



Family-centred Early Childhood Intervention: How to make it work

International Conference 2023

June 8th - 9th

Hosted in **Tirana, Albania on 8th - 9th June**, the conference will focus on how to build policies and practices in the field of support for children with disabilities, or with developmental delays, and their families. The conference will address the key elements of **family-centred Early Childhood Intervention (ECI)** and the creation of **national ECI** systems. It will also share the experiences from the EASPD and UNICEF joint action on provision of emergency support for early childhood development to **families with young children with developmental difficulties displaced from Ukraine to five countries in Europe**.

In July 2022, as a response to the Ukraine war, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and EASPD launched a project to increase the availability of trained Family Consultants who will provide Early Childhood Development parental counselling and support to children at risk of or with developmental delays and disabilities. The project will also support system strengthening for the provision of ECI services in host countries as well as raise awareness of the importance of early support for developing the potential for every child.

The conference objectives will include:

- Raise public awareness around family-centred ECI benefits and functioning
- Highlight good practices and methodologies in the field of ECI
- Share the experience of service provision to Ukraine refugees in neighbouring countries
- Zoom in on the Western Balkans and EU member states, highlighting specific challenges and opportunities for the region
- Discuss the enabling factors for strengthening national ECI systems and the role of the EU in facilitating it
- Encourage greater commitment of policy makers in prioritizing ECI and ECEC policies across Europe.

Co-organisers

The [European Association of Service providers for Persons with Disabilities](#) represents over 20,000 social care and support service providers for persons with disabilities across 41 countries.

[Down Syndrome Albania Foundation \(DSA\)](#) is an NGO established in 2013, aiming to improve the lives of children and youth with intellectual disabilities, by providing services to them and to their families. DSA advocates for the rights of people with disabilities in Albania and also contributes to the capacity building of the professionals that work and care for children with disabilities. Awareness, inclusion, advocacy, and support are fundamental to DSA's mission.

[Help the Life Association](#) is an NGO established in 1998 by parents of children and youth with intellectual and physical disabilities. It contributes to the improvement of life and inclusion of people with intellectual and physical disabilities (PWD) in social-economic life, through the provision of psycho-socio-educational services. Help the Life contributes to the capacity building of the professionals that work for children with disabilities and strengthen the



well-being of their families. The organization is also focused on raising awareness, advocating for the rights of persons with disabilities, and lobbying to improve policies for people with disability in Albania.

[UNICEF](#) is an agency of the United Nations responsible for providing humanitarian and developmental aid to children worldwide. With a presence in 192 countries and territories, UNICEF's activities include providing immunizations, strengthening maternal and child health care services, improving child and maternal nutrition, sanitation, promoting education, and providing emergency relief.

Programme

1st Day Thursday 8th June	
8:00	Registrations
8:45	<p>Welcoming Remarks Chair: Vasilka Dimoska De Jong, EASPD ECI Member Forum</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Denada Seferi, Albania Deputy Minister of Health and Social Protection • Hubert Perr, Head of Cooperation, EU Delegation in Albania • Roberto De Bernardi, UNICEF Albania • Emanuela Zaimi, Down Syndrome Albania • Jim Crowe, EASPD
9:30 – 10.00	<p>Keynote speeches: Chair: Vasilka Dimoska De Jong, EASPD ECI Member Forum</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why focus on early years, prof Milica Pejovic • Family-centred ECI what does it mean and why it works, Emily Vargas-Baron, RISE Institute
10.00	<p>1st Panel: ECI principles in practice</p> <p>Chair: Irene Bertana, EASPD Senior Policy Officer</p> <p>Setting the scene: Key principles of family-centred ECI, according to the EASPD position paper “Family-centred ECI: the best start in life”</p> <p>The principles in practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Family-centred, <i>Agapi Papadaki, Amimoni, Yiannis Fratzeskakis, Greece</i> ▪ Transdisciplinary and team-based, <i>Tatjana Petrović Sladetić, Mali Dom, Croatia</i> ▪ Individualised and evidence-based, <i>Maria Kastanis, Associate Director, Early Intervention Training Program, University of Illinois</i> ▪ Accessible to all families, <i>Eljona Boce Elmazi, National Director, World Vision Albania</i>
11:30 – 12:00 Coffee Break	

<p>12:00</p>	<p>2nd Panel: Building and strengthening national ECI systems</p> <p>Chair: Aleksandra Jovic, UNICEF Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia</p> <p>Setting the scene:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. ECI as a part of holistic family support, <i>Camille Roux, COFACE Families Europe</i> 2. Steps in building ECI systems, <i>Aleksandra Jovic, UNICEF and Flavia Shehu, Down Syndrome Albania</i> <p>Looking for solutions: Organisation and provision of ECI services across countries</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Netherlands, <i>Marit Recourt-Vollebregt, Doctor of public health</i> • Portugal, <i>Miguel Valles, CECD Mira Sintra</i> • Georgia, <i>Liana Mkhatvari, Georgian Coalition for Early Childhood Development</i> • Serbia, <i>Snezana Plavsic, Institute of Public Health of Serbia</i>
<p>13:30 – 14:30 Lunch Break</p>	
<p>14:30</p>	<p><u>Workshops on policies and practices</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. ECI Situation analysis and lessons learnt from UNICEF in North Macedonia and Montenegro Moderator: Vera Rangelova, UNICEF ECARO Speakers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ida Ferdinandi, UNICEF Montenegro • Aleksandra Karovska, Associate Professor, Institute of Special Education and Rehabilitation, Skopje 2. The use of Person-Centred Technologies in ECI Moderator: Omor Ahmed, EASPD Speakers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May Agius, Senior Assistive Technology practitioner and Speech and Language Therapist, Agenzija Support (ACTU unit), Malta • Rachel Blum, Speech Language Pathologist, Beit Issie Shapiro, Israel Community Center for Health and Wellbeing • Ivana Cekovic, UNICEF Montenegro 3. Early identification of developmental difficulties in children Moderator: Aleksandra Jovic, UNICEF Speakers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revan Mustafayev, UNICEF, WHO, • Shkelzen Marku, Partnership for Development, UNICEF • Mirella Giannakopoulou and Ioanna Karavaggeli, Theotokos Foundation

	<p>4. Methodologies and findings on collecting good practices in family support Moderator: Lilith Alink, EASPD Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wilfried Kainz, Zero Project • Fabrizio Serra, Fondazione Paideia <p>5. Routine-based Intervention and home visiting Moderator: Eric Bloemkolk Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anna Kukuruza, CF Early Intervention Institute • Maria Kastanis, University of Illinois
16:00	End of Day 1
19:30	Conference dinner

**2nd day
Friday 9th June**

9:30	<p><u>Workshops on policies and practices</u></p> <p>6. Storytelling of family support: the experience of the ECDUR project Moderator: Rachel Vaughan, EASPD Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Laurentiu Garofeanu, videomaker • Representative of TENENET • Plamena Nikolova, National Network for Children, Bulgaria • Antoaneta Ivanova, The Social Teahouse, Bulgaria • Maria Pavlova, Imago Foundation <p>7. Roadmaps to national ECI system building and ECI Greece project and its policy journey, the lesson learned Moderator: Timothy Ghilain Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Irene Bertana, Project Manager ECI Greece project • Vasilis Kalopisis, Local Coordinator ECI Greece project • Dorina Giouroukou, DG REFORM, European Commission • Dimitris Nikolsky, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Greece <p>8. Training parents: the Denver Model and “Now and Next” Moderator: Fabiana Scarano Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eglantina Shllaku, Help the Life Association • Annick Janson, Plumtree Learning <p>9. Parental and ECI staff burnout, definition and strategies for preventing it Moderator: Agapi Papadaki, Amimoni Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vicky Krokou, Amimoni
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nikos Papastamatiou, Omegatech <p>10. The transition to ECEC: tools for the inclusion of children with disabilities Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Liana Mkhatchvari, Georgian Coalition for Early Childhood Development Aurela Zisi, National Agency for ensuring Quality of Education in Albania Maria Ioannou, Veronica Hadjipanayi, Emphasys centre
	<p>11:00 – 11:30 Coffee Break</p>
<p>11:30 – 13:00</p>	<p>3rd panel - ECI in the context of emergency and displacement Chair: Vera Rangelova, UNICEF Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia</p> <p>Setting the scene:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> ECI in Ukraine before and during the war, <i>Uliana Tokarieva, Deputy Minister of Social Policy of Ukraine</i> ECI in the emergency context, <i>Anna Kukuruza</i> <p>Looking for solutions: Adapting ECI in the context of emergency and displacement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tetyana Mishchuk, Dzherelo, Ukraine Lyzaveta Drannikova, EASPD Borislava Cherkezova, Karin Dom, Bulgaria Daniela Bordeianu, National Institute of Early Childhood Intervention, Moldova
	<p>13:00 – 14:00</p>
<p>14:00</p>	<p>4th panel - How to use existing policy and financial instruments to advance ECI in Europe Chair: Thomas Bignal, Head of Policy, EASPD</p> <p>ECI in the context of EU policies</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> International and EU strategic framework related to children with disabilities, Katarina Ivanković Knežević, Director for Social Affairs and Inclusion, DG Employment, European Commission (video message) Katrin Langensiepen, Member of the European Parliament (video message) Technical Support Instrument supporting building of ECI system in Greece: the example of the ECI Greece project, Dorina Giouroukou, DG REFORM, European Commission Early Childhood Intervention in the implementation of Child Guarantee in Croatia, Melita Čusek, Monika Begović, Ministry of Labour, Croatia <p>Q&A</p>
<p>14:45</p>	<p>Final reflections: the way forward</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suela Lala, European Network for Independent Living Board Member Emily Vargas Baron, RISE Institute

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dorina Giouroukou, DG REFORM, European Commission• Eric Bloemkolk, ECI Member Forum, EASPD <p>Closing remarks Ivelina Borisova, UNICEF ECARO Emanuela Zaimi, Down Syndrome Albania Jim Crowe, EASPD</p>
16:00	End of Day 2