

**PARTNER SEARCH: HORIZON-CL2-2022-TRANSFORMATIONS-01-05 Gender and social, economic and cultural empowerment Specific conditions**



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 *Gender and social, economic and cultural empowerment*.

**Context**

Over the past years, the Centre of Expertise in Pedagogical Support has conducted research into different gender-related social and economic issues and found that gender plays a significant role both in perceived family life balance (e.g. book [Flexibility in childcare](#)) and in job experiences of early childhood practitioners. Daycare employees, who almost entirely consist of vocationally trained women, report flat careers, low pay, a lack of lifelong learning opportunities and claim that they are struggling with the growing societal expectations of their profession. From all care workers early childhood practitioners seem to experience the largest gender gap and while policy documents keep on stressing the importance of early childhood education for children's futures, staff members increasingly deal with feelings of disempowerment.

Philosophical frameworks: The centre adheres to a Care Ethics perspective, considering care for one another 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 investigate the complex intersections of gender, social hierarchy and care work as well as the lack of power many care workers experience;
- embark on experiments aimed at making care work more democratic (e.g. by asking non-care workers to spend 20% of their working time on care work and by allowing care workers to spend 20% of their working time on non-care tasks);
- experiment with communities that unite care services with other economic facilities, making care more visible and more obvious for all and allowing for more exchange and cooperation between care workers and non-care workers
- contribute to evaluation research of experiments on care work, gender and power distribution.

## **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 of 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 provisions, 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; a Value+ project on the principle of Educare) and the AMIF-project MUST-a-LAB (Multi-Stakeholder labs for migrants and stakeholders).
- The centre is a member of a COST action on parental participation and co-presides the national preparatory committee of OMEP.

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