

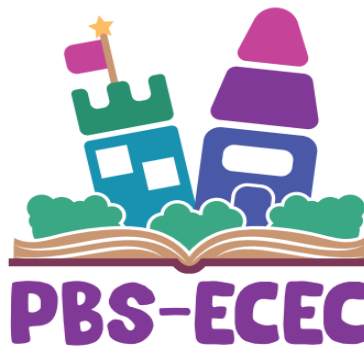
Implementing Positive Behaviour Support in Early Childhood Education and Care

PBS-ECEC



R3/A3:

Impact Assessment Study and Recommendations for Practice - Ireland



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PROJECT INFORMATION

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LEADING PARTNER	INSTITUTO POLITECNICO DO PORTO
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Executive Summary	4
2. Introduction	6
3. Findings from Questionnaire 1: Pre-training Questionnaire.....	14
4. Findings from Questionnaire 2: Post-training Questionnaire	17
5. Findings from Questionnaire 3: Follow-up Questionnaire.....	25
6. Conclusion of the Impact Assessment Study	33
7. Practice Recommendations.....	38
8. References	40
9. Annex I.....	41
10. Annex II.....	42
11. Annex III.....	43
12. Annex IV.....	48
13. Annex V.....	54

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The PBS-ECEC project utilised online learning materials to train early years educators in implementing the Programme-Wide Positive Behaviour Support (PW-PBS) approach. Each partner in the consortium was responsible for conducting training programmes for early years educators in their respective countries and guiding the implementation of PW-PBS practices. This report presents the evaluation of the training programme and implementation phase conducted by the Institute of Child Education and Psychology (ICEP) Europe in Ireland.

The training in Ireland followed a train-the-trainers approach, where two coaches equipped early years trainers (preschool managers/owners) with the necessary knowledge and skills to train ECEC teams in implementing PW-PBS. Ultimately, eight preschools participated, with nine trainers successfully recruiting and training 18 early years professionals. The training sessions with the coaches (trainers from the partner institutions) were conducted online, introducing the trainers to the project, the e-learning platform, and the content of the learning modules. The trainers were then responsible for training their respective teacher teams, with a focus on different learning objectives of the modules. Following the training, the teacher teams implemented PW-PBS in their settings for approximately 8-9 weeks. Throughout the process, coaches provided support and addressed any concerns. A set of three questionnaires were utilised to gather data for evaluation.

By analysing the collected data, valuable insights and findings regarding the effectiveness and impact of the training programme in Ireland are provided. The findings highlight the need for continued training opportunities in evidence-based approaches like PW-PBS, addressing specific challenges faced by educators and promoting inclusive environments. The study also emphasises the importance of comprehensive online training programmes that enhance educators' professional development and equip them with the skills to effectively support student learning and wellbeing. The practice recommendations, which emerged from this activity, include: providing regular professional development and training opportunities for all staff members, ensuring a shared vision by involving stakeholders in goal-setting, fostering a collaborative approach among educators and stakeholders, implementing a system to monitor progress and provide feedback, recognising and addressing implementation barriers, celebrating success and recognising effort, and emphasising that PW-PBS implementation is an ongoing process that requires commitment and consistent effort. These

recommendations aim to enhance the implementation of PW-PBS strategies in ECEC settings throughout Europe, ultimately creating socially inclusive environments and addressing behaviour problems from the early years of children's education.

2. INTRODUCTION

PBS-ECEC Project Overview

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

The PBS-ECEC project aims to promote a whole-school approach titled Programme-Wide Positive Behaviour Support (PW-PBS) in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) settings in Europe. Through collaboration between ECEC centres and academic institutions in Europe, PBS-ECEC focuses on applying a programme-wide approach to enhance children’s socioemotional competence. The project specifically focuses on:

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

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

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

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

Result 3: Impact Assessment Study and Practice Recommendations

This report is presented as part of Result 3 of the PBS-ECEC project - Impact Assessment Study and Practice Recommendations. Result 3 involved the utilisation of the online learning materials developed during Result 2 and designed to train early years educators in implementing the PW-PBS approach. Each partner in the consortium was responsible for conducting training programmes for early years educators in their respective countries and guiding the implementation of PW-PBS practices in their work. In this report, we present the evaluation of the training programme and implementation phase conducted by the Institute of Child Education and Psychology (ICEP) Europe in Ireland. By examining the collected data, we aim to provide valuable insights and findings regarding the effectiveness and impact of the training programme in Ireland and to include practice recommendations that emerged from this activity.

The Role of Coaches and Trainers

In Ireland, a train-the-trainers approach was used. Two coaches were selected from the staff of ICEP Europe due to their expertise in psychology and early childhood education. The coaches were tasked with equipping early years trainers (preschool managers, owners, etc.) with the necessary knowledge

and skills needed to train teacher teams (their staff and colleagues) in the use of the PW-PBS approach. Following the training, the trainers and educators were responsible for introducing and implementing PW-PBS in their own respective ECEC settings.

Table 1

Definition of ‘coach’, ‘trainer’, and ‘teacher team’ as used for the purpose of this report

Participant title	Definition for the purpose of this report
Coach	This professional, who is associated with the PBS-ECEC partner organisation and is involved in the PBS-ECEC project, has the responsibility of training preschool trainers. Their goal is to improve the knowledge and skills of these trainers required to effectively support their staff and colleagues in PW-PBS implementation.
Trainer	This professional, whether he/she is a preschool manager, owner, educator, or another staff member, participates in training with PBS-ECEC coaches. Their purpose is to gain the necessary skills and knowledge to subsequently train and support their own staff and colleagues in implementing the PW-PBS approach.
Teacher team	A group of preschool early years professionals participating in PW-PBS training facilitated by a trainer within their early years setting and implementing PW-PBS practices in their work, with support from their trainers.

Preschool Recruitment and Profiles

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

Initially, 8 preschools were recruited for the training and implementation activity, with 11 trainers agreeing to train their staff or colleagues. However, following the initial training sessions, 2 preschools

(accompanied by 2 trainers) decided to withdraw from the activity. The reasons for dropping out provided by the preschools related to the programme not being suitable to their current needs and availability. Among the remaining 6 preschools, 4 were public institutions while 2 were private. The remaining 9 trainers successfully recruited 18 ECEC professionals to participate in this project activity and trained them in the utilisation of the PW-PBS approach.

Table 2

Information relating to participating preschools

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

Timeline of the Training and Implementation Phase

This project activity began with a coaches' webinar in January 2023, which was held online via Zoom. The purpose of the webinar was to introduce the coaches from all partner countries to the project and their role in Result 3. The content of the online learning platform was presented, and a detailed timeline of the activities to be undertaken as part of Result 3 was discussed. The webinar gave the coaches an opportunity to ask questions and gain more clarity on what was expected of them as part of their involvement in the project.

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

Following the preparation of the coaches, the training activities of the project began in each of the countries. All partner countries followed the same guidelines when working with the early years settings. Each partner had some flexibility to adapt and change the process slightly to suit the needs of their participants. In Ireland, three online training sessions took place with eight preschools across two weeks in March 2023:

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

The coaches encouraged the trainers to organise an information session with their colleagues to explain the preschool's involvement in the PBS-ECEC project. The trainers were asked to explain the project aims, particularly the aims of Result 3 which they were taking part in, and what their involvement in this result would entail. In this session, trainers were asked to confirm with their colleagues whether they wished to be involved.

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

- ECEC and socioemotional learning;
- Basic theoretical framework of PBS;
- Practical tips on supporting socio-emotional learning and PBS;
- Whole-school programme approach;
- Assessment and monitoring methods.

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

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

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

Following the training sessions, the teacher teams were expected to have a clear idea of the importance of socio-emotional learning in early years, what PBS is and how it can be implemented and assessed. Throughout the training, the trainers were asked to discuss with their colleagues the needs of their ECEC settings and the aspects of PBS which they wish to implement in their work, if any. The trainers and teacher teams were then asked to implement PW-PBS in their respective settings, over a period of approximately 8-9 weeks.

Trainers had an opportunity to meet with the project coaches after the first four weeks of implementation and at the end of the implementation. These sessions were held online and gave the trainers an opportunity to ask questions and raise any concerns they had in relation to the implementation of PW-PBS in their settings, as well as provide informal feedback about the training and implementation phase. The coaches also encouraged the trainers to get in touch via email at any point of their involvement in this project activity, should any issues arise. The majority of the questions and concerns reported by the trainers were centred around time issues. Trainers found that the ECEC teams

struggled to find time to study the content and to effectively plan and implement PW-PBS practices in their work. The coaches encouraged the trainers to adapt the implementation level and timeline to suit the needs of the preschool and the availability of the ECEC teams. Trainers were encouraged to send regular updates on their progress.

Consent, Evaluation and Assessment

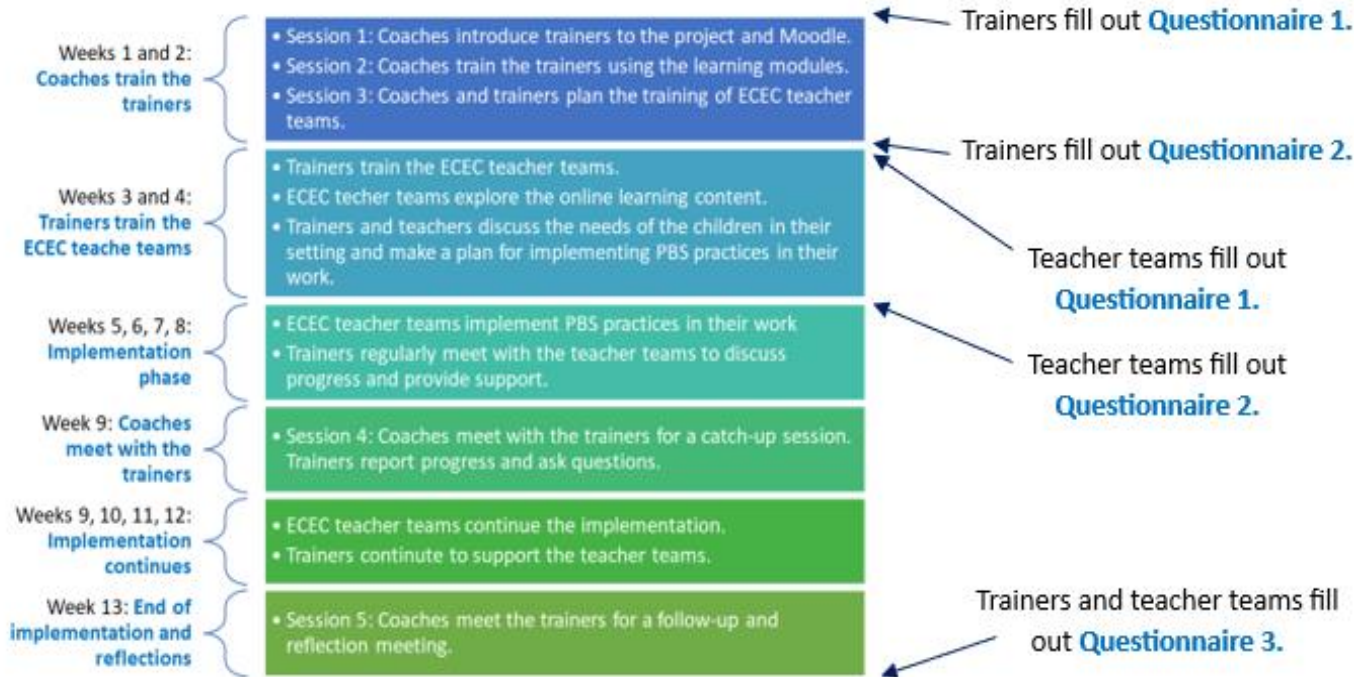
All participants (trainers and teacher teams) were asked to fill out a consent form, prior to their involvement in the project activity. Separate consent forms were sent to teachers and trainers, which outlined their tasks as part of Result 3. The consent form clearly explained that participants can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

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

At the end of the last training session, participants (trainers and teachers) were asked to fill out the post-training questionnaire (Questionnaire 2) to evaluate the support provided by the training facilitators, the learning content, the training effectiveness and the tools used. The questionnaire was distributed online.

A follow-up questionnaire (Questionnaire 3) was given to the participants at the end of the implementation phase, to analyse the knowledge they gained through the training, whether they chose to implement aspects of PBS in their practice and whether they identified any changes in the children's behaviour and socio-emotional skills as a result. As with Questionnaires 1 and 2, this questionnaire was also distributed online. All questionnaires can be found in Annexes III, IV and V.

Figure 1: Timeline for the training of trainers and ECEC teacher teams, including the schedule of evaluation and assessment



3. FINDINGS FROM QUESTIONNAIRE 1: PRE-TRAINING

QUESTIONNAIRE

Questionnaire 1 was distributed to the trainers online, before taking part in the training. The trainers were also asked to distribute it to the ECEC teams, before training them in the use PBS. The questionnaire was designed to gather demographic information as well as information on their current knowledge of PBS, the current use of behaviour programmes in their professional setting and their current thoughts on the behavioural and socio-emotional needs of the children they work with. The data gathered through this questionnaire is presented separately for trainers and ECEC teams below.

Trainers' Demographic Information

Nine trainers took part in this project activity, all of them female, with an average age of 45.5 (age range 35-56). Eight participants held a Bachelor's Degree (88.9%) and 1 participant completed the Advanced Certificate/Higher Certificate (1.1%). When asked about their professional roles, 5 of the trainers described themselves as preschool leaders/managers/owners (55.6%), 3 as preschool teachers (33.3%) and 1 participant described themselves as a member of preschool care staff (1.1%). Four of the participants reported working with children aged 4-5 (44.6%), 2 participants reported working with children aged 1-3 (22.2%), and the remaining 3 participants reported working with children aged 2 years 8 months to 3, 3-4 years and 3-5 years. Four of the trainers reported working in a public (government-funded preschool) (44.4%), while 5 of the trainers worked in private settings (55.6%). In terms of their work location, 5 trainers reported working in small towns (approximately 3,000-15,000 people) (55.6%), 2 reported working in in towns (approximately 15,000-100,000 people) (22.2%) and 2 reported working in cities (approximately 100,000-1,000,000 people) (22.2%).

ECEC Teams' Demographic Information

Based on the demographic data collected, it was observed that out of the total 18 participants of the ECEC teams, the majority consisted of females (17 participants, accounting for 94.4%), while only one participant was male (5.6%). The age range of the participants varied from 20 to 47 years old, with an average age of 30.2. When considering their educational qualifications, the distribution was as follows: 9 participants held a Bachelor's Degree (50%), 6 participants completed the Advanced Certificate/Higher Certificate (33.3%), and 3 participants possessed a Masters Degree (16.7%).

In terms of their professional roles, the participants identified themselves as follows: 13 participants were preschool teachers (72.2%), 3 were preschool care staff (16.7%) and 2 were preschool leaders/managers/owners (11.1%). The majority of participants worked with children aged 3-4 years (61.1%), followed by those working with children aged 4-5 years (27.8%), and those working with toddlers aged 1-3 years (1.1%).

The participants were employed in various settings, with 13 indicating their affiliation with private preschools or creches (72.2%), while 5 were associated with public (government-funded) preschool settings (27.8%). When considering the population size of their work locations, 9 participants described their work locations as small towns (50%), 8 participants worked in towns (44.4%), and 1 participant worked in a city (5.6%).

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

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

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

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

that children 'behave well'. When assessing the socioemotional competencies of children, 50% of participants considered them 'moderately developed' and 44.4% considered them 'well developed'.

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

Regarding the current use of behaviour management programmes and their knowledge of PBS, all trainers indicated that their schools/preschools have explicit written guidelines to handle behaviour difficulties. 55.6% of those reported using a specific behaviour management programme (mostly the HighScope Preschool Programme – 60%), while 44.4% reported that they do not follow any programme. Trainers who used behaviour management programmes generally perceived them to be 'moderately' effective in reducing children's challenging behaviours (80%) and supporting their socioemotional and behavioural needs (80%). When asked about their awareness of PBS as an evidence-based, tiered framework for supporting students' behavioural, academic, social, emotional, and mental health, a large majority of trainers (88.9%) indicated they were not aware of PBS before the study. Likewise, the majority of trainers (88.9%) had not previously participated in a training programme focusing on the use of PBS to aid the socioemotional learning of preschool children.

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

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

4. FINDINGS FROM QUESTIONNAIRE 2: POST-TRAINING

QUESTIONNAIRE

After completing their training and exploring the online learning platform, participants were asked to complete Questionnaire 2. Trainers responded to the questionnaire following their online training sessions with coaches, while teacher teams completed it after finishing the training within their respective settings. Questionnaire 2 aimed to assess the effectiveness of the strategies used by the training facilitators, the content of the learning materials, the overall training experience, and the tools utilised.

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

Trainers' and ECEC Teams' Evaluation of the Online Modules

The first part of Questionnaire 2 was designed to evaluate the online training materials which were developed as part of Result 2 of the PBS-ECEC project and used to train all participants in the use of PW-PBS. The trainer's and ECEC team's evaluation of the online modules is presented below

Learning Objectives

Firstly, the participants were asked to evaluate the learning objectives of the training materials. The majority of the trainers found the learning objectives easy to understand (77.8% agreed, 22.2% strongly agreed). Additionally, most trainers considered them relevant to their professional practice (66.6% agreed, 33.4% strongly agreed). Similarly, the ECEC teams found the learning objectives easy to understand (73.3% agreed), and they reported that the learning objectives were relevant to their professional practice (73.3% agreed)

Learning Content

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

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

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

The participants were then asked “Is there something that should be included in the learning content? If yes, what is it?”. This was a required question, with 2 trainers and 8 participants of the ECEC teams

indicating that there is nothing that should be included in the learning content. The remaining participants provided ideas related to specific scenarios and instructions (“More scenarios with possible solutions that can be implemented in our workplace”, “More specific examples of activities to use in the classroom”, “More Tier 2 and Tier 3 information”, “More examples for younger children”, “I feel that for our service, we would have benefited from having information on Tier 2, as we are at this stage.”), clarity and instruction (“Some of the activities could be a little clearer. I didn’t understand everything I was being asked to do.”) and possible expansion and enhancements:

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

The participants were asked “do you think that any aspects of the learning content should be left out? If yes, what are they?”. Again, this question required a response to move forward with the survey, with 8 trainers and 9 ECEC professionals indicating that there is nothing that should be excluded from the content. The remaining 7 participants provided ideas relating to the content relevance and applicability (“Not so much left out as there are many different sizes/types of services but we are a small service - myself the owner/manager and then 2 staff. So, I felt the piece on leadership and being led by a team of 4 or 5 people was not relevant to me. Also, I loved the idea of 'if teacher can’t deal with it go to the leadership team'!! If only that option was available. Or even for us another support group/person. Sometimes we can feel very alone.”), the language used and the clarity of the content (“I feel it repeats some aspects at times!!”, “Some of the quizzes had responses in a foreign language”, “There was a bit of repetition between the different courses so some information could be left out or replaced”) and resource streamlining (“There was quite a lot of content to get through. Could maybe be condensed and

make it easier to follow for preschool staff who are very busy”, “There are a lot of resources provided - it’s a bit overwhelming not knowing what’s important and what isn’t”).

Learning Activities

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

Additional Materials

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

Trainers’ Evaluation of the Training Programme

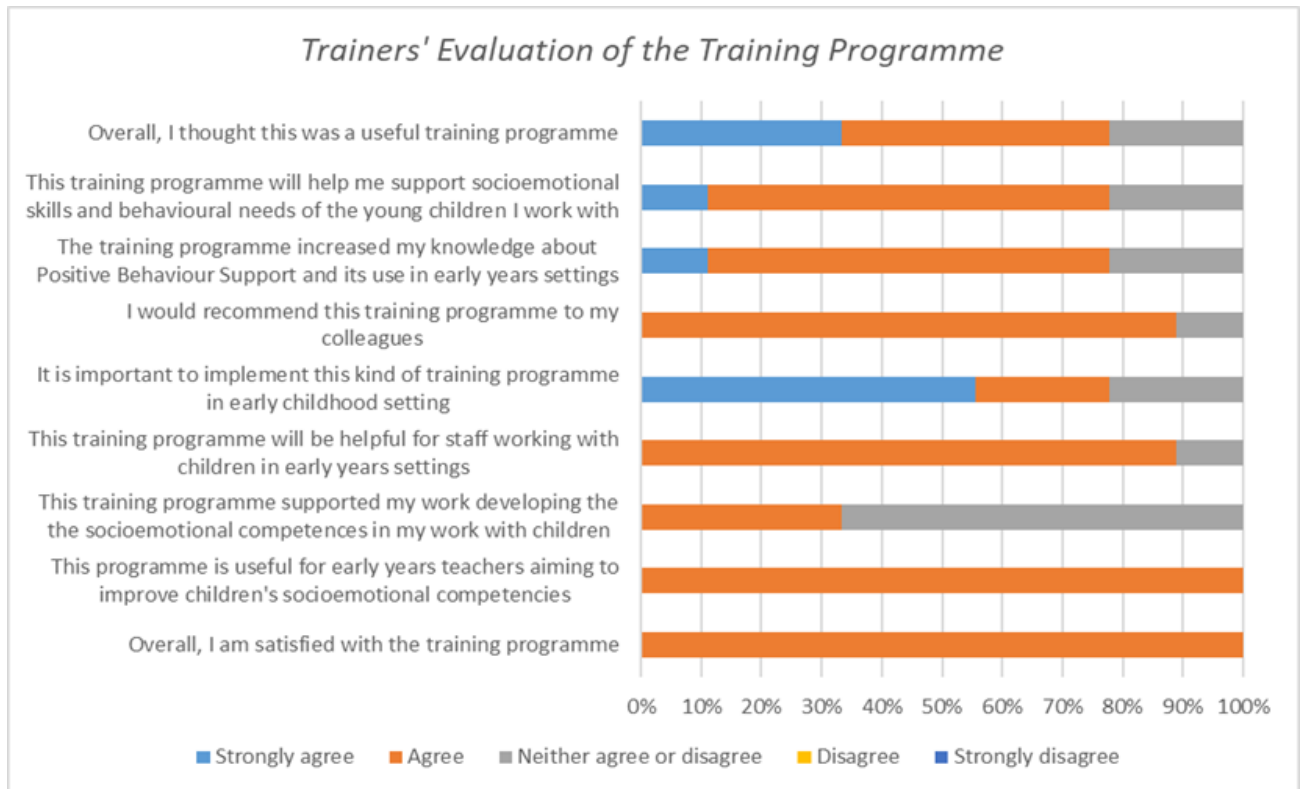
The second part of Questionnaire 2 was designed to evaluate the training programme delivered to the trainers by the coaches and to the teacher teams by their trainers. The trainer’s evaluation data is presented below, followed by the ECEC teams’ evaluation data.

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

The majority of trainers believed that it is important to implement this kind of training programme in early childhood settings (55.6% strongly agreed and 22.2% agreed) and believed that this training programme will be helpful for staff working with children in early years settings (88.9% agreed). Interestingly, the majority of trainers remained neutral when asked whether the programme supported their work in developing the socioemotional competencies of children (66.7% neither agreed or

disagreed, 33.3% agreed), but all believed that this programme is useful for early years teachers aiming to improve children’s socioemotional competencies (100% agreed). To the statement “Overall, I am satisfied with the training programme”, all participants (100%) responded, “agree”.

Figure 2: Trainers’ Evaluation of the Training Programme



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

The trainers were also asked if there was anything that could be improved about the training programme and provided suggestions relating to content and delivery (“Give specific scenarios and possible solutions”, “Some language was difficult to understand”, “More interactive quizzes”) and the relevance and appropriateness of the content (“Maybe some videos of early years educators

implementing strategies in the learning environment. Some of the videos were American and didn't replicate the teaching strategies we would follow.”).

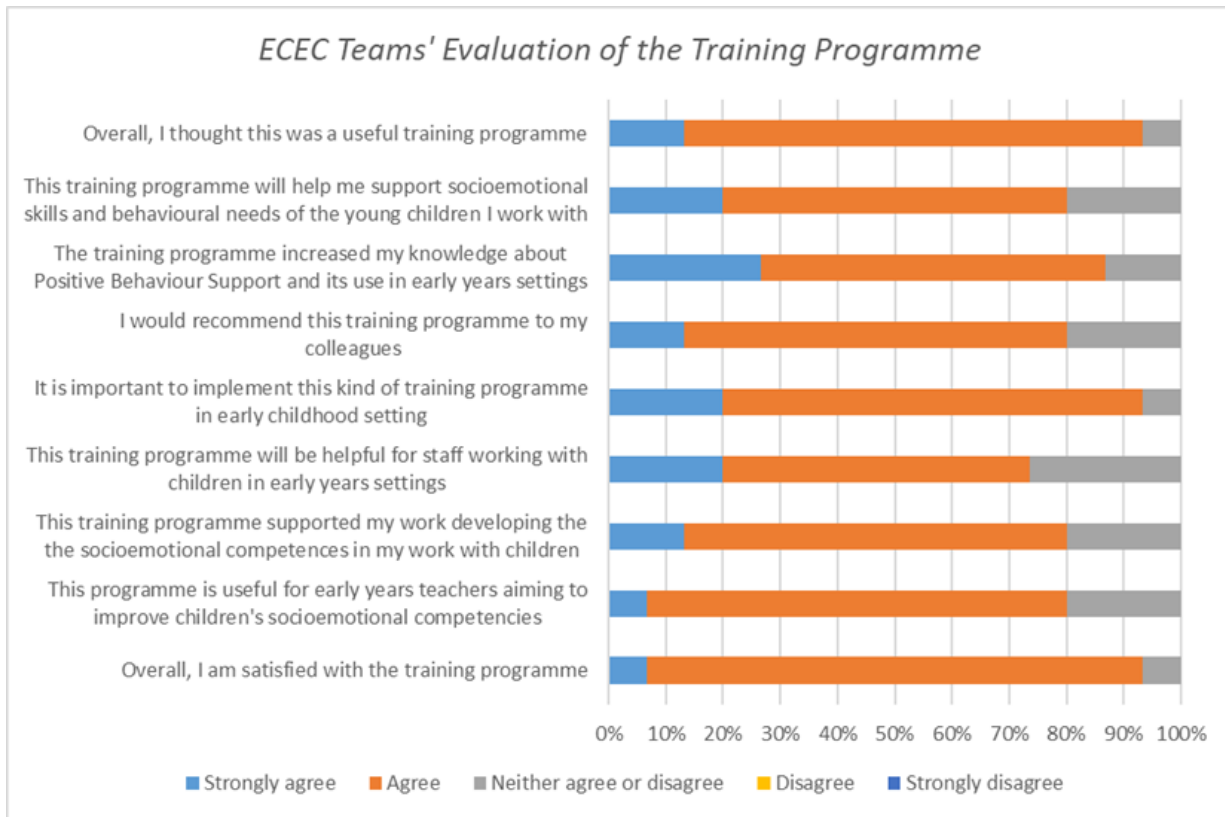
The trainers were then asked if they plan on implementing PBS in their professional practice in the ongoing school year. 7 trainers said 'yes' and the remaining 2 trainers indicated that they have already begun implementing PBS in their work and that they have already been implementing most of the aspects of PBS mentioned in the course.

ECEC Teams' Evaluation of the Training Programme

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

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

Figure 3: ECEC Team’s Evaluation of the Training Programme



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

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

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

Trainers' Evaluation of the Training Facilitators/Training Organisers

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

ECEC Teams' Evaluation of the Training Facilitators/Training Organisers

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

5. FINDINGS FROM QUESTIONNAIRE 3: FOLLOW-UP

QUESTIONNAIRE

Participants were asked to fill out Questionnaire 3 at the end of the implementation phase. The questionnaire was designed to analyse the knowledge gained by participants through the training, to find whether participants chose to implement aspects of PBS in their practice and whether they have noted any changes in their students' behaviour and socio-emotional skills as a result. The data gathered through this questionnaire is presented separately for trainers and ECEC teams below.

Again, despite the trainers' and the research team's efforts to encourage all teacher teams to fill out Questionnaire 3 within the specified timeframe, 4 participants did not comply. However, these individuals reportedly still participated fully in the activity, completing the training and implementing PW-PBS practices in their work. Therefore, the project findings presented below are based on the responses received from 9 trainers and 14 members of ECEC teams.

Trainers' Perceptions of the Training Programme

Firstly, the trainers were asked to evaluate the training programme which they took part in as part of the PBS-ECEC project. The majority of trainers reported that they were glad to have taken part in the training programme (55.6% strongly agreed and 33.3% agreed), and they agreed that the training programme increased their knowledge of the importance of children's socioemotional learning (55.6% agreed and 33.3% strongly agreed), their knowledge of Positive Behaviour Support and its use in preschool settings (55.6% strongly agreed and 33.3% agreed) and their competencies in dealing with challenging behaviours and supporting socioemotional learning in the classroom (66.7% agreed and 11.1% strongly agreed). The trainers also agreed that the training programme encouraged them to learn more about socioemotional learning, challenging behaviours and positive discipline (66.7% agreed, 30.3% strongly agreed). As expected, all trainers indicated that they have discussed the training programme with their colleagues and recommended the programme to their colleagues.

ECEC Teams' Perceptions of the Training Programme

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

Trainers' Implementation of PBS in the Preschool Classroom

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

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

The trainers were then asked about the barriers to using PBS in their professional practice, with 44.4% indicating that they encountered barriers and 55.6% indicating that they did not. When asked what barriers they encountered, the participants provided responses related to time constraints and staff and resource shortages ("Lack of time and staff was a huge issue for us and continues to be whenever we try to implement or try anything new", "Lack of time and I felt that only certain aspects could be considered for the children with additional needs, especially those that need support in the areas of communication and understanding.", "Many barriers including time constraints, staffing issues and insufficient resources") and the general approach and perspective ("The main barrier is as a result of the label 'PBS'.

PBS is very behaviour based, when behaviour is from a struggle with communication or an inability for the child to communicate clearly what they need. When we focus on behaviour instead of communication and language we can be drawn into a focus of punishing or rewarding. There are many great examples in this training and the delivery was very good and easily accessible, but the name would need to change for widespread use in ELC to support the rights of the child to be heard and listened and communicated with.”).

The majority of trainers (77.8%) indicated that they encountered facilitators and resources that helped with PBS implementation, including: “The questionnaires you provided especially the TPOT and the Strengths and Difficulties questionnaire”, “Plenty online resources”, “Support from colleagues”, “Everything presented in the course acted as a facilitator “, “The ease of access and quality of resources were great and the support from (the coach) was very good.”

Finally, all trainers indicated that since taking part in the training programme, they have encouraged or trained their colleagues to use PBS.

ECEC Teams’ Implementation of PBS in the Preschool Classroom

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

- “Mainly stating rules in a positive manner and giving frequent feedback when children are doing something good.”
- “The voice meter and other strategies.”
- “Taking advantage of undesirable behaviour to create a moment of learning.”
- “Whole-classroom approach to PBS.”
- “The voice meter, modelling desired behaviour, behaviour matrix, monitoring progress, etc.”
- “More use of reinforcement of positive behaviours using different reinforcers, setting out rules and expectations, active supervision.”
- “All aspects from the training.”
- “Modelling to the children the behaviour that they should be displaying .”
- “Pretty much everything from the course, though it was hard to have a leadership team in such a small setting like ours.”

- “Mostly ensuring that we state rules and expectations in the classroom in a positive manner and that we provide regular positive feedback when these expectations are met.”

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

Interestingly, all ECEC team members indicated that they encountered facilitators and resources that helped with PBS implementation, including: “Support from colleagues”, “The resources on the online modules were very helpful”, “Well-structured online course”, “Supportive manager”, “Team work”, “Help from colleagues”, “The online resources were fantastic”.

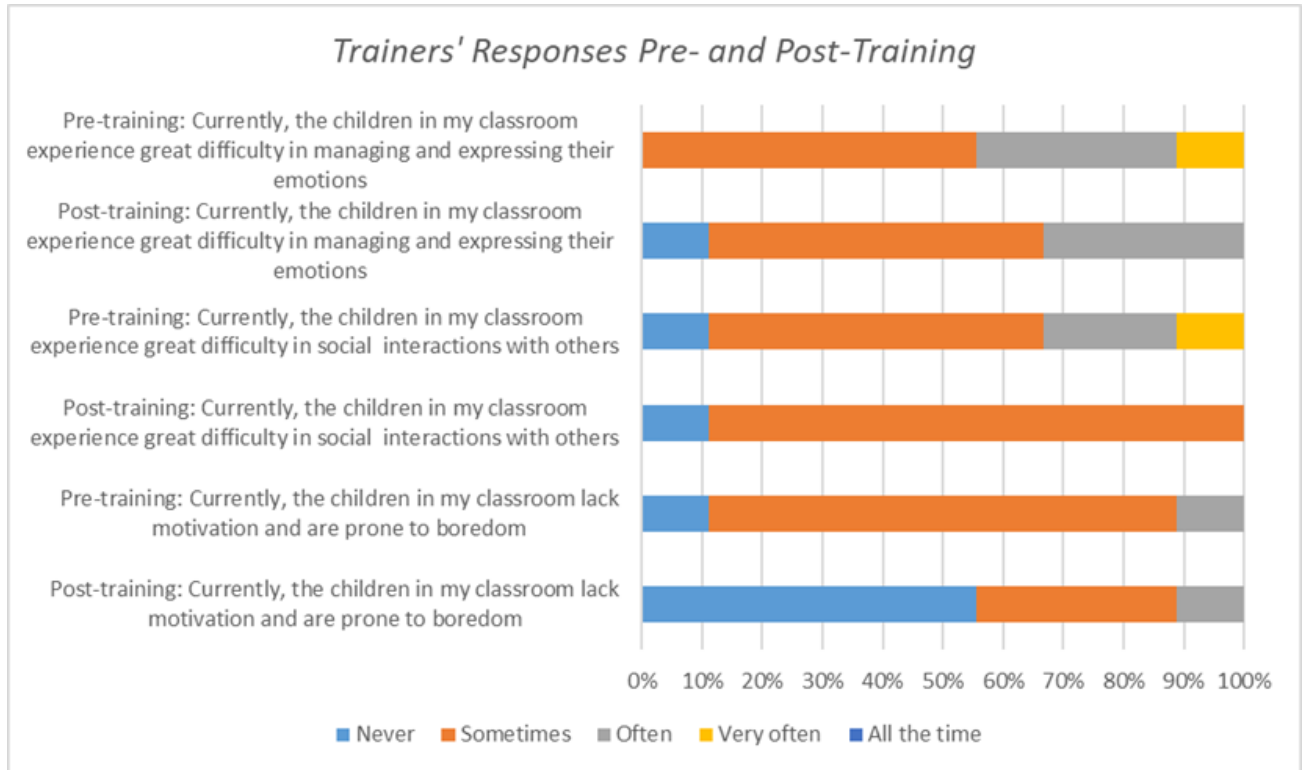
Finally, all participants indicated that since taking part in the training programme, they have encouraged or trained their colleagues to use PBS.

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

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

Post-training, the majority of trainers reported that preschool children ‘sometimes’ experience great difficulty in managing and expressing their emotions (55.6%) and that preschool children ‘sometimes’ face challenges in social interactions with others (88.9%). When asked whether the children in their classroom are prone to boredom, 55.6% trainers responded ‘never’, 30.3% responded ‘sometimes’ and 11.1% responded ‘often’.

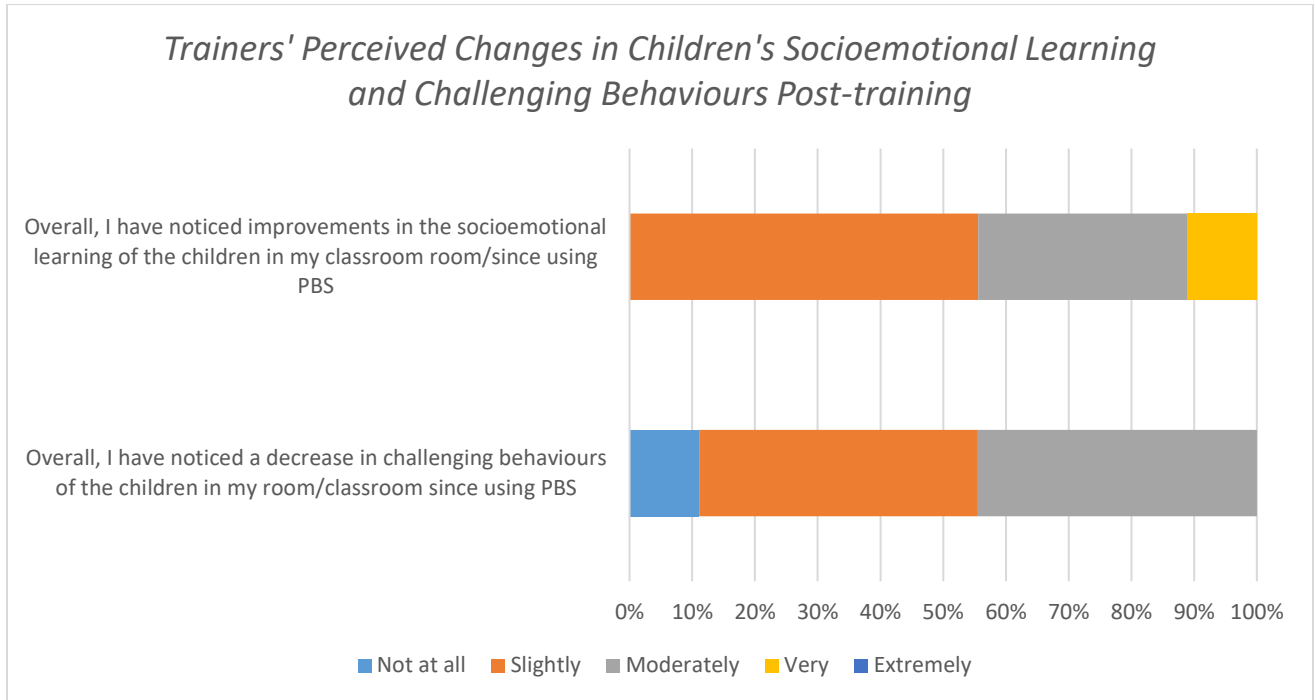
Figure 4: Comparison of Trainer’s Perceived Status of Children’s Behavioural and Socioemotional Difficulties Pre- and Post-training



Regarding overall behaviour, 66.7% of trainers perceived that children in their classes ‘misbehave occasionally’, while 33.3% reported that children ‘behave well’. When assessing the socioemotional competencies of children, 66.7% of trainers considered them ‘well developed’, 22.2% considered them moderately developed, and 11.1% considered them ‘very well developed’.

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

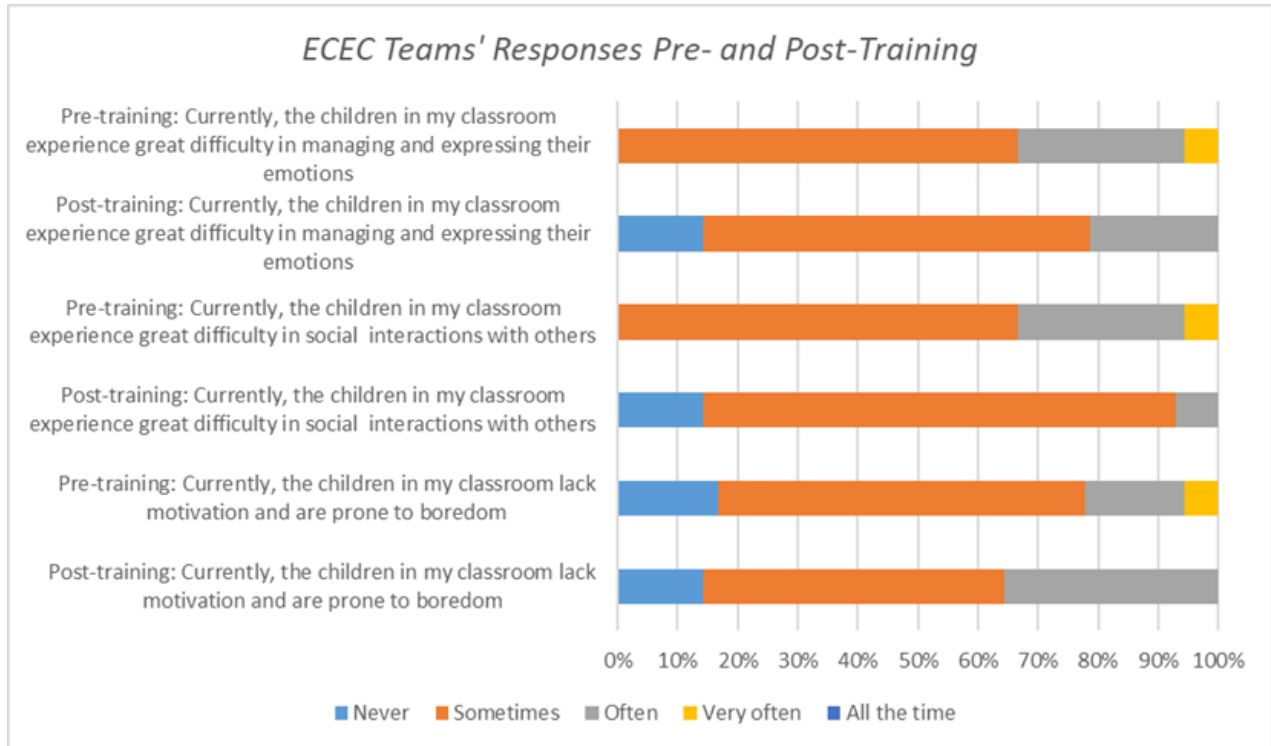
Figure 5: Trainers' Perceived Changes in Children's Socioemotional Learning and Challenging Behaviours Post-training



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

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

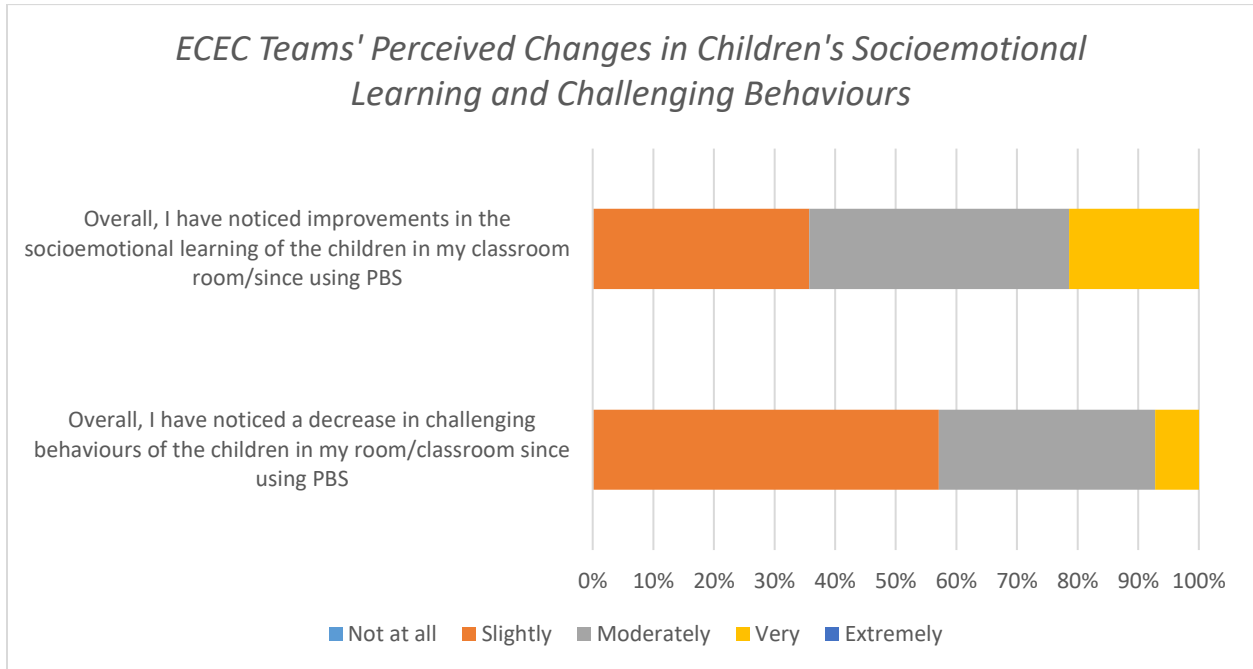
Figure 6: Comparison of ECEC Team’s Perceived Status of Children’s Behavioural and Socioemotional Difficulties Pre- and Post-training



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

In terms of noticing improvements in the socioemotional learning of the children in their classroom since implementing PBS, 42.9% of participants responded ‘moderately’, 35.7% responded ‘slightly’ and 21.4% responded ‘very’. The participants were also asked if they noticed a decrease in challenging behaviours of the children in their classroom since using PBS, with 57.1% responding ‘slightly’, 28.6% responding ‘moderately’ and 14.3% responding ‘very’.

Figure 7: Trainers' Perceived Changes in Children's Socioemotional Learning and Challenging Behaviours
Post-training



6. CONCLUSION OF THE IMPACT ASSESSMENT STUDY

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

The findings from the questionnaires distributed as part of this study provided valuable insights into the participants' perceptions of the online learning materials used in the training. Both the trainers and the ECEC teams expressed overall satisfaction with the online learning content, considering it relevant, enjoyable, and meeting their expectations. Many participants appreciated the ability to learn at their own pace and the convenience of completing the training online. They expressed satisfaction with the clear explanations, engaging videos, interactive quizzes, and the opportunity to reflect on teaching strategies and learning tools. The online format allowed participants to engage with the content comfortably, without the pressure of attending in-person classes or taking part in exams, which was particularly beneficial for those juggling busy schedules and staffing limitations.

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

The majority of trainers and ECEC team members expressed their satisfaction with the training programme as a whole, highlighting its positive impact on their understanding of the importance of children's socioemotional learning and the use of positive behaviour support, and on their competencies in dealing with challenging behaviours. Prior to the training, a substantial majority of participants (85.2%) acknowledged their lack of awareness regarding PBS as an evidence-based, tiered framework for supporting various aspects of students' development. Moreover, the majority of participants (96.3%)

had never undergone a training programme specifically focused on utilising PBS to enhance the socioemotional learning of preschool children. However, after completing the training and participating in the study, the educators' understanding of PBS underwent a significant transformation. When evaluating the training programme, the majority of participants expressed their gratitude for having had the opportunity to take part in the programme. They reported that the training had substantially enhanced their knowledge of the importance of children's socioemotional learning. Additionally, they agreed that the training programme significantly improved their comprehension of Positive Behavior Support and its effective implementation within preschool settings. The participants also felt more confident and competent in managing challenging behaviours and providing support for socioemotional learning in their classrooms.

Moreover, the training programme served as a catalyst for the participants' curiosity and motivation to further explore the topics of socioemotional learning, challenging behaviours, and positive discipline. The educators indicated that the programme had encouraged them to delve deeper into these areas, highlighting the programme's success in fostering ongoing professional development. Importantly, all participants stated that they had engaged in discussions with their colleagues about the training programme, emphasising the positive ripple effect it had on their professional communities. Furthermore, the majority of participants enthusiastically recommended the programme to their colleagues, recognising its value and potential impact on enhancing educational practices and promoting socioemotional development in early years settings. These outcomes underscore the need for continued training opportunities in evidence-based approaches like PW-PBS within the field of early childhood education. Equipping early childhood educators with the knowledge and skills to implement PW-PBS empowers them to effectively support children's socioemotional development and create nurturing environments conducive to learning.

One notable outcome of the study was the clear indication that participants successfully embraced and implemented PBS practices in their preschool classrooms. In fact, all trainers and ECEC team members reported incorporating various aspects of PBS into their professional practice following their participation in the training programme. Participants reported incorporating more visual strategies in their work, such as visual schedules and cues, to aid children in understanding expectations and transitions. They also emphasised the importance of providing positive feedback and reinforcement to children, recognising and praising their efforts and appropriate behaviours. Clear rules and expectations were established to promote consistency and clarity in the classroom environment. Behaviour questionnaires were utilised as a means to assess and monitor children's behaviours, enabling educators

to gather valuable data for intervention and support. The participants also mentioned employing strategies like choral repetition, where children repeat desired rules and behaviours as a group, fostering a sense of collective responsibility and engagement. Some participants expressed that they took advantage of undesirable behaviour as an opportunity for teaching and learning, using these moments to address and guide children toward more positive alternatives. A whole-classroom approach to PBS was embraced by many participants, recognising the significance of creating a positive and inclusive community where everyone is involved in promoting appropriate behaviours and social-emotional development. Strategies such as the voice meter, the behaviour matrix, and modelling desired behaviours were mentioned as effective tools in promoting a positive classroom climate and encouraging self-regulation skills. Active supervision, where teachers actively monitor and guide children's behaviour throughout various activities, was also highlighted as an essential aspect of their PBS implementation. The diverse range of PBS strategies implemented by the participants demonstrates their commitment to enhancing their teaching approaches and creating a positive and supportive learning environment for young children.

Both the trainers and the ECEC team members reported encountering similar barriers to PW-PBS implementation. A number of participants mentioned the limitations imposed by their small preschool setting, where they lacked the staff resources required to establish a dedicated leadership team. Limited time availability was a common challenge mentioned by several participants, who expressed the difficulty of engaging in additional training and exploring new approaches amidst their busy schedules. It was also noted that certain aspects of PBS may need to be tailored to meet the needs of children with additional support requirements, particularly in areas such as communication and understanding. Despite these barriers, the participants acknowledged the significant support they received in their PBS implementation journey. Colleague support emerged as a valuable facilitator, with participants expressing gratitude for the assistance and encouragement they received from their fellow educators. The online training programme proved to be a particularly valuable resource, providing comprehensive modules, well-structured content, and a wealth of online resources that participants found helpful and accessible. The questionnaires provided, such as the TPOT (Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool) and the Strengths and Difficulties questionnaire, were specifically mentioned as valuable tools in their PBS implementation. Participants also appreciated the support of their managers and the collaborative nature of teamwork, emphasising the importance of a whole-school approach to PBS. These facilitators played a crucial role in overcoming implementation challenges and reinforcing the participants' commitment to PBS practices.

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

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

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

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

programmes can provide educators with opportunities for reflection, feedback, and continuous learning. They should include follow-up sessions, coaching or mentoring components, and access to a network of support where educators can seek guidance and share experiences.

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

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

7. PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS

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

- Provide professional development and training: Offer regular professional development and training opportunities for all staff members. Professional development holds an integral role in enhancing quality within early childhood education and care (Siraj et al., 2019). Ensure that everyone has a good understanding of PW-PBS principles and strategies and is equipped with the necessary skills to implement them effectively. Ensure that all staff have access to evidence-based practices, instructional materials, and assessment tools to support their implementation efforts. Accessible resources such as visual supports, behaviour management tools, and data collection systems assist educators in implementing consistent and targeted interventions.
- Develop a shared vision: Clearly define the desired outcomes and goals for promoting positive behaviour in the setting. Involve all stakeholders, including teachers, staff, parents, and even children, in the process of developing a shared vision.
- Foster a collaborative approach: Creating a supportive system that promotes collaboration among educators, provides adequate resources, and encourages a whole-school approach can facilitate successful PBS implementation (Evan & Weiss, 2014). Encourage open communication and collaboration among all stakeholders, including teachers, staff, parents, and therapists. Regularly share information, strategies, and progress updates to ensure a consistent approach across settings. When educators work together as a team, they are better equipped to address challenging behaviours and create consistent behaviour support plans across various classroom settings. Collaborative problem-solving and the sharing of resources and expertise results in a more cohesive and unified approach to behaviour support.
- Monitor progress and provide feedback: Implement a system to monitor educators' progress and provide feedback on their implementation of PBS practices. Monitoring the progress of PBS implementation is crucial for assessing its effectiveness, identifying successes and challenges, providing individualised support to educators, enabling data-driven decision making, and promoting continuous improvement. Set milestones or checkpoints within the training programme to assess educators' understanding and application of the concepts learned. Offer

personalised feedback and guidance to educators to reinforce positive practices and address any areas that require improvement.

- Recognise implementation barriers and work towards mitigating them: Recognise and address limitations imposed by small preschool settings, such as lack of staff resources for a dedicated leadership team. While it may not be possible for all preschool settings to form a leadership team, at least one or two members of staff should act as educators responsible for overseeing PBS implementation and supporting all staff members. Similarly, recognise time constraints and provide flexibility and support to educators in managing busy schedules.
- Celebrate success and recognise effort: Acknowledge and celebrate the efforts and achievements of both children and staff members. Highlight positive changes in behaviour and create a supportive and encouraging atmosphere.
- Remember, implementing PW-PBS is an ongoing process that requires commitment, collaboration, and consistent effort. It may take time for the positive effects to become evident, but with dedication, the benefits for children's behaviour and social-emotional wellbeing can be significant.

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9. ANNEX I

Consent Form for Activity Leaders/Trainers

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

- Take part in online training sessions with members of the PBS-ECEC research team.
- Take part in online training comprised of five learning modules.
- Form a Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) team in your preschool. Share the online training package with the team members. Train the team members to implement PBS practices in their work.
- Implement aspects of PBS in your professional practice and encourage your team members to do the same.
- Take part in three questionnaires: before taking part in the training, after taking part in the training and approximately eight weeks after completing the training.

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

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

Do you consent to taking part in this project?

- Yes
- No

What is your name?

What is the name of your preschool?

10. ANNEX II

Consent Form for Early Years Educators

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

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

- Join the Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) team in your preschool and take part in the training organised by the team leaders.
- Take part in online training comprised of five learning modules.
- Implement aspects of PBS in your professional practice.
- Take part in three questionnaires: before taking part in the training, after taking part in the training and approximately eight weeks after completing the training.

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

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Do you consent to taking part in this project?

- Yes
- No

What is your name?

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

11. ANNEX III

PBS-ECEC Project - Pre-training Questionnaire

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

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

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

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

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

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

Contact email: a.szproch@icepe.eu

The PBS-ECEC Consortium

Consent

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

- Agree
- Disagree

Demographic Information

Please state your gender.

- Female
- Male
- Other
- Prefer not to say

How old are you?

What is the HIGHEST level of education you have completed?

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

What is your professional background?

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

How many children are there in your classroom?

What age group do you primarily work with?

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

In what type of setting do you work?

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

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

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

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

- Yes
- No

Children's Socioemotional and Behavioural Needs

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- Very well developed

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

Current Use of Behaviour Management Programmes and Knowledge of PBS

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

- Yes
- No

Does your institution follow any specific behaviour management programme?

- Yes
- No

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

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

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

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

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

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

- Yes
- No

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

- Yes
- No

If yes, can you tell us more about it?

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

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

The PBS-ECEC Consortium

12. ANNEX IV

PBS-ECEC Post-training Questionnaire

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

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The PBS-ECEC Consortium

Consent

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- Agree
- Disagree

Evaluation of the Online Modules

Learning Objectives

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

- Strongly Agree
- Agree

- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

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

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

Learning Content

The learning content of the online modules met my expectations.

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

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

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

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

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

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

I enjoyed reading the learning content of the online modules.

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

What did you enjoy about the learning content?

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

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

Learning Activities

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

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

I enjoyed completing the learning activities within the online modules.

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

Additional Materials and Resources

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

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

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

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

Evaluation of the Training Programme

Overall, I thought this was a useful training programme.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I would recommend this training programme to my colleagues.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Overall, I am satisfied with the training programme.

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

What did you enjoy most about this training programme?

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

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

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

Evaluation of the Training Facilitators/Training Organisers

The training programme was well organised.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PBS-ECEC Consortium

13. ANNEX V

PBS-ECEC Follow-up Questionnaire

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

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The PBS-ECEC Consortium

Consent

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- Agree
- Disagree

Perceptions of the Training Programme

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

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

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

- Strongly Agree

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I have discussed the training programme with my colleagues.

- Yes
- No

I have recommended the training programme to my colleagues.

- Yes
- No

Implementation of PBS in the Preschool Classroom

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

- Yes
- No

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

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

- Yes
- No

If yes, what were the barriers you encountered?

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

- Yes
- No

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

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

- Yes
- No

Children's Socioemotional and Behaviour Needs Post-training

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- Not at all

- Slightly
- Moderately
- Very
- Extremely

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

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