

PARTNER SEARCH: HORIZON-CL2-2022-DEMOCRACY-01-04

Education for democracy



The Centre of Expertise in Pedagogical Support at the KdG University of Applied Sciences and Arts in Belgium, Antwerp is seeking to join a consortium for the HORIZON call *Education for democracy*.

Context

Over the past years, the Centre of Expertise in Pedagogical Support has conducted research in a variety of settings, including action research into non-violent practices in daycare setting, schools, leisure organisations and reception centres. Researchers found that practitioners like to gain insight into what actions and utterances children can experience as violent or intrusive. We also found that peaceful and democratic practices benefit mostly from a 'whole-organisation' approach. A whole-organisation approach implies an awareness that not only educational elements contribute to democratic dynamics but that all aspects of the organisation, including the (pedagogical) use of space, the staff interactions and the involvement of families play a significant role.

Philosophical frameworks: The centre adheres to a Care Ethics perspective, considering care for one another as a key element in a democratic society. It approaches the interconnected nature of the caregiver and the care receiver as a starting point and pleads to make care more democratic and democracy more caring (Tronto, 2009).

With respect to this call the centre would like to:

- contribute to projects that want to include early childhood practices or after-school care practices;
- experiment with pedagogical practices that include democratic coexistence in the whole organisation, not only in educational programmes or class contexts;
- explore how early childhood settings can work on historical and cultural consciousness, for instance through intergenerational projects;
- investigate what competences briefly educated practitioners or logistic workers and longer educated teachers need to cocreate and work in a democratic childcare or school environment;
- contribute to evaluation research of innovative pedagogical practices.

Centre Of Expertise

The Centre of Expertise in Pedagogical Support conducts practice-oriented research for and with professionals working with children up to 12 years of age.

Following competences are relevant to the calls:

- Extensive experience with practice-oriented research for stakeholders in the field of Early Childhood Education and Care, After School Care and Leisure Time facilities.
- Strong networks in local organisations working with a diverse public of children (schools, childcare, leisure time and cultural activities, reception centers) and willing to participate in pilots and action research.
- Extensive experience in mixed-methods research, including experiential research with children, action research, evaluation research, research by design, as well as narratological analysis.
- Extensive experience in coaching methods for professionals working with young children, including coaching on the floor coaching of low-skilled professionals.
- Experience in developing hands-on tools, such as a practical guide on how to introduce Education for Sustainability in Early Childhood Centres, a tool to reflect on childcare's cooperation possibilities with families, a playful method to discuss intercultural awareness.
- Experience with creating digital learning platforms such as a narrative website linking the experiences of refugee children to inspirational materials for professionals, webinars about parental involvement and interactional possibilities with infants and babies.

Data gathering and analysis: The centre uses a variety of participatory methods to gather and analyse data and strives to involve research participants, respecting their agency. Researchers often include participants during data gathering (practitioners co-interview parents, organise focus groups with parents and employ pedagogic documentation; children engage in conversation through photo-voice, photo-elicitation, arts-based inquiry, ...) and experiment with co-analysis possibilities. At the heart of these methods lies the question how complex matters can be made more tangible for all participants.

Results: The centre's research results range from action frameworks over policy recommendations and practical guides and toolboxes addressing certain topics in a variety of childcare environments.

The centre has been and is involved in several EU projects:

- Two social innovation projects in the Interreg 2seas Programme: PACE (Providing Access to Childcare and Employment) and VRAC (It takes a Village to Raise A Child), several Erasmus + projects (ProChill on training practitioners for childcare; the Value+ project on the principle of Educare) and the AMIF-project MUST-a-LAB (Multi-Stakeholder labs for migrants and stakeholders).
- The centre is also member of a COST action on parental participation and co-presiding the national preparatory committee of OMEP.

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