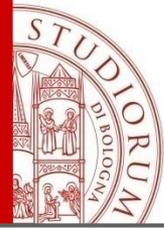


SUMSIC 2017

**Regions as social innovation ecosystems?
History, culture and institutions**

**Social Innovation in ECEC: the case of
Emilia-Romagna (Italy)**

*Prof. Lucia Balduzzi and Dr. Arianna Lazzari
Department of Education
Bologna University*



The context of European ECEC policies (I)

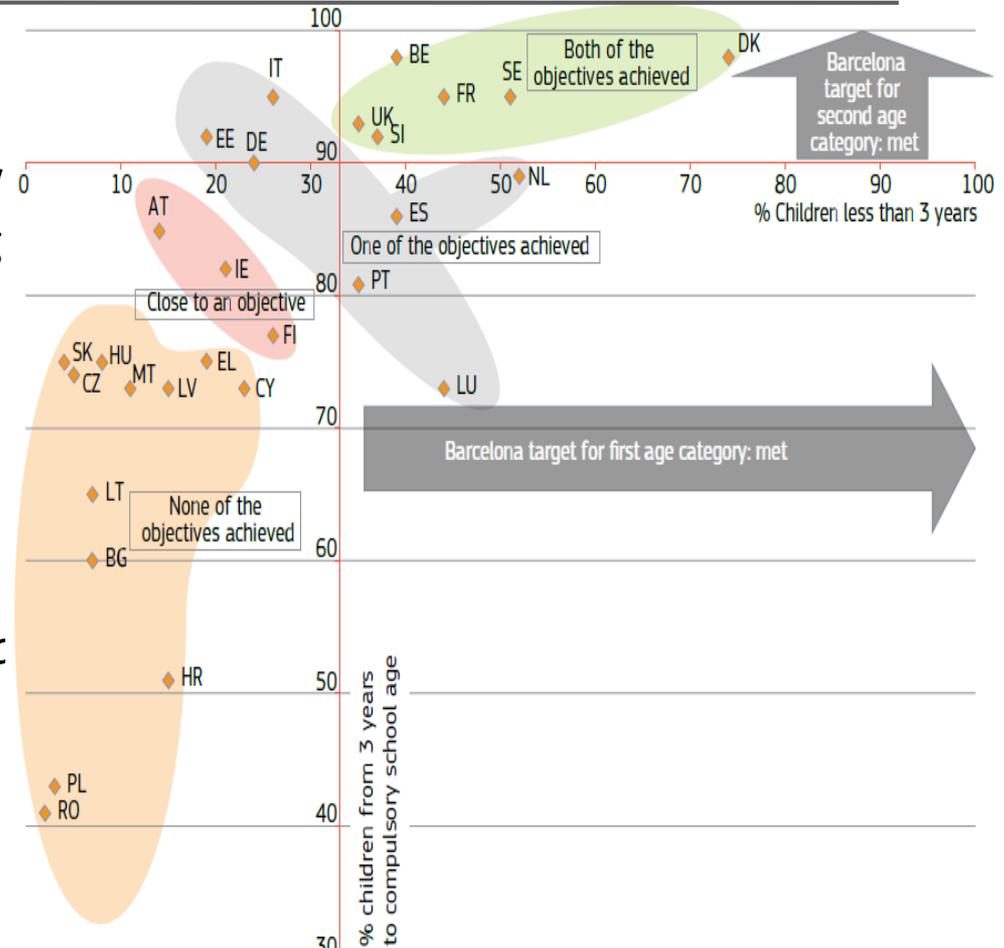
Late 80s and early 90s

Women's participation to the labour market and concerns about gender equality (sharing responsibilities between women and men in children's upbringing) were the main drivers of EU policies:

- European Commission Network on *Childcare and Other Measures to Reconcile Employment and Family Responsibilities* (1986-1996)
- *Council Recommendations on Childcare* 1992

→ *Barcelona Targets*, 2002:

33% coverage for children 0-3, 90% attendance 3-6 years old



Over 10 years have passed since the Barcelona Targets have been released, but only 6 Member States have successfully achieved them. In times of economic recession, the situation is even deteriorating in some countries → time to move beyond a labour-market oriented approach, long term political vision is needed



The context of European ECEC policies (II)

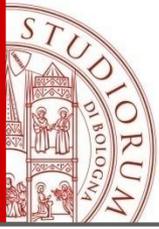
2008 – 2011: a turning point

Increased number of studies funded by the European Commission highlighting that ECEC services can play a crucial role in:

- Enhancing children's EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT and preventing ESL
- Ensuring EQUAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES
- Tackling social and cultural INEQUALITIES

Shift of focus in EU policies -> educational and social function of ECEC services





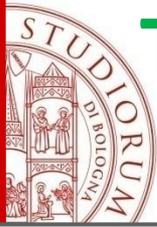
...but certain conditions are needed!

HIGH QUALITY

- ✓ ECEC of high quality entails positive effects on cognitive and non- cognitive development (Burger, 2010; Lazzari and Vandebroek, 2012)
- ✓ these effects are particularly salient for children at risk of social exclusion (EACEA, 2009)
- ✓ low quality may be damaging for development and increase inequalities (NESSE, 2009)

GENERALISED AND EQUITABLE ACCESS

- ✓ Children from low-income and migrant families are less often enrolled
- ✓ when enrolled they are more often found in lower quality ECEC provision
- ✓ and tend to be more often absent and less often listened to (Brabant-Delannoy & Lemoine, 2009; Ghysels & Van Lancker, 2011; Noailly, Visser, & Grout, 2007; OSI, REF & UNICEF, 2012)



The context of European ECEC policies (III)

2011 - onward

QUALITY and **ACCESSIBILITY** have become the main pillars of EU policies in recent years:

- COMM 66/2011: 'Providing all our children with the best start for the world of tomorrow' -> Council Conclusions on ECEC (2011)

'The Communication responds to the requests from Member States to launch a *process of cooperation* which will help them address the two-fold challenge [...] to provide **access to child care and education** for all, but also to **raise the quality of their provision** through well integrated services that build on a *joint vision of the role of ECEC*, of the most effective curricular frameworks and of the staff competences and governance arrangements necessary to deliver it.'

- European Commission Thematic Working Group on ECEC (2014) ***Proposal for key principles of a quality framework for early childhood education and care***

http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/education/policy/strategic-framework/archive/documents/ecec-quality-framework_en.pdf

- Recommendation 112/2013 'Investing in children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage' + **Social Investment Package**



innosi

Innovative Social Investment
Strengthening communities in Europe

WP4 Case studies D4.2 Evaluation report on each case study

Case Study: The integrated system of early childhood education and care of the Emilia-Romagna Region. Case studies of innovative services





Why Emilia-Romagna? An exemplary case of social innovation

70s

- Origin of *nido* services (L.1044/71), following municipal self-organised initiatives
- Women's struggles and democratic movements, intense political and pedagogical activism

80s

Late 90s
onward

8 DICEMBRE 1967 Pubbliche Elezioni

CONSIGLI DIRETTIVI

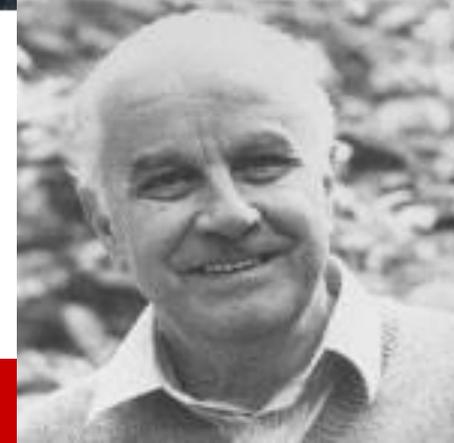
"COMITATI SCUOLA - SOCIETA'.

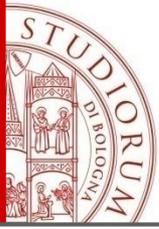
(gli Comitati Gestori Insegnanti)

QUARTIERI	SEGGI	ORARI
BARCA	1 Ufficio di Quartiere Piazza Giovanni XXIII	
	2 Scuola Materna (Micheli) Via Ruggero D'Asce, 8	
BORGO	1 Centro Ricreativo (Lavino di Mezzo) Via M. C. Lepido 295	dalle ore 9 alle 12 e dalle ore 14.30 alle 17.30
	2 Scuola Materna Mazzini Via Legnola, 2	
PANIGALE	3 Scuola Materna Villa May via Paganini, 15	
	4 Scuola Materna Birra Bot. Via Arnesene, 12	
	5 Polisportiva Cavaledebole via Fagnano	
	1 Ufficio di Quartiere via di Corticella, 2059	
	2 Scuola Materna via Geronzi, 290	dalle ore 9 alle 13
CORTICELLA	1 Biblioteca Centro Ricreativo Via Zanardi, 226	
	2 Scuola Materna via Geronzi, 290	dalle ore 9 alle 13
MURRI	1 Scuola Caspuzzo Prebiteriale Dini, 4	
	2 Ufficio di Quartiere via San, 34	dalle ore 9 alle 12 e dalle ore 14.30 alle 17.30
S. DONATO	1 Ufficio Comunale Via delle Scali, 21	
	2 Ufficio di Quartiere Via E. Dossini, 66	
	3 Scuola Materna Via Mastelloni, 2 - Zona S. Donato	dalle ore 9 alle 12.30 e dalle ore 14.30 alle 15
S. RUFFILLO	1 Scuola Materna via C. Abbi, 20	dalle ore 9 alle 12 e dalle ore 14.30 alle 17.30
	2 Ufficio di Quartiere Via E. Parenti, 155	dalle ore 8 alle 14
S. VIOLA	1 Ufficio di Quartiere Via del Parco, 12	dalle ore 9 alle 12.30 e dalle ore 14.30 alle 15.30
	2 Scuola Materna "Carducci", Via Dante, 3 Calvino	
TRO	1 Palazzina Montagnola Amp. Via Emerico, 22	dalle ore 9 alle 13
	2 Ass. Pubblica Istruzione Via Bolognina, 2 - ex Mare S. Felice	
MARCONI	1 Ufficio di Quartiere Piazza Galvani, 4	
	2 Scuola Materna "Carducci", Via Dante, 3 Calvino	
MALPIGHI	1 Ufficio di Quartiere Piazza Galvani, 4	
	2 Scuola Materna "Carducci", Via Dante, 3 Calvino	



I Comuni: Bolognina, Costa Saragozza e Mazzini promuoveranno le elezioni entro breve tempo.
POSSONO VOTARE NEI RISPETTIVI QUARTIERI I CITTADINI INTERESSATI ALLA VITA DELLA SCUOLA, CHE ABBIANO COMPIUTO IL 16. ANNO DI ETÀ.





Why Emilia-Romagna? An exemplary case of social innovation

70s

- Origin of *nido* services (L.1044/71), following municipal self-organised initiatives
- Women's struggles and democratic movements, intense political and pedagogical activism

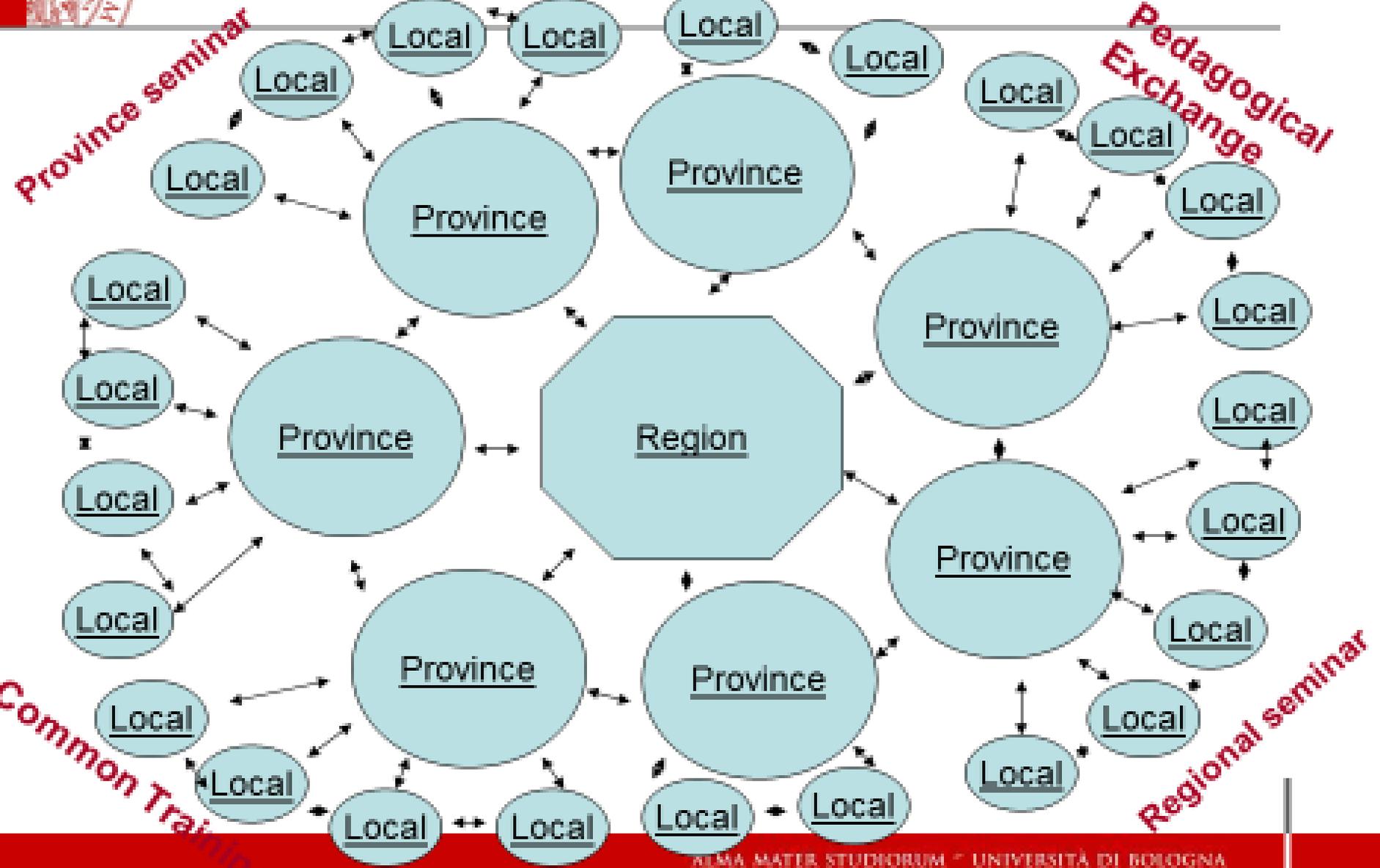
80s

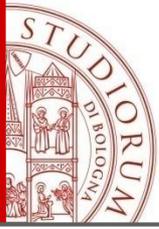
- Consolidation of 0-3 services → financial and cultural investment of local governments (Municipalities)
- ECEC services qualification through Pedagogical Coordinators (*pedagogisti*) → with support at regional level (training and infrastructure)

Late 90s
onward



The net of pedagogical coordination





Why Emilia-Romagna? An exemplary case of social innovation

Empowering for the actors involved

Systemic change is achieved by combining grassroots initiatives with responsive & proactive policy-making

Addressing constantly evolving societal challenges

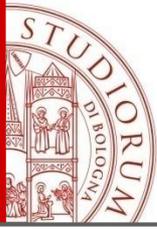
Contextualised and tailored to local circumstances (needs and resources)

- Origin of *nido* services (L.1044/71), following municipal self-organised initiatives
- Women's struggles and democratic movements, intense political and pedagogical activism
- Consolidation of 0-3 services → financial and cultural investment of local governments (Municipalities)
- ECEC services qualification through Pedagogical Coordinators (*pedagogisti*) → with support at regional level (training and infrastructure)
- Experimentation of new typologies of services to answer to new families needs (LR 1/2000 & amd: centres for children & parents, children's spaces, small educational groups)
- Changing patterns in welfare policies → constraint of public expenditure & partnership between the public and private NFP sector (social cooperatives)



Research aims

- Identifying *current societal challenges and un-met demands* (connecting local <> EU focus on *accessibility and quality*)
- Exploring *how such challenges are addressed* by drawing on a selected sample of good practices
- Identifying *key-success factors* for ECEC services innovation through in-depth contextualised analysis (*conditions for transferability* rather than *replication*)



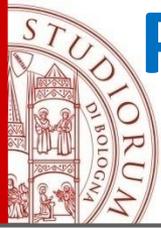
Research design & methodology

Review of ECEC policies in ERR (1970-2015)

Needs assessment
(data from the regional observatory on childhood and families policies)

Multi-site case study (3 ECEC centres)

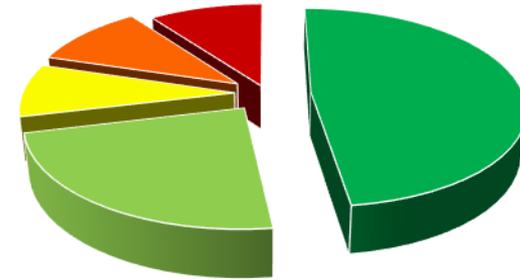
Theory of Change



Phase 1 - needs assessment identifying challenges & un-met demands...

- The number of children attending ECEC services is steadily decreasing in recent years of financial crisis: coverage exceeding the uptake (*beyond demographic trends*)
- **Un-equal enrollement**: children and families with migrant background tend to be less present (*although strong municipal variations, eg. Modena and Bologna*)
- **Renunciation and/or withdrawing** are becoming increasingly common phenomena in recent years, especially among lower-middle class families (*Innocenti Institute, 2015*)

Breakdown childcare places ERR



- Municipal provision
- Public provision managed by private NFP providers
- Publicly subsidised private (NFP) accredited provision
- Private accredited provision (no subsidies)
- Private provision

ACCESSIBILITY
SUSTAINABILITY
(QUALITY)



...as well as research gaps

- While quantitative data on ECEC availability, coverage and uptake are systematically collected, **very few qualitative data exist in relation to the perceived needs of children and families attending these services**
- While **common issues & concerns** are shared at regional level (re: financial sustainability & structural accessibility of ECEC provision), **diverse needs and responses to these challenges seem to emerge in diversified contexts** (eg. municipal governance arrangements, geographical area and socio-cultural environment characteristics)
- *Virtually no (research-validated) data exist in relation to good practices* elaborated in different local contexts to face the challenges emerged in the needs' analysis (*accessibility & sustainability*)

**USERS' VOICES
(families)**

**GOOD
PRACTICES vs
BEST PRACTICE**



The selected cases for in-depth analysis



Family day-care centre in a rural mountain community



Municipal and company creche / project financing consortium (Bologna city)

Review of ECEC policies in ERR (1970-2015)

Needs assessment

Multi-site case study: practitioners' FGs, parents' interviews, participant observations

Theory of Change based on **contextualised data analysis**



Integrated centre for children and parents & children's space in a low-income / economically deprived neighbourhood



'Girotondo intorno al bosco' family day-care centre in Serramazzoni

Context: high variability in resident population due to work migration flow in the ceramic district, both national and foreign origin without kin network



- privately-owned but publicly subsidised by the municipality (based on parents' income-related fee, direct subsidies to the provider)
- admission list centralised at municipal level as well as staff professional support initiatives (pedagogical coaching, collective meetings at district level, free-of-charge CPD + qualification programs available regional level)
- home-based setting, facilitating the transition from home to daycare for very young children
- *service rooted in the community, for the community* reflecting local cultural traditions (eg. outdoor activities, mixed-age groups of children) and strong link with community organisations (eg. library, sport club,...)

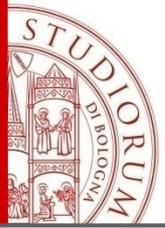
'L'albero delle meraviglie' integrated centre for children and families in Comacchio

Context: socio-economically deprived area where the initiative of a group of mothers advocating for children's places was scaled up through the support of international NGOs, Region & Municipality

- focus on **outreaching of families living in vulnerable conditions** (low-income, single-parents, migrant background)
- **integrated centre from birth to compulsory school and beyond** providing pre-natal courses, breastfeeding, infant massage, meeting place for parents and children 0-6, part-time nursery 0-3, after-school care 6-11
- strong **connection with local health board and family-support services**
- **inter-professional collaboration among staff** - educators, social workers, family-worker - **including pedagogical coordinator** -> facilitating a common orientation in educational practices across services as well as with local authorities
- educational initiatives are **not only focused on the child but also on his/her family**, creating opportunities for **social networking** among families (self-organised activities, city festivals)



'Filonido' municipal and inter-company daycare centre in Bologna (trade district)



Context: social mix combining (upper) middle class parents working in the trade district's offices with diverse population living in the neighborhood (high rate of migrant background families)

- project financing - cooperation between Municipality and local social cooperatives (public tender through which Municipality gave the land + 20 years contracting to the cooperative consortium 'Karaback' hiring educators, cleaning staff, providing meals)
- economic sustainability guaranteed by municipal quota subsidising the attendance of children's in municipal list + private companies subsidising attendance of the children of the employees at affordable fees (company pays the difference)
- flexibility meeting the demands of working parents as well as service provided to the community (eg. school holiday summer camps, self-organised activities by parents)
- staff professionalisation carried out in cooperation with Municipality and Region (continuing professional development initiatives provided by Municipality + participation to regional qualification programmes)





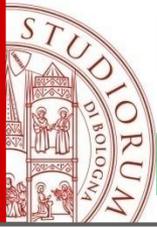
Findings (I): innovation in governance and funding strategies

Key-success factors for increasing *availability* and *affordability* of provision are:

- **Flexible combination of different funding sources** coming from the **public sector** (Municipal supply-side subsidies, Regional funding for qualification initiatives) as well as from the **private NFP sector** (management) and private enterprises (*responsabilità sociale di impresa*)
- **Within a comprehensive framework of public policies** (Regional regulatory framework ensuring homogeneous level of quality through structural requirements, Municipal centralised admission lists and income-related fees)
- That **responsively addresses the diverse needs identified within each community** (rural/city areas, vulnerable/working families) **while striving for universalism***.

Public policies infrastructure and **public funding** sustaining the diversification of services (experimentation) with a special focus on **equal access** and **quality**:

- **supply-side subsidies based** (VS demand-side vouchers) conditional to quality requirement (eg. no-contact time for staff meetings, CPD, pedagogical guidance),
- **centralised enrollment procedures** allowing allocation of places on the basis of **income related fees** (VS quasi market competition)



Findings (II): co-creation and sharing of knowledge, expertise and experiences

Key-success factors for increasing *responsiveness of ECEC services* to the needs of children and families in the local communities (*accessibility & quality*):

- **Pedagogical guidance and continuing professional development (CPD)**
→ key-role of pedagogical coordinator in sustaining practitioners' reflection on their practices starting from critical issues emerging on daily basis in the work with children and families <> broader pedagogical vision shared at municipal / regional level (*networking among services, pedagogical exchanges*)
- **Networking with local community organisations for outreaching families that are not yet attending the services** (eg. *local health board, voluntary associations, cultural organisations, leisure time organisations*)
- **Regularly involving parents' in decision-making processes** ('*listening to parents rather than talking to parents*') and in the **daily life of the ECEC centre** VS top-down 'expert role' of practitioners

Findings (III) - pedagogical innovation: welcoming practices

- Welcoming and non-judgmental attitude
- Establishing trusty relationships by creating opportunities for informal exchanges (BELONGING)



<<Before my first child started to attend the small educational group, my wife and I were strongly against childcare but we were both working parents and we had no choice really...By thinking back, I am now convinced that it was the most important experience my child could have ever had from an educational point of view...and I realised that as a parent while being there with him. When I accompanied him in the morning, I used to spend even half an hour on the armchair in the playroom, I played not only with my child but also with the other children, while the educators were offering me a coffee...Then I became the first father to be involved in the project 'educator for a day!>> [*Italian father*]



Findings (III) - pedagogical innovation: nurturing learning through relationships

- nurturing children's **feeling of identity** and **independence**
- sustaining **opportunities for peer interactions, friendship** and **belonging**
- responsiveness toward children's **individual needs**



<<The sense of independence that very young children develop while attending the centre is amazing...As an example, I used to take the skin off the banana before giving it to my child to eat...instead I have noticed that the educators let the children find out themselves how to peel it...They leave them the space to try out things, to experiment, to solve the problems themselves>> [Italian mother]

<<When I enter the service as 'educator for a day' I saw with my eyes the things that children are able to do when they are together, older and younger...they help each other and they learn to care for each other!>> [Peruvian father]

<<At the beginning it was not easy for my child to socialise with other children as she used to stay at home with me all the time...in the 2 years she attended the service she developed authentic friendships, who are still important to her now, although she is in kindergarten...>> [Italian mother]



Findings (III) - pedagogical innovation: reshaping participation by empowering families

- *listening, guidance* and *free confrontation* (vs patronising expert advice)
- promoting the creation of *informal support networks* by *activating group resources*



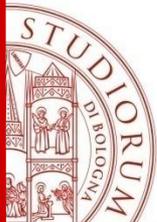
<<I got to know the centre for children and parents through another mum attending the pre-natal course ...she told me they do infant massage here and gave me the contact...I started attending the baby massage course and at the end of it the nurse told me that in the same centre they also organise parents and toddler groups...As I was not employed and I was at home all day with her, I started to go and we are still here after 3 years! My child and I learned a lot of things together here...She learnt to socialise with other children although she did not attend childcare. And I felt supported in my role as mother – not only at practical level – but also at psychological level: I learned to listen to her, to be responsive of her needs and...let's say that I learnt how to better interact with her...especially in those situations in which I was facing difficulties and I used to panic...now I've learned how to deal with them...>>
[Romenian mother]



...as actors of change

- from ECEC parent committees (pedagogical coordinators, municipal representatives) to **self-organised group of parents in the local school board, advocating for change throughout the compulsory school system**
- engagement in **community-run initiatives** giving visibility to children's culture
- **advocating for children's rights starting from the neighbourhood** (children's friendly spaces, community regeneration)

<<Having had the experience of participation in the committee for the management of ECEC services set up by the municipality, we decided to set up a parent committee also in the state-run pre- and primary school attended by our children. As there is no coordination between the 7 state-school institutions spread across the municipality, we decided to set up a parent committee to promote a more unified approach throughout the different school levels, from kindergarten to lower secondary school...also to help with fundraising initiatives, because the school here do not have many resources...We meet one summer and we started to plan together what to do...we created an association and we are still here, after 8 years...and we all started when our children attended the childcare centre...>> [Italian father president of parents committee]



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