with her in the school premises and that also guided the intervention of teachers and auxiliary staff in the preschool and parents at home. The flow of information between the family and the school was very effective and based on trust. These systems put in place were managed by the pedagogical director who made sure that they complemented each other and that the whole school was working for the inclusive education of the child as well as her peers.

• Implications for Policy:

This example shows that there is an intervention at the various levels of the multi-tiered system, and there is involvement of the significant people in the child's life, including peers. There are measures in the various contexts of the child's life and also at the several level of the management of the institution. This example is consistent with the innovative legislation in force since 2018.

• Supporting Materials and Resources:

dl_54_2018_en_version_dge.pdf (mec.pt)

3.3. Policy recommendation: *Promote an inclusive approach based on multi-tiered systems of support at all levels (centre-level, local, national)*

• Recommendations for Decision-makers and Educational Stakeholders:

National Level – several countries have been applying, nationally or regionally, the general principles of the multi-tiered systems of support (United States of America, Canada, Finland, are some of them). Several authors (e.g., Choi et al., 2020; Sailor et al., 2018) sustain that the construction of an inclusive educational system implies the organisation of equitable supports, as in the case of multi-tiered systems of supports. A formal mandate to implement such practices in all schools would favour the construction of educational systems that effectively answer the needs of all students.

Centre Level - Even if there is no formal mandate to incorporate such practices, educational centres should consider the organisation of the available supports in a multi-tiered format. In the case of pre-school

environments, PW-PBS is of particular importance, due to the centrality of the socio-emotional development in that age frame.

• **Expected Benefits of the Policy Recommendation:**
o *Children are the most benefitted, through the creation of positive contexts, where high quality educational practices are implemented, and supports are available to address the needs of all children.*
o *The whole centre benefits from a clear organisation of tasks and responsibilities. The high quality of the educational supports provided to the universal tier tends to reduce the number of children requiring additional supports, therefore allowing a concentration of the available resources into the few children that actually require them.*
• **Supporting Evidence and Resources:** *Add links, documents, references, etc.*   Choi, J.H., McCart, A.B., & Sailor, W. (2020). Reshaping educational systems to realize the promise of inclusive education. FIRE: Forum for International Research in Education, 6(1), pp. 8-23   Sailor, W., McCart, A.B., & Choi, J.H. (2018). Reconceptualizing inclusive education through multi-tiered system of support. Inclusion, 6(1), pp. 3-18. DOI: 10.1352/2326-6988-6.1.3   dl_54_2018_en_version_dge.pdf (mec.pt)

Portugal Key Idea 4: Pedagogical Leadership

4.1. Lessons Learned and Challenges: A well-prepared and supportive pedagogical leadership is highly influential in the implementation of PW-PBS
• **Related Result(s) of the PBS-ECEC + Informational Source:** R1 and R3   Sources: team reflection, meeting with professionals, PBS-ECEC Guide
• **Description:** *Pedagogical leadership plays a core role in organising, coordinating, and motivating preschool teams throughout all phases of the implementation of PW-PBS. The specific preparation and support of pedagogical leaders is also paramount given the critical demands posed by their roles.*
• **Importance and Possible Impact:** *A well-prepared, highly engaged, and supportive pedagogical leadership promotes common ground within the team at the level of professional vision (beliefs and values), theoretical underpinnings, and pedagogical practices. To build this common ground, pedagogical leaders have the responsibility to facilitate communication processes among the team members, guaranteeing spaces for debating the progresses, challenges and tensions encountered by professionals. The promotion of processes of critical reflection focused on this triad (vision, theory and practices) is the basis for the successful implementation of PW-PBS primary-tier level. Thus, preparing and supporting pedagogical leaders throughout all phases is critical, within a process that ultimately intends to promote their autonomy and guarantee the sustainability of outputs, both for professionals and children.*

• **Possible Challenges:**
 Pedagogical leadership teams often encounter barriers/challenges related to:
    o *Professionals who are unmotivated and/or disengaged;*
    o *Professionals who are unwilling to change practices;*
    o *Professionals that are not reflexive and/or who lack communication skills;*
    o *Professionals' physical and mental fatigue;*
    o *Difficulties in changing professionals' beliefs (affecting the building of a common vision);*
    o *Lack of time to engage professionals in collaborative and reflective work;*
    o *Isolation of professionals in their classroom;*
    o *Difficulties in creating a school culture focused on positive outcomes.*

• **Strategies to Address the Challenges:**   o *Support the building of a trusting, non-judgmental and collaborative ethos among all professionals of the team;*

- o *Guarantee the participation of all members of the team, irrespective of their roles;*
- o *Organization of regular meetings among staff members, focused on sharing and reflecting about their beliefs and practices, during non-contact pedagogical time;*
- o *Encourage the disclosure of emotional aspects of professionals' work, acknowledging the emotional demands of such work and promoting mutual support;*
- o *Timely availability of quality tools/instruments, aligned with the PW-PBS framework, to sustain the work of teams;*
- o *Diversification of training strategies, combining an online approach with on-site support;*
- o *Monitor and address aspects related with centre organisation that impact on professionals' working conditions (wages, groups size, ratios).*

4.2. Promising practice: *Leadership data-driven decision-making*
• **Country of Collection:** *Portugal*
• **Related Result(s) of the PBS-ECEC + Informational Source:** R3 *Sources: Observational data, meeting with participants*
• **Description of Practice:** *As a result of the PBS-ECEC training and the implementation of the PBS component related to data-driven decision-making, the leadership team in a participating preschool developed a shared tool for the staff to report incidents. This tool was deemed necessary since professionals usually commented on the incidents and rarely recorded them. This instrument comprised elements such as date/hour, description of incident, location, involved parties, professional responsible for handling the situation, and other observations. All professionals could use this tool to report everyday events that were problematic, challenging, or somewhat disruptive of the normal routine. Looking at the data that this new tool provided, the leadership discussed with the professionals the patterns that were emerging and becoming clear: most of the difficulties experienced and the problems reported were located in the transition periods. This clarity provided by the data informed the team´s decisions regarding several intervention strategies, which were guided by the leadership. Later, the leadership team assessed the effectiveness of the strategies and made the necessary adjustments, in collaboration with the staff, in order to achieve the team´s goals and reduce the incidence of challenging behaviours and disruptions occurring during transitions in the kindergarten.*
• **Implications for Policy:** *The preparation and support to leadership in ECEC settings is central in providing the conditions for the successful implementation of PW-PBS. Policy implications are twofold:* o *The preparation of pedagogical leaders should combine knowledge on the PW-PBS approach, knowledge and skills on a democratic approach to leadership (e.g., distributed leadership) and the domain of pedagogical frameworks for early childhood education. This broad preparation is intended to help sustain a highly informed and intentional exercise of pedagogical leadership focused in promoting professional development, transformation of pedagogical practices and positive socioemotional outcomes for children.* o *Pedagogical leaders should be supported in their roles through similar strategies that they will use with their peers. This homology in training processes is intended to support their understanding and enactment of pedagogical strategies to use with their colleagues.*
• **Supporting Materials and Resources:** European Commission (2014). *Proposal for Key Principles of a Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care*. Report of the Working Group on Early Childhood Education and Care under the auspices of the European Commission. Retrieved from http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework/archive/documents/ecec-qualityframework_en.pdf *PBS-ECEC Guide: https://pbs-ecec.eu/wp-content/uploads/outputs/PBS-ECEC_Guide_EN.pdf*

3.3. Policy recommendation: *Pedagogical leadership as a driven force of change*
• Recommendations for Decision-makers and Educational Stakeholders: *Leadership is recognised as a key element for quality in ECEC in European policies. In the PW-PBS approach, it assumes a mediating role: through the support to professional development and learning, pedagogical leaders can influence pedagogical practices and children's outcomes concerning socioemotional learning and the prevention of challenging behaviours.* *At a national level, policy frameworks should clearly acknowledge that the role of leaders in ECEC settings involves a critical pedagogical dimension, while also integrating an administrative function. Besides, the transition from policy to practice carries a severe difficulty in strategically combining these two dimensions, with the administrative dimension prevailing and the pedagogical dimension being often neglected. The creation or enactment of professional support systems at a regional or local level (e.g., through professional associations or training centres located in clusters of schools) should provide specific preparation for this demanding role, including an awareness of the synergies between organisational development, professional development and children's development.* *At the centre level, leadership should be acknowledged as a driven force of change and transformation. This means the creation of working conditions for leaders to fully develop their pedagogical role and functions. The mediating role of the leaders include multiple relations and interactions that demand time and energy, with the team of professionals, families and with other stakeholders from the community (intersectoral work). Conditions for these complex processes to take place are paramount in successfully implementing PW-PBS.*
• Expected Benefits of the Policy Recommendation: *Pedagogical leaders exert influence at different levels of the organization. By creating a positive organizational climate, by supporting and motivating all professionals of the team, by co-creating collaborative mechanisms to involve families and the community, they are leading the creation of pedagogical dynamics for children's socioemotional learning, for mitigating challenging behaviours and for professionals' and children's well-being.*
• Supporting Evidence and Resources: Douglas, A. L. (2019). Leadership for Quality Early Childhood Education and Care. OECD Education Working Paper, n. º 211. https://doi.org/10.1787/6e563bae-en European Commission (2014). *Proposal for Key Principles of a Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care*. Report of the Working Group on Early Childhood Education and Care under the auspices of the European Commission. Retrieved from http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework/archive/documents/ecec-qualityframework_en.pdf *PBS-ECEC Guide: https://pbs-ecec.eu/wp-content/uploads/outputs/PBS-ECEC_Guide_EN.pdf*

To implement PW-PBS, it is fundamental to promote <u>continuous professional development and training</u>
Continuous professional development is crucial for the implementation of systemic approaches such as PW-PBS. Despite initiatives already in place to increase qualifications and training in ECEC, professionals reported that there are not enough opportunities for teacher training, in particular about promoting children's socioemotional learning and managing children's challenging behaviour.

Recommendations for policymakers and educational stakeholders include, among others: promoting and funding teacher education and training focusing on socioemotional learning (SEL); providing professional development opportunities focused on promoting SEL; supporting collaborative learning communities, valuing and promoting evidence-based practices; incorporating monitoring mechanisms, allocating adequate time and resources, and supporting research and evaluation.

At the policy level, and also at the centre level, it is necessary that professionals develop a deeper understanding of PBS principles and strategies. Online training and meetings, together with joint online platforms for ongoing discussions and sharing resources, can enhance opportunities, thus addressing time constraints and promoting flexibility. These policies also aim to increase ECEC professionals' job satisfaction and well-being, and to create better conditions for promoting children's socioemotional development and managing challenging behaviours. By prioritising socioemotional development in ECEC, professionals can help children develop essential life skills, mental health and overall well-being.

PW-PBS implementation requires a <u>long-term process</u>
Educational stakeholders need to consider educational and developmentally adequate and reasonable implementation timelines to achieve a sustainable PW-PBS impact at several levels (children, families, professionals, schools, communities) and regarding different outcomes (health and well-being, positive development, positive school climate, social). This implies a definition of policies that support long-term implementation of PW-PBS in ECEC settings. The duration of the implementation of PBS can vary depending on the specific needs and goals of each school or educational institution. PBS is an ongoing process.

The implementation includes the integration of PBS strategies into daily routines and interactions within the school environment. This phase requires consistent monitoring and ongoing professional development to ensure that staff members remain committed and skilled in applying PBS principles. We have found that a more prolonged engagement with the PW-PBS approach would allow the interventions to become embedded in ECEC centres' daily life, leading to lasting effects on children's socioemotional development. Moreover, an extended timeframe would enable educators to train in depth, refine their PW-PBS practices and adapt to the evolving needs of their children.

The duration of PW-PBS implementation is not fixed and can be influenced by various factors that must be considered, such as the preschool's size, available resources, and staff's readiness and willingness to embrace the approach. Additionally, time constraints can pose significant challenges, hindering the

professionals' ability to fully engage in professional development, learn new strategies, and effectively implement PBS practices.

Recommendations for policymakers and educational stakeholders include, among others, providing adequate time for training staff in PW-PBS principles and implementation strategies, tailoring interventions to individual children's needs, and consistently applying positive behaviour strategies; promoting planning, monitoring and evaluation measures focused on quality and positive outcomes; involving all stakeholders as active participants thru every stage of implementation; fostering collaborations between educational stakeholders and community organisations to support long-term outcomes for preschools; mitigation of time constraints and prioritising time allocation for professional development and collaboration; encouraging the use of evidence-based methods to assess the effectiveness of implementations; supporting collaboration and networking among schools that have implemented PW-PBS successfully (sharing best practices, strategies, and lessons learned, fostering a community of support).

Implementing PW-PBS in preschools requires <u>involving parents as part of the educational team</u>
Working in partnerships with families on issues related to PBS and SEL and promoting their involvement in ECEC systems and activities is at the centre of the PW-PBS approach. Parents' involvement enhances the continuity of support for children's socioemotional development throughout their everyday life contexts.

Such collaborative efforts between parents and educators, as well as other members of the educational team, create a more holistic approach, on the one hand, in identifying and addressing children's behavioural and socioemotional needs and challenges (prevention), and on the other hand, effectively and sustainably promoting their socioemotional learning (promotion). For example, by providing parents with training and resources on PW-PBS, schools can strengthen the partnership between home and school environments, promoting a consistent and positive approach to behaviour support that benefits children's overall development and empowers families as part of the educational team. The impact of the PW-PBS approach can be magnified by positive parental involvement and partnership in the endeavours of ECEC institutions. Building the capacity of ECEC staff in establishing successful family-ECEC partnerships is, therefore, paramount and can enhance the overall quality of early education.

Recommendations for policymakers and educational stakeholders include, among others: investment in comprehensive/ongoing professional training for ECEC professionals on family engagement strategies and effective communication skills; promotion of programmes that provide opportunities for parents to actively participate in ECEC settings; provision, to ECEC teams, of resources and materials that facilitate family partnerships and offer flexible scheduling options and various communication methods; supporting initiatives that are inclusive and consider the unique needs and circumstances of diverse families, including those with special needs, low-income backgrounds, and different cultural backgrounds; collaborate with community organisations and local agencies to establish strong networks of support for families; and allocate adequate funding and resources to implement this recommendations effectively, thus prioritizing family engagement initiatives in ECEC centres.

The implementation of PW-PBS is based on the development of <u>collaborative practices and partnerships</u>
In the successful implementation of PW-PBS in ECEC, collaborative work involving teachers, other professionals and families is crucial. Collaboration should occur at the classroom, centre and community levels. Effective communication and collaboration among professionals promote consistency in pedagogical strategies, supporting positive behaviours and socioemotional learning.

In the classroom and centre, effective communication, a collaborative climate and democratic leadership need to be promoted. To endorse a shared philosophy and vision, all staff should identify and examine their beliefs and values. Establishing communication channels, a leadership team and shared goals facilitate ongoing communication, resource allocation and effective consistent educational practices to promote socioemotional learning.

In addition, effective partnerships with stakeholders, including policymakers, researchers, and other practitioners (such as mental health professionals) throughout the child's educational path – different school levels – contribute to the effective organisation of resources, and also to consistency and continuity. Establishing clear communication channels and protocols to facilitate the sharing of information, progress updates, and children/student records supports the PW-PBS.

Systematic discussions and decision-making processes support aligning policies with research and promising practices. Policy documents should recognise and support the importance of collaborative practices, promoting teamwork, staff wellbeing and professional development opportunities. Resource allocation is vital to support the large-scale implementation of PW-PBS in ECEC.

PW-PBS systems should include <u>multi-tiered supports</u>, to answer the needs of <u>all children</u>
Inclusive educational systems accommodate and support the learning and development of all students, regardless of their abilities or background. They are systems that promote participation in all aspects of school life, fostering a supportive and accessible learning environment, and providing the necessary accommodations and resources to promote each student's success.

A multi-tiered support system is a way of promoting inclusive environments, by organising the available supports in an equitable manner including a universal level, addressing all the children; a selective level, providing support that complements the universal measures, for a limited number of students; and an additional level of support, when the children's difficulties are significant and persistent, requiring individualised intervention. PW-PBS is an example of a multi-tiered support system, aiming to promote children's social and emotional development, establishing a positive culture, and creating a supportive environment.

Preschools should implement PW-PBS, developing procedures of assessment and data collection about the children's behaviour and socioemotional competencies, to sustain data-driven decisions, and promoting a collaborative and supportive partnership between the educational staff, families, and mental health professionals. Support should include high quality universal practices, directed to all the children, focused on promoting socioemotional development and positive behaviour, accompanied by additional supports to answer the needs of those children who still maintain challenging behaviours (e.g., team work to implement processes of behaviour analysis through all the contexts the child participates, with input from mental health specialists and the family).

Multi-tiered support systems can be included in national legislation (as in Portugal and the United States of America, among other countries), can be upheld and promoted as a recommended practice by local policymakers, or implemented at educational centre level.

Leadership teams play a central role in coordinating, guiding and supporting the preschool teams throughout all phases of the implementation of PW-PBS
 Systems-level implementation of PW-PBS is led by a team in each preschool centre. This team take primary responsibility and organise, integrate, and coordinate the implementation of effective

interventions and practices. Team member includes administrators, preschool educators, preschool staff, family members and preschool children.

A well-prepared, highly engaged and supportive leadership promotes a common ground within the team at the level of professionals' vision (beliefs and values), theoretical underpinnings and pedagogical practices. Leadership teams have the responsibility to facilitate communication and provide ongoing professional development and resources to preschool teams, guaranteeing spaces for reflecting and debating on progresses and challenges encountered by professionals. Ultimately, a knowledgeable and committed leadership promotes professionals' autonomy and participation, which accounts for the sustainability of outputs, both for professionals and children.

The preparation and support to leadership in ECEC settings is central in providing the conditions for the successful implementation of PW-PBS. The preparation of leaders is intended to help sustain a highly informed and intentional exercise of pedagogical leadership focused in promoting professional development, pedagogical practices and positive socioemotional outcomes for children.

A shared commitment among stakeholders, including administrators, educators, and support staff, is vital in providing support to leaders, fostering a culture of professional growth, and allocating dedicated time for leadership development activities. Providing differentiated guidance that takes into account the unique characteristics of individual preschools can ensure that the implementation of PW-PBS remains realistic, feasible, and aligned with the available resources.

The promotion of children's socioemotional learning should be clearly emphasised in ECEC <u>national curricula and institution educational projects</u>

The promotion of children's socioemotional learning should be clearly emphasised in ECEC national curricula, in line with European policies and frameworks that stress the core relevance of personal, social and emotional key competences. This entails the definition of national policy frameworks that clearly acknowledge a holistic understanding of children's learning and development and an integrated approach to professional action in ECEC settings.

ECEC national curricula should also emphasize comprehensive guidelines on pedagogical practices focused on socioemotional learning and behavioural management, including the promotion of nurturing and supportive learning environments for young children.

Additionally, the successful implementation of PBS-PW entails the definition of a common philosophy that should be clearly stated in the educational project of ECEC institutions. Explicit written guidelines create a common vision and coherence throughout all phases and processes of the implementation of PW-PBS.

Policy recommendations at national and centre level demand processes that facilitate their transformation into consistent daily practices. ECEC professionals should be trained and encouraged to create supportive and nurturing environments. Time and resources must be allocated for professionals to collaborate and design learning activities ensuring that socioemotional learning is integrated into the daily programme.