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**ERASMUS+ DEE**  
**Diversity, Equality and Inclusion in pre- primary**  
**Education and care: a gender perspective**

**2017-1-IT02-KA201-036723**

**Transnational Report on IO2: Parents information  
materials**





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**ERASMUS+ DEE**

**Diversity, Equality and Inclusion in pre- primary Education and care: a gender perspective**

2017-1-IT02-KA201-036723

KA2 - Cooperation for Innovation and the Exchange of Good Practices

KA201 - Strategic Partnerships for school education

This document was carried out as part of the activities of the Erasmus+ Dee Project within IO 2. This report was edited by Verein für Männer- und Geschlechterthemen Steiermark (responsible partner IO2).

Other results:

- ✓ Handbook of a Training Course, IO1
- ✓ Activity toolkit for work with parents, IO2
- ✓ Recommendations and best practices, IO3

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- February 2020 -

# About DEE

The Dee project started on 01<sup>st</sup> November 2017 and lasted for 30 months.  
It was produced by a partnership of three European countries (Austria, Bulgaria, Italy).

The general objective of DEE project is to promote diversity, gender equality and inclusion starting from pre-school education by addressing educators and parents.

## Our outputs

### **I01 - Training course for pre - primary school educators**

Development of a training course for pre-primary school educators and a toolkit to be used in everyday activity of educators.

### **I02 - Parents information materials**

Development of communication materials for parents to provide awareness of stereotypes as well as benefits of diversity and gender equality.

### **I03 - Policy guidelines and recommendations**

Development of recommendations and guidelines for pedagogical coordinators in the pre-primary education and care system and for decision makers at national and international level.

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# 1. Introduction

This report summarizes results from the DEE project focusing on working with parents/guardians to create a greater awareness of gender equality and diversity issues in early childhood education and care. The activities undertaken by the partners in Italy, Bulgaria and Austria succeeded in reaching the overall aims:

- to engage parents/guardians<sup>1</sup> through educators,
- to support educators to reflect on the influence of stereotypes in their work and in contact with parents/guardians,
- and to support educators to help parents/guardians to become aware of bias and prejudices.

This transnational report can serve as a best practice guide to developing needs-based parental work with the aim strengthening gender and diversity awareness.

A total of 8 facilities

- carried out self-evaluations/observations of their work with tools provided by the Austrian partner VMG (and translated into the local languages),
- developed measures for parent work based on the results of the self-evaluations, supported by DEE researchers and trainers,
- and took part in evaluating the effectiveness of these measures.

Tools used for the self-evaluations/observations were a monitoring sheet ("*parents' presence in our facility*") as well as a checklist ("*gender equality and diversity in our facility*"), developed by VMG. The goal of the monitoring sheet was to help educators monitor and analyze the engagement of parents/guardians with a special focus on fathers/male guardians and diversity. The template used by educators is depicted below:

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<sup>1</sup> The term "parents/guardians" is used in this report in order to acknowledge that family constellations and children's home environments can vary from the biological mother-father-child model.

Please monitor and document over the course of 1 month how parents are present in your facility.

Main questions we want to find out about:

- How involved are fathers, how involved are mothers, how involved are other carers?
- What topics are of the most relevance when we talk to parents or parents talk to us
- Is gender and sexuality a topic in the interactions (e.g. regarding dress, play, behavior, special events, friendships,....)
- Are differences of the children a topic, such as cultural, language, traditions, background

Date/Time	Child (Nick/Name)	Parent(s)/ Carers	Situation	Topics of the interaction	Comments	Educator(s) present	

Image 1: Monitoring sheet template

The checklist was developed to help educators become aware of practices, spaces and materials in their work which contribute to or hinder the creation of a prejudice-aware environment. It outlines different dimensions of diversity which influence children and people in their near social environment, such as gender, health status, migration experience, educational background, family forms. Nine areas of work were offered to the educators as sites for analysis. They were asked to monitor and document over the course of one month and to take time to watch, listen, and discuss within the team for at least five days. This process was proposed to be done two times within each involved ECEN – before and after the implementation of activities (informational display, parents/guardians’ evening). The areas the checklist covered are:

- Books and materials which are in regular use in the facility: The goal was to analyze how gender is represented/visible in them, how resources are distributed with respect to gender, and which realities are depicted and created through the materials (method 1).
- Use of spaces, use of designated play areas by children with a focus on gender and other diversity markers (through method 2 and 3).
- Possible differences in interactions between children and educators because of different diversity markers (in method 4 with respect to assisting children to dress when going outside/coming in, in method 5 with respect to drawing attention to outfits children have on).
- Norms and concepts of “families” which might guide the work of educators (in method 6)
- Gendered routines in parent work based on stereotypical concepts of task distribution in families (in method 7)
- Awareness of sexual and gender diversity (in method 8)

- Diversity within educators as a resource (in method 9)

The contents of the checklist are depicted below:

These dimensions influence children and people in their near social environment. They can also influence your work in the facility in a number of ways. These dimensions correspond with the analysis tools in this checklist.

We suggest to concentrate on the following aspects in your facility:

<b>1 Books and Written Material .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>2 Observation Map – Use of Games.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>3 Use of Room - Children Take Pictures .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>4 Attention and Personnel Help – Dressing-Up and Undressing Children when going Outside .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>5 Outfit.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>6 Families .....</b>	<b>8</b>
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*Image 2: Checklist: Table of Contents*

The use of the checklist during two separate time-spans offered the possibility to show developments. The results and necessary consequences of the mid-term self-evaluation were discussed during the second part of the training course and/or in planning sessions arranged between facilities and DEE researchers/trainers.

Among the measures developed to promote parent work towards more gender and diversity awareness were one-time events such as parents/guardians’ evenings, as well as longer-term interventions such as visible statements and informational displays on gender and diversity in the entrance hall of the facilities. A total of 7 parent-focused events and 8 visual interventions (exhibitions, information displays) were implemented by the participating facilities.

To evaluate effectiveness, the lead partner VMG developed feedback questionnaires and report templates which were translated in the local languages. After all the activities were finished, VMG analyzed the feedback from parents/guardians and other guardians/family members participating in the events, the feedback from the involved educators, as well as short reports from facilities on their activities. The activities related to the DEE project were documented by the facilities (photographs, print-outs).

Note on data confidentiality: The project partners took care to preserve the anonymity of educators, children and parents, as well as the data from the participating facilities. Before the educators handed over the self-evaluation materials to the project partners, they chose pseudonyms for the children according to a structure provided to them. In this report, the names and locations of the participating facilities are not included due to confidentiality.

## 2. Outcomes of the self-evaluations and observations

This section gives a summary of outcomes of the self-evaluations and observations carried out by educators and outlines some central learnings educators developed through this process.

### Austria

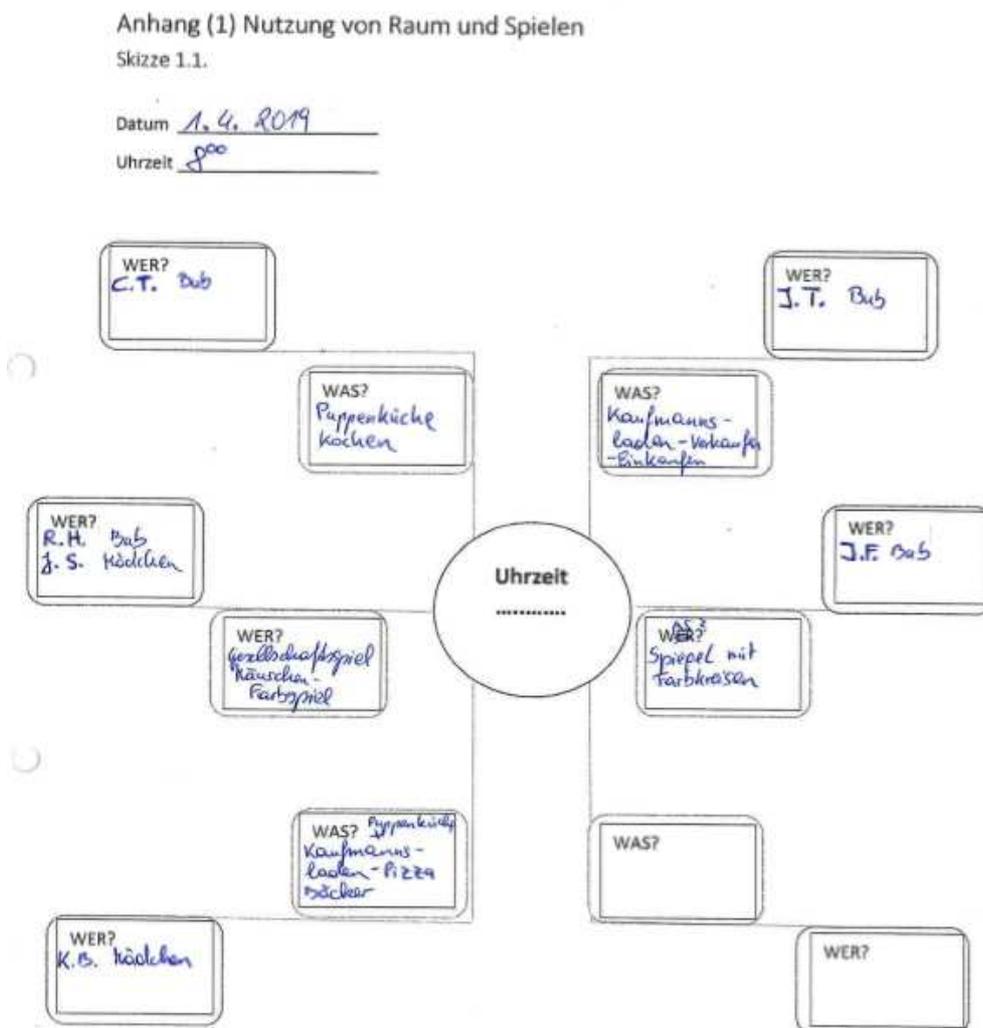


Image 3: Example for an Austrian educator's documentation of use of spaces by children (method no. 3 from checklist) from Austria

According to the notes in the monitoring sheets, when they bring the child to the facility in the morning, fathers usually take time to help the child change from street clothing to inside clothing and even seek out educators to talk about necessary information of the day. The documentation shows that fathers and grandfathers are present in the facilities in a number of ways. This indicates that there are many opportunities to involve them to be more strongly present in the ECEN activities. The DEE

researchers/trainers think that the morning arrivals are an opportunity for educators to engage with fathers and other male relatives.

According to educators' observations with the help of the checklist as well as discussions in the second part of the training course, educators do not consider gender as being of great relevance when looking at children who are very young (up until three years-old). Most influential for the behavior of the child (i.e. who they play with, which games they prefer, how autonomous they are in dressing themselves, helping others) is, according to the educators, their stage of development. However, it was noticeable that gender stereotypes are present in the actions of educators, in the material on offer to children, as well as in parent work. Educators drew the following conclusions for their work and planned to make some changes in the areas outlined below:

#### Materials and spaces:

Educators identified the need to make the building corner more popular with girls (e.g. by adding animals, figures) and make drawing/painting more popular with boys (e.g. by offering to paint buildings, cars). The educators approach with these suggestions to make the games more attractive to girls/boys is still somewhat gender-stereotypical one. This can be interpreted as a starting point to a longer process with the aim to eventually deconstruct gender stereotypes through the use of materials. Indeed, educators also expressed that they plan to offer more gender non-specific materials.

#### Personal behaviour:

Educators stated that they will keep on encouraging children to choose activities according to their personal interests. This was identified as a good practice. They also plan to be more aware of the need to serve as role models (e.g. as a female team member who also plays with games stereotypically "for boys"). They decided to offer materials for longer and repeatedly. They also committed to offering freedoms (of space, choice), as well as to support children in developing individual personal interests (e.g. by encouraging times of boredom). On the whole, they will observe closely the needs of children. Reflecting about personal ideas on gender was also identified as a need by the educators through the process of monitoring and observing.

#### Parent work:

Educators identified the need to be more transparent in work with parents/guardians and to reflect on their roles in influencing children. One suggestion for this was to invite parents/guardians to spend a half day in the kindergarten to see what happens on a typical day plus reflect with them about what they experienced. In the discussions of the results of the self-observation, educators also expressed the wish to make a public commitment/explanation about gender-sensitive education (e.g. on the website, through posters). Another idea regarding diversity-friendly parent work was to use smaller groups during parents/guardians' evenings so that one interpreter can be used for parents/guardians with a common language. Because the facilities serve families who speak different languages, it was decided that it would be a good idea to more strongly include these languages when creating events, posters and so on.

Educators also suggested to be aware of children in their role as 'educators' for their parents/guardians. This can also be a way to engage fathers more strongly. Another way for involving

fathers would be to actively take up cooperation opportunities with fathers/male guardians as they present themselves. Educators generally learned that they need to be more aware of stereotypes when establishing contact with families (e.g. contacting mothers first, talking about mothers when talking about housework).

In all the outlined areas, Austrian educators identified best practices already in use as well as opportunities to change their practice. They came up with creative ways to do so. While many of the suggestions are still firmly rooted in a heteronormative perspective on family life and gender, there was also a noticeable awareness of potential restrictions of each child’s personal expression and learning through gender stereotypes.

## Bulgaria

Date/Time	Child (Nick/Name)	Parent(s)/ Carers	Situation	Topics of the interaction	Comments
08.05.2019r./ 7.10	V.V	Mother	Arriving into the facility in the morning	Mother tells her daughter that she will help her to undress faster because she is in a hurry to go to work. On departure, she reminds the child to listen to the teachers, to keep herself clean and to behave like a girl.	Usually, mother brings the girl early in the morning and undresses the child, although the child can do it herself (she says that this is the only time when both of them are together and prefers to help the child to undress. The child does not object, even enjoys the attention, received from her mother and knows that her mom has to go to work and has to hurry. Promises her mum to listen to the teachers (older brother is the model of behavior) and to behave "well". The child comes to kindergarten with desire
08.05.2019 / 17.30	V.T	Father	Taking the child from the kindergarten yard	The father shouts child's name and the girl run joyfully to his father Happy because her father comes to take her from the kindergarten.He is	The father of the child is committed to take his child from kindergarten every day. He is interested in how the day passed for the child, if there was something unusual in her behavior if she has been polite to the others

*Image 4: Example of part of a monitoring sheet for parent contact in Bulgaria*

The monitoring sheet and checklist gave the participating Bulgarian educators the first ever opportunity to work on the topics of gender and diversity.

Looking at the observations documented in the checklist, one significant example is the attention of educators to their practice of helping children dressing and undressing when going outside. After one month of the group observation, the results showed changes in all facilities. The number of children assisted by educators has decreased. The number of children seeking assistance decreased. The children who gained confidence in this process began to offer help to others. With regards to gender, the documentation shows that mostly they support each other on the basis of friendships, and girls are more likely to provide mutual help than boys. As one of the educators has pointed out: “Often we think that the child is not able to manage on its own or in a hurry we do this for him (dressing them). The child can do so much more than we think. Often parents/guardians make the same mistake". This shows a reflection process on the part of the educators.

Outfit choice and preferences in outfits, feeling comfortable in clothing, was discussed by educators with children when the checklist observations of educators focused on “outfit”. They reflected on

gender roles with respect to preferred clothes, shoes, accessories for girls and boys, and the role of the parents in assisting children.

According to the observations/self-evaluations in Bulgaria, family forms are diverse (grandparent-families, single mothers, separated families). Not many fathers bring their children to the facility. The involvement of male relatives seems to depend both on the attitude of the educators and on the personal motivation of the parent/guardian. Most often, it is the mother who takes care of the children and participates in different events in the kindergarten. Mostly the men are helping in the maintenance of the yard, small repairs etc. (gendered duties). Fathers and grandparents/male guardians are less likely to attend parent's meetings. The traditional understanding that it is the mother who is responsible for raising the children is wide-spread among the parents in the Bulgarian facilities. During the parents' meetings, individual opinions were shared which stated that the topic of gender equality has been overexposed recently and that there is no need for any change in the already established gender/social roles. However, most parents/guardians, and also the educators, shared the wish for changes in the perception of that theme. Children, according to the observation in one facility, are happy when fathers are present at events and holiday celebrations.

The analysis of materials and educational content used in Bulgaria (such as tales taught to children, illustrations, lesson plans, books) also showed prevalence stereotypes (e.g. in clothes and activities of male and female figures), as well as some missing topics, such as untypical occupations, people of colour, multi-language settings, sexual education, religion.

The following potentials for change in the facilities were identified by educators after using the tools:

Personal behaviour:

New insights into the effect of gender and intersecting categories (age, ethnicity, social status, and education level – stereotypes) are needed. Also a raised awareness on the role of educators is needed, the stereotypes and prejudices hidden inside of this role – e.g. how the educators transmit their own prejudices and stereotypical thinking. It is important to gain a deeper understanding of how gender roles are taught to children since the early childhood, as well as the impact educators themselves can have on children.

Work with parents/guardians:

From the short observation period (one month) the Bulgarian researchers/trainers are not able to report a significant change in the presence and influence of parents/guardians in the ECEN work, but even the small steps during this period are important for the work of the educators. It can be seen as a success that parents/guardians have been made aware of the issues of gender and diversity and the interaction with them on these issues will continue in the future. In some instances, a stronger involvement and interaction between parents/guardians, educators and children was noticed, especially regarding fathers. The educators' work on attention to dressing and undressing for example was shared with parents/guardians and they were asked to assist in this process and provide guidance on how to support their children at home and prepare them for independence, irrespective of their gender. Fathers were invited by educators to share experiences from their working life and discuss the gendered (or non-gendered) nature of these. After participating in the DEE events and reading the

information materials, ECEN educators have received the parents/guardians' support and confirmation to participate in new meetings of a similar nature.

All in all, there has been progress in the educators' and parents' perception of this subject and a growing recognition of the terminology associated with it.

## Italy

Nick Name del/della bambino/a	Il personale offre aiuto	Il/la bambino/a chiede aiuto	Aiuto reciproco tra bambini/e	Il personale invita a vestirsi/svestirsi
bambino 1	X	X		X
bambina 2	X	X	X	X
bambina 3			X	X
bambina 4		X	X	X
bambina 5	X	X		X
bambina 6	X			
bambino 7	X			
bambino 8	X			

*Image 5: Example from Italy: Documentation of educators attention when children dressing for going outside (method no.4 from checklist)*

In Italy, three crèches were involved in the observations and self-evaluations. The monitoring sheet has been filled in two of the facilities (during one timeframe in each), while a selection of the tools from the checklist has been carried out in all three facilities. In one case, a facility carried out repeat observations with the checklist two months apart, in the other facilities there was no possibility to repeat observations. There is no data available on possible changes in the wake of the self-evaluations and subsequent parent-work events, since, due to organizational changes for the Italian partners, the parent-centered events were carried out some months after the self-evaluations took place.

Monitoring sheet (ECEN 1 and ECEN 3):

There is a difference in the observations between the facilities: In ECEN 1, in 90% of the cases, mothers bring children to the facility. The most typical situation observed is mothers dressing and undressing children. The situations observed in ECEN 3 describe an involvement of both fathers and mothers, all of whom tend to encourage the autonomy of children in dressing and undressing (an important educational aim especially in ECEN 3).

Checklist (ECEN 1, 2, 3):

Regarding the answers of gendered use of play spaces, there is a difference between the three facilities, even though all three cater to the same age group. While in ECEN 1, there was no gendered use of play areas described, in ECEN 2, boys and girls tend to play separately. Boys often play with toy cars and buildings while girls are often observed role playing ('mothers'). Even in the case of role play in the kitchen, the girls fed their imaginary children while the boys played cooks. ECEN 3 reports that the choice of play spaces by children is not influenced by their gender.

Generally, in all three facilities, the children are supported to achieve autonomy in the dressing up situation (when changing from sleeping clothes to play clothes, when arriving at the facility, when going outside, and so on). The educators report that they support children in gaining autonomy and

give attention to them during this activity regardless of gender. The cases in which the educators offer help vary from facility to facility (between 50% and 90%), but all report that there are no differences in treatment or behavior with respect to gender. Mutual aid between children does rarely exist; children also ask for help, but this happens more often in ECEN 3 than in ECEN 1.

Regarding the importance placed on outfits (by educators, parents/guardians and children), the answers from the three facilities showed some differences as well: In ECEN 1, it was stated that children of this age rarely define themselves through clothing. When they get older, some of them (whether they are male or female) begin to draw attention to what they are wearing, simply by making educators notice which clothes they like, without gender connotations and differences. In ECEN 2, it is described as important for the children to show to the educator what they are wearing. Often this happens during the reception in the morning and prompted by an invitation of the parent to the child. Here, it is also the oldest children (24-36 months) who show the importance of clothing, always reinforced by the parent (almost exclusively the mother), and the educators note that it is a phenomenon found in the more wealthy parents/guardians. Educators are careful not to demonstrate expressions that define children through clothing. In ECEN 3, it may happen that educators turn to children with these expressions, especially during the time of reception in the morning, when often the parent first emphasizes the new clothing and asks a child to show it. Here it is noted that this is a tendency prevalent to girls, but also to some boys who show that they value what they are wearing, perhaps for a particular colour or printing. Educators states that habits of children who differ from the norm are accepted and respected. It is also noted that sometimes, educators turn to children with phrases like "how beautiful you are today" or "how well you dressed today" and it happens more frequently with girls.

ECEN 3 also makes outfit a conscious part of the educational process. Situations where children place attention to cloths are used as an opportunity for discussing gender issues and talk about the masculine and the feminine in relation to parenting roles. ECEN 3 also expresses that clothing must not compromise the experiential activity of the child, but allow them to live it in its entirety, guaranteeing maximum comfort.

Regarding parent work, educators in ECEN 1 show less awareness and ambition to include fathers than the other facilities; here mothers are the primary person of contact. ECEN 2 describes a little more involvement of fathers: Both parents/guardians are always involved in initiatives aimed at the family, but it can happen that there are special events where only mothers or only fathers are invited. In ECEN 2, male figures are often involved in laboratory activities or in the collaboration in setting up the garden. The explanation given for this is that at the parents/guardians' evening, the dads show more interest in lending themselves for manual, DIY activities or for the possible maintenance of the greenery or for the realization of the garden. In ECEN 3, estimating a percentage for parent involvement, the results are: 60% mother, 35% father, 5% others (grandparents/guardians or others). Mothers tend to express the desire to be contacted first. For payments, nutrition, behavior of the child, events and clothing, both parents/guardians are contacted without distinction. For aspects of childcare (wearing and feeding, changing from diapers to potty, change and clothing ...) the father

often refers the information to the mother, who then asks the educator for details, while details on payments are frequently requested by fathers (this is also the case in the other two facilities). Fathers are involved in every initiative addressed to the family, but the participation is mainly female. It may happen that there are separate laboratories for mum and dad to create an opportunity for dedicated play, and the preferences of the parents/guardians tend towards the traditional gender roles (garden for fathers, indoor play for mothers). As in the other facilities, the fathers tend to propose themselves for more practical-manual activities, often delegating the mother to participate to more creative activities.

The self-observations lead to self-reflection on the part of the educators, in instances where they found themselves acting in ways which reinforce gender stereotypes. As outlined below, this concerns for example approaching female children more often with comments on their choice of outfit. It also concerns placing the focus on involvement of fathers when being in contact with parents. From the analysis point of view, it seems advisable for the educators to critically address some automatisms present in the organization of the facilities and in the relationship with the parents. Another potential for change would be to continuously encourage children to play together regardless of gender. Offering and encouraging games and materials in which stereotypical gender roles are mixed is also important.

### 3. Measures developed and implemented

This section gives an overview over the implemented measures for involving parents and guardians more strongly in the facilities in Austria, Bulgaria and Italy. All the activities were documented by educators and part of this documentation is used here to give a more clear idea of the events and information displays.

#### 3.1 Short descriptions

<p><b>Austria</b></p> <p>“Diversity house” produced as preparation to the parents’ event</p>  <p>Parents/guardians looking at exhibition “typical boy, typical girl, typical me”</p>	<p><b>Bulgaria</b></p> <p>Parents’ evening</p>  <p>DEE-information materials provided in entrance hall</p>	<p><b>Italy</b></p> <p>Workshop for Parents: Materials provided</p>  <p>DEE-information materials provided in entrance hall</p>
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*Image 6: Pictures from the events and interventions in Austria, Bulgaria and Italy*

## **Austria**

In Austria, participating facilities were one kindergarten and one crèche from the same locality in Graz, as well as one kindergarten and one crèche from the same locality in a rural part of Styria which did combined activities.

On the 14th of June 2019, ECEN 1, a kindergarten in a rural town in Styria, together with the crèche housed in the same locality, carried out a summer party, which was accompanied by an entrance hall exhibition/display of information materials and the creation of a picture book. The exhibition/display was available for four months, starting with the first information about being part of the DEE project in March.

9 educators were involved in the summer party and in creating the exhibition/informative display. Participants: 30 fathers and 35 mothers, 4 other guardians/family friends (estimate). The aim of the event, as stated by the educators, was to sensitize parents/guardians for non-stereotypical gender roles, reflection of one's own behavior in the kindergarten (language, offerings), and broadening awareness.

During the event and before and after, there was an exhibition of drawing/paintings and informative materials in the 'parents/guardians' info area' in the entrance hall of the facility. In the crèche and kindergarten respectively, there also was a picture book created and handed out at the party about "the colourful house of the family Klaus", as well as "diversity houses" created together with the children. The story printed in the book (each page is accompanied by pictures created by children) describes a family consisting of mother, father and children. The first half describes (in rhymes) what the family members do in a very stereotypical way (mother cleans, father works, children play). The second half takes a turn in which the family members start to reflect on these tasks and decide to reverse them. It ends with the family relaxing together and the message "everyone can do everything".

Mama und Papa haben viel darüber nachgedacht,  
wer im Haushalt welche Sachen macht.  
So entschieden sie sich in die Rolle des Anderen zu  
schlüpfen,  
um so zu verknüpfen,  
dass die Arbeit nicht geschlechtsspezifisch muss sein,  
ab nun versetzten sie sich in die andere Rolle hinein.

*Translation of the rhyme above: "Mama and Papa have thought long about who does what in the household. So they decided to slip into the roles of the other one and thereby notice that work need not be gender-specific. From now on they took up the role of the other."*



*Image 7: Picture book created by children and handed out at summer party for parents/guardians in Austria*

The summer party had the following agenda:

- Welcome song in different languages
- Welcome by educators and introduction to the DEE project
- Song about the family Klaus (family in the picture book)
- Presentation of the picture book "the colourful house of the family Klaus" by performing /holding pictures, handing out copies
- Goodbye ritual for children leaving the facility
- Activity stands/stations for parents/guardians & children with different gender stereotypes ("role reversal", e.g. fathers hang laundry)
- Exhibition of family trees

As preparation, there was a letter to parents/guardians describing the DEE project, there was a poster about the event, and an invitation to the summer party.

On the 7th of June 2019, ECEN 2, a kindergarten in Graz carried out a summer party, which was accompanied by an entrance hall exhibition and display of information materials. These were available for 35 days, starting in May.

8 educators were involved in the summer party and in the setting up of the display. Participants: 30 fathers and 50 mothers, 15 other guardians (estimate). The aim of the event, as stated by the educators, was to raise awareness for typical gender roles and the importance of being a good role model to children and to make visible that women can do the same as men.

During the event and before and after, there was an exhibition of drawings/paintings by children in the entrance hall of the facility with the theme of "non-stereotypical roles of parents/guardians".

The summer party (called "parents/guardians' café") had the following agenda:

- Children march in while circus music plays
- Welcome song
- Welcome by the head of educators

- Children act in the play “The Silly Augustine” (subtitle: “goodbye cliché, Augustine can do everything her husband does”) and sing
- Children perform a hip hop style dance
- Children sing a family song (focusing on how mothers and fathers do untypical things with regard to gender roles)
- Drinks are served to parents/guardians
- Presents for parents/guardians are presented (shadow paintings)

Materials were costumes (hand-made) for the play, and a music box for the song and the dance.

As preparation, there was a letter to parents/guardians describing the DEE project, they received an invitation in the form of a circus tent, there was a poster describing the agenda.

On the 23th of May 2019, ECEN 3, a crèche in Graz carried out a summer party, which was accompanied by an entrance hall exhibition and display of information materials. These were available for 40 days, starting in April.

9 educators were involved in the summer party and the creation of the display. Participants: 13 fathers, 21 mothers, 5 other guardians. The aim of the measures, as stated by the educators, was to show parents/guardians that children should and want to make experiences in all areas, that gender neutral toys are important, that girls also seek adventure and boys want to play quietly.

“Family pictures” of every child were exhibited (including hand prints of every family member and little dolls representing the members), which were prepared and talked about with the children beforehand. Diversity of families was focused on. The exhibition included three posters on the topic of “typical boys, typical girls, typical me” – posters with photos of children doing things which are more often attributed to the other gender and doing the things they like best.

The family summer party (Elterncafe) had the following agenda: At the start, there was a march of children into the room, the singing of a welcome song, and welcome words by the head of educators. Then there was a showing of a 30 minute movie which documents everyday life in the crèche with focus on gender and diversity (with the main message that all areas in the crèche are open and used by all children), with popcorn. There was an introduction to the movie, introducing the topic of gender and diversity. Afterwards, parents/guardians got presents, there was a photo shoot (photos were taken of the families which were printed after the party and installed as an addition to the exhibition in the entrance hall), and cake was served, parents/guardians look at the exhibition.

To prepare, there was a letter to parents/guardians describing the DEE project, and invitation to the summer party in the shape of a heart, the exhibition, as well as a poster on the topic of family showing the educational areas. There were no media reports and no social media work.

Liebe Eltern,

Wir möchten euch recht herzlich zu unserem Eltern-Café begrüßen!

Das Motto in diesem Jahr ist „Gender & Diversity“, weil unser Verein, Rettet das Kind, seit einiger Zeit an einem EU-Projekt zu diesem Thema beteiligt ist. Informationen dazu habt Ihr durch einen Elternbrief bereits erhalten.

Nicht nur im Laufe des Projekts, sondern auch im Allgemeinen konnten wir bisher feststellen, dass sich Kinder in diesem Alter noch nicht, in Bezug auf die Geschlechterrollen, stereotypisch verhalten. Sie üben ihren Interessen gemäß, verschiedene Rolle aus, die sie im Alltag an anderen Beobachten.

Passend dazu, haben wir euch ein Video vorbereitet, das euch einen besseren Einblick in den Krippen-Alltag gibt. Und dabei wünschen wir euch viel Spaß!

! FILM AB!

Liebe Mama, lieber Papa, liebe Oma, Opa.....

Ein herzliches Willkommen zum Elterncafe auch von unserer Seite. Wir freuen uns, dass Sie so zahlreich gekommen sind um mit uns das Fest für Mama und Papa zu feiern.

Dieses Jahr steht dieses Fest ganz unter dem Motto „Klischee ade- Augustine kann das Gleiche wie ihr Mann“ da unser Verein, Rettet das Kind, seit einiger Zeit an einem EU-Projekt zum Thema „Gender & Diversity“ beteiligt ist. Informationen dazu haben Sie bereits durch einen Elternbrief erhalten.

Wir haben mit den Kindern typische/untypische Rollenbilder besprochen um herauszu finden in wie weit diese stereotypen Geschlechterrollen in den Köpfen der Kinder verankert sind.

Wir haben dabei festgestellt, dass sie sich in der Gruppe noch eher Rollenuntypisch verhalten, z.B Buben spielen gerne in der Puppenstube/Verkleiden, Kreatives Arbeiten,, Mädchen Konstruieren und Bauen gerne, bewegen sich gerne im TS, helfen uns auch gerne beim Tragen der Tische und Sonstiges, aber schon eine sehr genaue Vorstellung davon haben welche Tätigkeiten NUR von Mama bzw. NUR von Papa übernommen werden.

Mit diesem Projekt, wollen wir den Kindern und Ihnen ein Stück weit die Augen zu diesem Thema öffnen und zum Nachdenken anregen.

Genug der Worte, die Kinder haben sehr fleißig geübt und gesungen und das dürfen sie jetzt endlich präsentieren.

Viel Vergnügen.

Liebe/r Leser\_in!

Im Zuge unseres EU-Projektes „Gender and Diversity“ haben wir die Kinder zu ihren stereotypischen Beobachtungen zu Hause befragt. Die Kinder erzählten, welche Aufgaben Mama und Papa zu Hause übernehmen und diese wurden von ihnen bildlich dargestellt.

Im Fokus des Projektes stand die Sensibilisierung der Stereotypen der Kinder sowie Eltern. Somit wurden auch nicht-geschlechtsspezifische Aufgaben aufgezeigt. Die Kinder waren mit großem Enthusiasmus dabei das Bilderbuch zu gestalten und hatten große Freude daran, ihre eigenen Ideen kreativ umzusetzen.

Viel Spaß beim Lesen und Schmunzeln! ☺

## Was geschieht im Mai bei uns im Kindergarten

**„Klischee ade“- Augustine kann, das Gleiche wie ihr Mann**  
Ein Projekt, welches traditionelle Rollenbilder hinterfragt und mit den Kindern thematisiert.

### Ästhetik und Gestaltung

- Raumdekoration gestalten: Bienen falten, Marienkäfer, Clownbilder
  - Elterngeschenk (verraten wir noch nicht ☺)
  - Portfolioblätter (Freunde und Familie)
  - Einladung fürs Elterncafe Freitag, 7.6.
  - Die dumme Augustine aus Kartonrollen
- Was können Mama bzw. Papa gut? - gezeichnet

### Sprache und Kommunikation

- Geschichten und Sachgespräche zum Thema Familie und Frühling
  - Geschichte: „Die dumme Augustine“
    - Klanggeschichte
    - Lieder
    - Fingerspiel
  - Gesellschaftsspiele
- Vorbereitungen fürs Elterncafe

Sample translation of the text above: "Dear reader, during our EU project "Gender and Diversity" we have questioned children about their stereotypical observations in the home. The children told us, which tasks Mama and Papa take care of at home and these have been depicted by the children. The focus of the project was on raising awareness of stereotypes among children as well as parents. Thereby also non-gender-specific tasks were shown. The children were enthusiastically involved in creating the picture book and had great joy in implementing their ideas. Enjoy reading and smiling!"

Images 8, 9, 10, 11: Communications with parents/guardians regarding the measures in Austria

## Bulgaria

In Bulgaria, participating facilities were three kindergartens, one in a town in western Bulgaria, one in a village near Sofia, and one in Sofia itself.

On the 12<sup>th</sup> of June 2019, a kindergarten in a town in western Bulgaria, carried out a “Dad’s profession activity”. In addition to this event, there was also an information display installed in the facility for the duration of one month.



*Image 12: Bulgarian information leaflet about DEE project*

2 educators were involved in the “Dad’s profession”-event, while all the facilities educators were involved with the display. Participants of the event were 16 mothers, 9 fathers. The aim of the action was to introduce different professions to the children and to challenge the existing gender stereotypes about what is a “feminine” and “masculine” profession. The event showed that traditionally there is an attitude in the families certain professions to be distinguished by gender. The discussion on the action has been closed with mutual agreement that the choice of profession depends on the willingness and the interest of every person, regardless of their gender.

This is what happened at the event: Four fathers talked about their professions and hobbies (firefighter, woodworker, musician, and fisherman). For example one father, who works in the Fire Service in the city, explained that this profession is for courageous people and that in his team are working both men and women who love to help people. The children, with the support of their parents/guardians, played the trumpet, the drums, learned how to make a knot for the fisherman's fishing line. After the fathers’ presentations, the children drew pictures with subjects related to professions. The second part of the meeting has been dedicated to discussing with the children whether professions may be common for men and women. The children have learned that women are also good firefighter, musicians, doctors, engineers, etc. At the end of the meeting, the children have had the opportunity to shared what are the professions they like and what they dream to work when grownups.

As preparation, there was a letter to parents/guardians describing the DEE project, the event was promoted on social networks, via an announcement on the kindergarten's Facebook page, an invitation for the event has been placed at the entrance of the kindergarten.

On the 17<sup>th</sup> of May 2019, ECEN 2,a kindergarten in a village near Sofia carried out an informative event with parents/guardians about gender roles in early childhood education. In addition to this event,

there was also an information display installed in the facility for the duration of one month, to be viewed by all parents/guardians who came to the facility during this time.

6 educators were involved in the informative event. Participants: 16 fathers and 15 mothers. All the facilities' educators were involved in setting up the display.

The aim of the event was to make parents/guardians aware of the subject of stereotypes about gender roles and their impact on the attitudes of boys and girls towards family responsibilities and family life, to introduce parents/guardians to the concepts and terminology in the field of gender and diversity and to increase capacity and awareness of stereotypes and prejudices (i.e. how adults communicate and transfer their own prejudices and stereotypical thinking on the children).

The event had the following structure: The topic and its objectives were presented at the beginning of the meeting. The participants were divided into several small groups and given a set of materials, each of them received particular questions to be answered:

- How do parents/guardians prepare themselves for the birth of a child?
- What are clothes for boys and girls?
- What are the toys given to boys and girls?
- What are the messages transferred from adults to children since the early childhood

Each group then presented the results. The generated discussion among the participants has been definitely helpful and has given positive feedback on the effect of the meeting, even though at the beginning of the meeting, a negative attitude has been shown by several participants (they considered the discussion of the topic unnecessary and stupid).

As preparation, a letter was sent to the parents/guardians describing the DEE project and they received an invitation for the event. The invitation was placed on a kindergarten information corner.

On the 30<sup>th</sup> of April 2019, ECEN 3, a kindergarten in Sofia carried out a parents/guardians' evening with the theme of "My Family" and a dramatization of the "The Three Little Pigs" tale. In addition to this event, there was also an information display installed in the facility for the duration of one month, to be viewed by all persons who entered the facility.

4 educators were involved in the parents/guardians' evening. Participants: 11 fathers, 15 mothers, 20 children. All educators were involved in setting up the display.

The aim of the event was to acquire skills for improvisation and interpretation, creative enrichment, rethinking of events, to provoke a sense of mutual assistance, tolerance and equality with others and to motivate and stimulate the parents/guardians to initiate more frequent activities with their children.

This is what happened during the evening: Participants (parents/guardians and children) were introduced to the story "The Three Little Pigs". While participating in the dramatization of the fairy tale, children and parents entered in different roles. The story is about three little pigs who have to build their house for the winter, but no one wants to take the responsibility. While arguing a big bad

wolf attacked them. But when they decide to join their forces and to be united facing the danger, they manage to cope with the Wolf and to live happily. The message of the story is that when we stand together and help each other, we can do much more things and everything becomes easy and works in the best way. The roles were distributed and the respective costumes/masks were provided to the participants. After the dramatization was over, the participants discussed and analyzed the play, the type of attitudes and the stories in the play. Special attention was paid to the positive moments and acts of the characters, so the children were able to feel and internalize tolerance, equality and mutual help. The issue of the importance of family support was raised through the topics in the story. The children have been prepared in advance with photos of their families and have talked about their family members, their roles at home etc.

As preparation, a letter was sent to the parents/guardians describing the DEE project and they have received an invitation for the event. The invitation was placed on a kindergarten information corner.

Regarding further dissemination work in Bulgaria, the event in one ECEN has been promoted on social network (announcement on the kindergarten's Facebook page). Generally, invitations for the events have been sent to parents/guardians and placed at the entrance of the kindergartens and in the information corners.



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### Уважаеми родители,

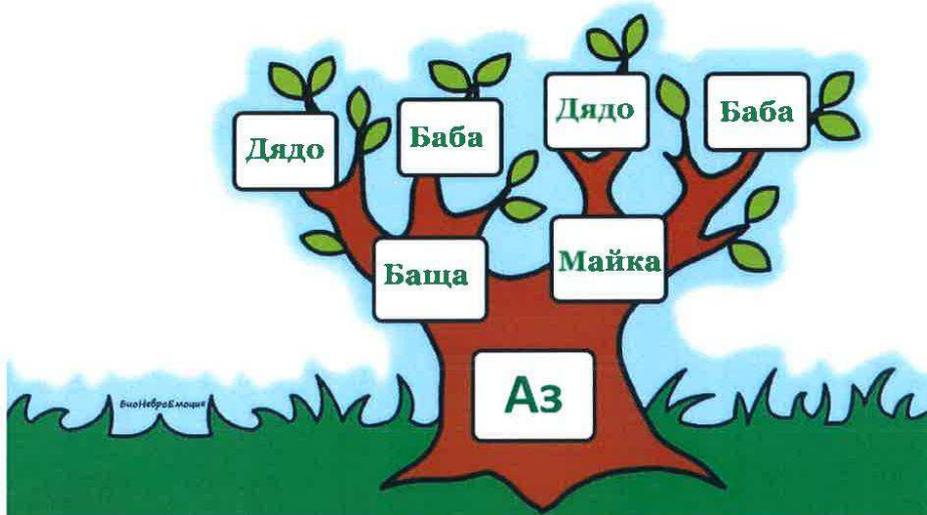
ОЗД „Слънчев ден“ участва като партньор в изпълнение на проект **„DEE – Разнообразие, равенство и приобщаване в предучилищното образование“** изпълняван от Сдружение „АРГИ“ България в партньорство с Автономната провинция Тренто (Италия), Университета в Тренто (Италия), „Институт за изследване на мъжествеността и изследванията на пола“ (Австрия) и Асоциация „Спасете детето в Щирия“.

Проектът е финансиран по програма Еразъм +, КА2 Стратегически партньорства за училищно образование.

Имаме удоволствието да Ви поканим за участие в родителска среща на тема **„Моето семейство“**.

Ще бъдем благодарни да донесете за срещата семейни снимки, с които заедно с вашите деца да направите семеен албум и родословно дърво.

Родителската среща ще се проведе в 17:00 часа на 30.04.2019г. в ОЗД „Слънчев ден“, гр. София.





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## Скъпи родители,

По покана на Сдружение „Алианс за регионални и граждански инициативи (АРГИ), Детска градина „Вакарел“ участва като партньор в изпълнение на проект **„DEE – Разнообразие, равенство и приобщаване в предучилищното образование“**. Еразъм +, К&2 Стратегически партньорства за училищно образование.

Имаме удоволствието да Ви поканим за участие в родителска среща на тема **„Изграждане на стереотипите за ролите на половете и тяхното въздействие върху отношението на момчетата и момичетата към семейните задължения и семейния живот“**.

Родителската среща ще се проведе на 17.05.2019г. от 17:00 часа, в ОДЗ „Вакарел“, с. Вакарел.

За допълнителна информация и въпроси, моля, свържете се на място в детската градина с г-жа Малина Милчева.

**Ще Ви очакваме!**



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### Уважаеми родители,

ОЗД „Здравец“ участва като партньор в изпълнение на проект „**DEE – Разнообразие, равенство и приобщаване в предучилищното образование**“ изпълняван от Сдружение „АРГИ“ България в партньорство с Автономната провинция Тренто (Италия), Университета в Тренто (Италия), „Институт за изследване на мъжествеността и изследванията на пола“ (Австрия) и Асоциация „Спасете детето в Щирия“.

Проектът е финансиран по програмата Еразъм +, КА2 Стратегически партньорства за училищно образование.

Имаме удоволствието да Ви поканим за участие в родителска среща на тема “Професията на моя татко”, на която заедно да разкажем и дискутираме с децата разнообразието на професиите и да ги запознаем с труда, който ние големите хора упражняваме ежедневно.

Обръщаме се с молба към бащите, да разкажат за своите професии на децата. В случай на интерес за участие с представяне на професия от Ваша страна, моля, потвърдете участие при г-жа Колева – Директор на ОЗД “Здравец” не по-късно от 07.06.2019г.

Родителската среща ще се проведе на 12.06.2019г. от 17:00 часа, в ОДЗ “Здравец”, гр. Ихтиман.

**ОЧАКВАМЕ ВИ С РАДОСТ И ДОБРЕ ДОШЛИ СТЕ!**



Images 13, 14, 15: Communications with parents/guardians regarding the measures in Bulgaria

## Italy

In Italy, the participating facilities were two crèches, one in Trento and one in a municipality southwest of Trento.

On 24<sup>th</sup> of October 2019, ECEN 1, the crèche in Trento carried out a parents' evening workshop, as well as a display of information materials in the entrance hall (information corner). 4 educators were involved in the parents' evening. As an expert who is a designer and curator of training courses on the issues of gender differences, inter-culture and active teaching methods, was invited. Participants of the parents/guardians' evening were 3 fathers and 2 mothers.

The aim of the parents' evening was to promote equal opportunities for girls and boys in and throughout the education inside the facility and with parents/guardians, using picture books. Raising parents/guardians' and families' awareness of stereotypes related to roles was a specific objective.

Agenda of the parents/guardians' evening:

After a brief presentation of the project and the work undertaken within the DEE project the trainer introduced the picture books and presented the topics that were the subject of the discussion. The evening included raising awareness and working in groups, on the concepts of masculine / feminine and then considering gender stereotypes. The modality was therefore of a laboratory work, divided into three groups. Participants reflected and discussed about gender constructs (masculine, feminine), reporting their discussions afterwards. From here the discussion took place in a plenary session led by the trainer on gender stereotypes. The participants (educators and parents/guardians) reflected, discussed and dialogued on gender stereotypes. There were spaces in which the parents/guardians were able to express their observations/ideas and shared with others present some experiences, even personal ones, from their life with the children, both in the early part of the evening and during work in groups and in the final discussion. Materials used during parents/guardians' evening were picture books (those used during the information corner set up in the ECEN) and sheets / whiteboard.

The informative corner display in ECEN1 was set up from Monday 15 July 2019 and remained available until 31 July, the closing date of the facility for the summer break, and then was set up again from the first days of September 2019 until 18<sup>th</sup> of October 2019. 4 of the ECEN's educators and about 20 parents/guardians were involved in the corner's activity about the informative corner display.

The display exhibited books also used during the training course with the aim to promote and raise awareness on the subjects of equality between men and women, the empowerment of girls and stereotypes in relation to what boys and girls would like to be in the future. Next to picture books made available on a small bookcase specifically for the project, the DEE researchers/trainers distributed some flyers to all the parents/guardians in which the objectives of the DEE project were indicated.

ECEN 2, the crèche in a municipality southwest of Trento, carried out the display of information materials in the entrance hall (information corner). The display was set up from Monday 15 July 2019 and remained available until 31 July, the closing date of the facility for the summer break, and then was set again from the first days of September 2019 with also the parents/guardians of the new children of the new term.

8 ECEN's educators were involved in the corner's activity and all parents/guardians from the facility were involved in the informative corner display.

The informational display again used painted books also used during the training course with the aim to promote and raise awareness on the subjects of equality between men and women, the empowerment of girls and stereotypes in relation to what boys and girls would like to be. Next to the picture books made available on a small bookcase specifically for the project, the DEE researchers/trainers distributed some flyers to all the parents/guardians in which the objectives of the DEE project are indicated.

In preparation for the events in all facilities in Italy, ECEN educators promoted the event by talking with the parents/guardians of children attending the facility. The information flyer was distributed among the parents/guardians. The invitation was placed in the entrance hall.

Erasmus+ DEE

PROGETTO DEE  
DIVERSITÀ, UGUAGLIANZA E INCLUSIONE NELL'EDUCAZIONE PRE-SCOLARE E NELLA  
CURA: UNA PROSPETTIVA DI GENERE

Incontro laboratoriale  
per genitori  
con Maria Agnese Maio

giovedì 24 ottobre, 20.30-22.00  
presso l'asilo nido di Madonna Bianca

Progetto DEE  
- Obiettivi -

Promuovere le pari  
opportunità e superare gli stereotipi di  
genere a partire dall'istruzione prescolare  
attraverso una formazione specifica di  
educatori e insegnanti,  
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Image 16: Communication with parents/guardians regarding the measures in Italy

### 3.2 Results of evaluation of effectiveness

In this section we present the analysis results of the collected feedback questionnaires in Austria, Bulgaria and Italy. Parents/guardians as well as educators employed by the involved facilities gave feedback on the measures for engaging parents/guardians in their facilities. The two groups (participants and educators) were handed two different questionnaires. Both sets of questionnaires included open answers, summarized below following a visual overview of results of all countries together. Please note: As is usually the case, not every individual respondent answered every question

from the questionnaire. Furthermore, since participation in the feedback process was voluntary, not every participant present at the events handed in a questionnaire.

### Feedback questionnaires: Participants (i.e. parents/guardians)

In Austria, 67 participants filled out the questionnaires, in Bulgaria 80 persons handed in the questionnaire and in Italy, 18 questionnaires were returned. These 165 questionnaires are the basis of the visualization below. Please note when comparing the visualized percentages between countries that “10% of the participants” in Italy means a much smaller number of actual responses than for example in Bulgaria.

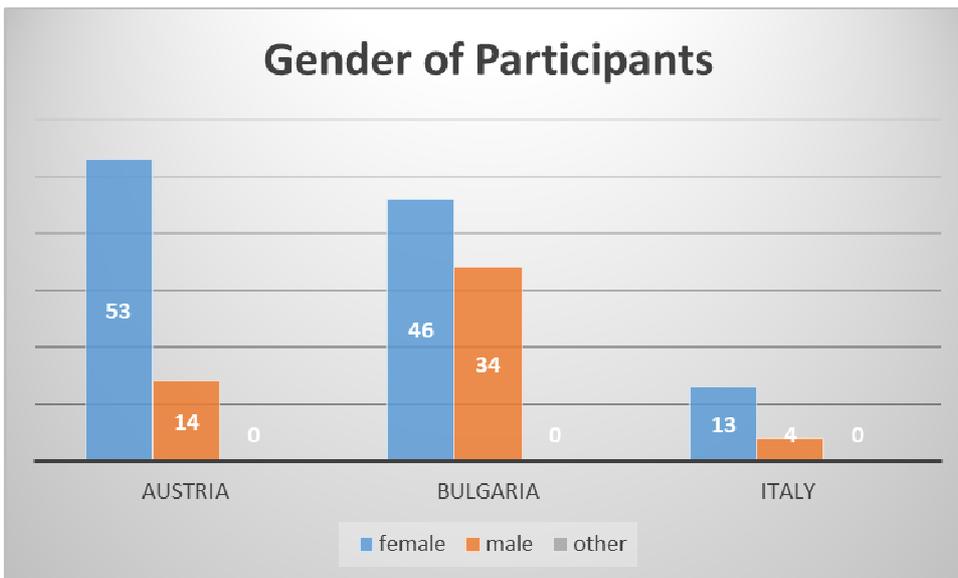


Figure 1: Gender of Participants in Austria, Bulgaria and Italy

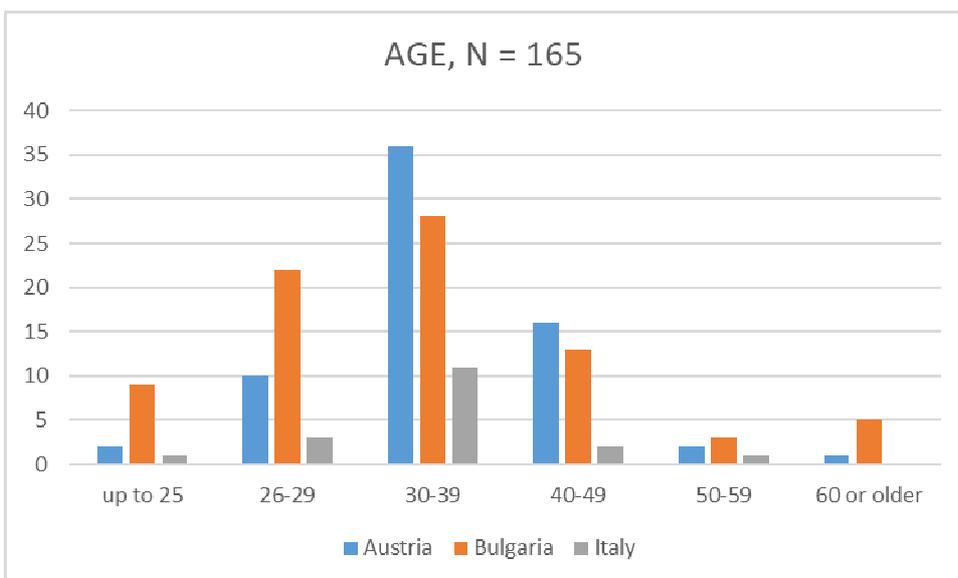


Figure 2: Age of Participants in Austria, Bulgaria and Italy

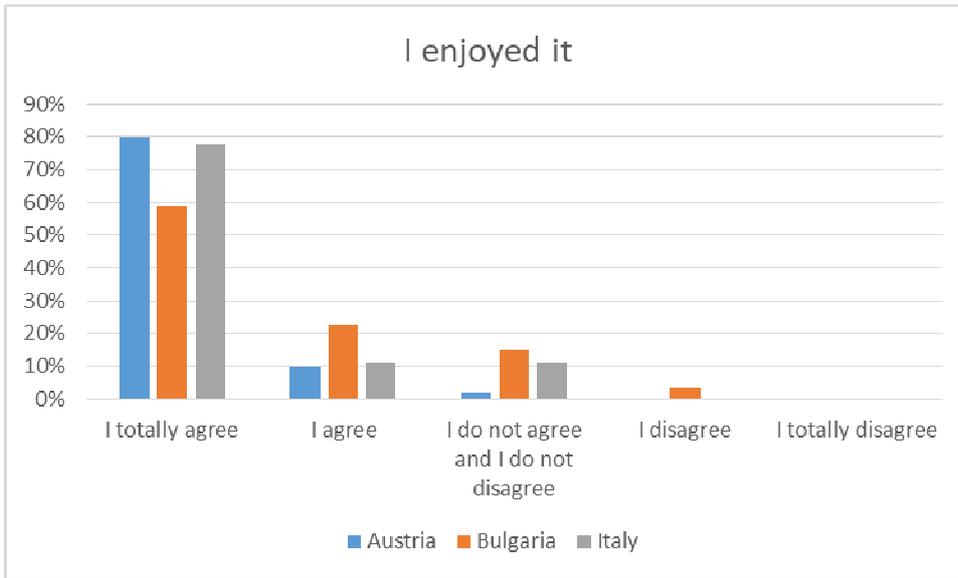


Figure 3: Agreement to Question “I enjoyed it” in Austria, Bulgaria and Italy

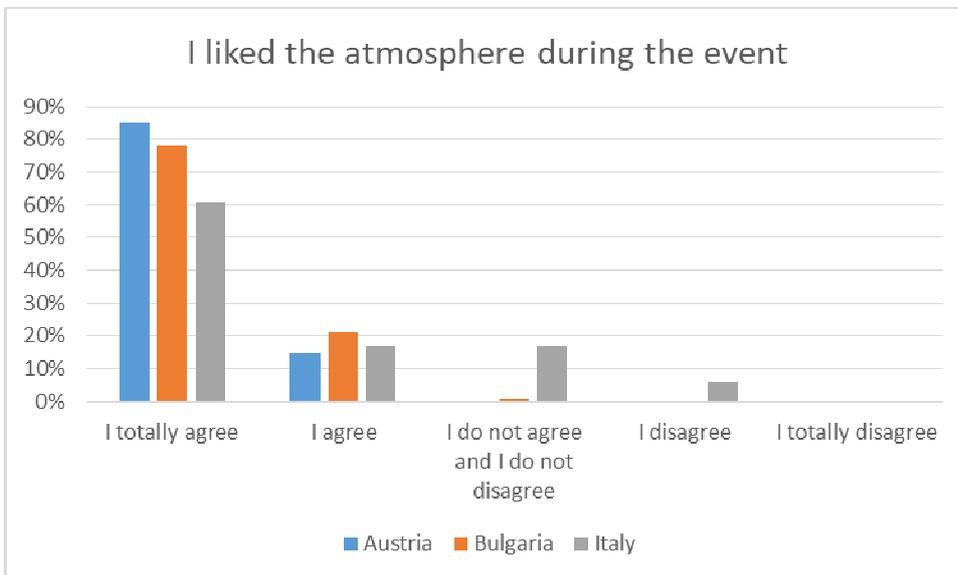


Figure 4: Agreement to Question “How did you like the atmosphere during the event” in Austria, Bulgaria and Italy

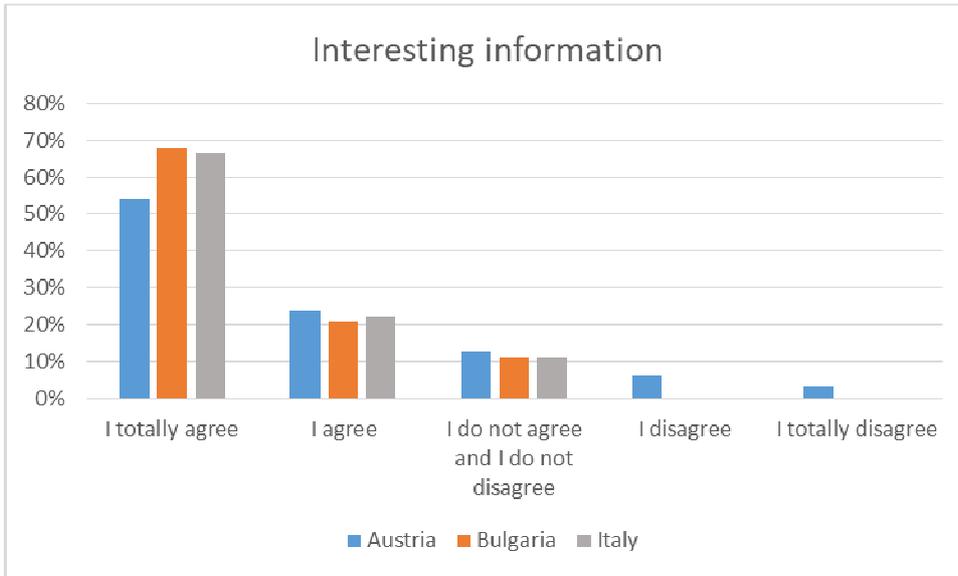


Figure 5: Agreement to Question “I received interesting information” in Austria, Bulgaria and Italy

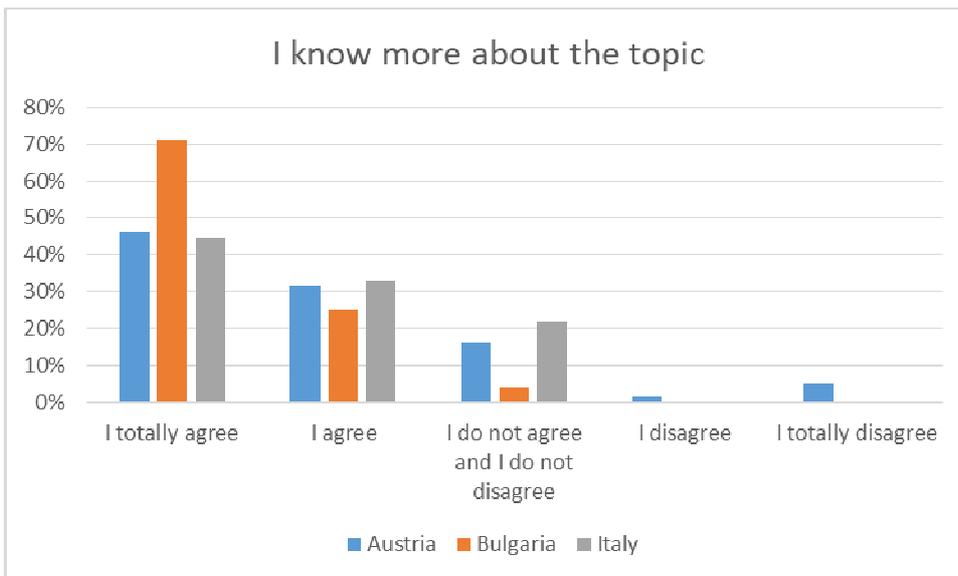


Figure 6: Agreement to Question “After this event, I know more about the topic” in Austria, Bulgaria and Italy

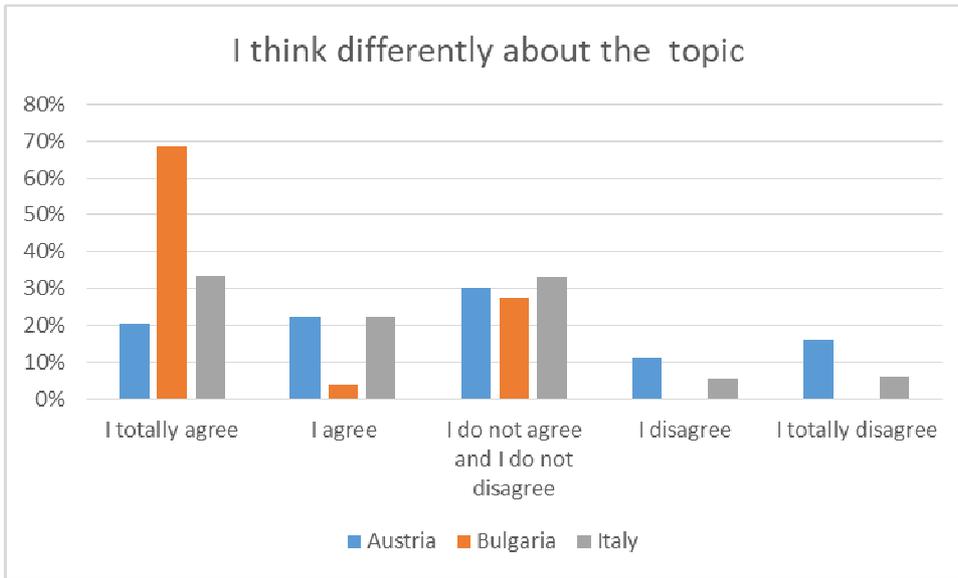


Figure 7: Agreement to Question “After this event, I think differently about this topic” in Austria, Bulgaria and Italy

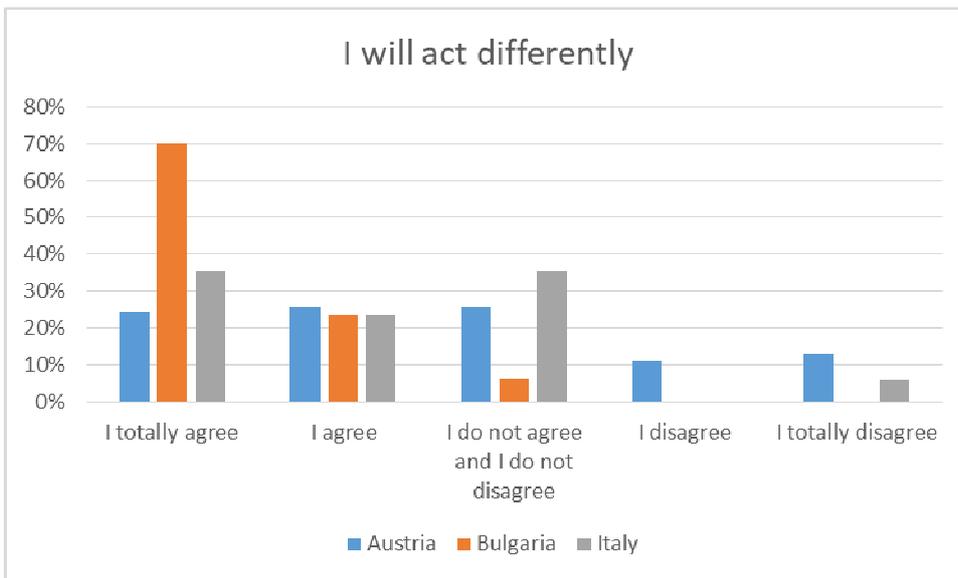


Figure 8: Agreement to Question “After this event, I will act differently” in Austria, Bulgaria and Italy

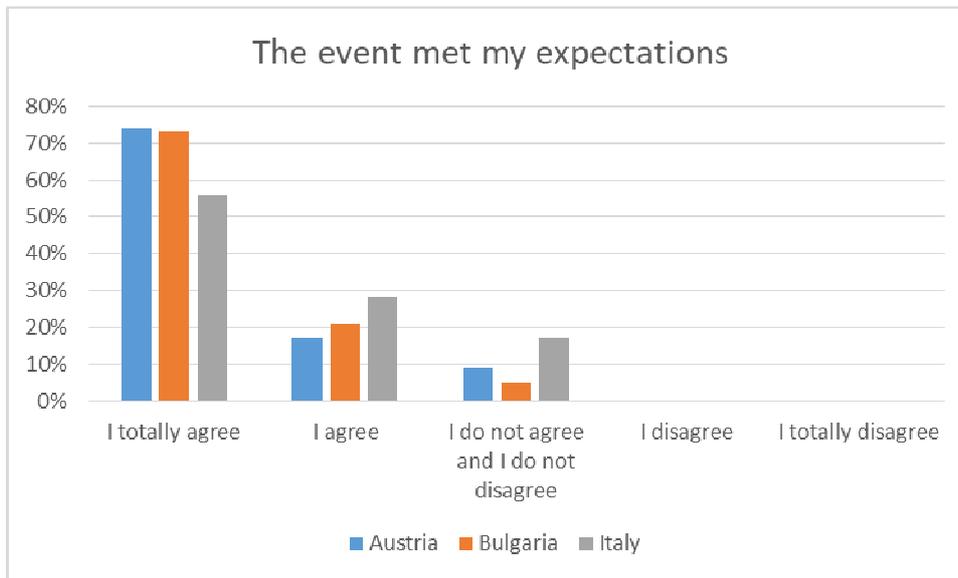


Figure 9: Agreement to Question “The event met my expectations” in Austria, Bulgaria and Italy

The results of the feedback given by parents/guardians who participated in the events show a majority of positive responses among Austrian, Bulgarian and Italian participants. Over half of all respondents stated that they “totally agree” or “agree” to the questions asked. Some neutral opinions are expressed regarding every of the questions shown above, with responses from at least two countries for each question. This indicates a high fulfilment of expectations among the participants, and they have enjoyed the events. It is noticeable that there is a knowledge gain. Many participants state that they will act differently after the event. When looking at the questions regarding changing opinions/practices, there is a noticeable heterogeneity between countries. While the measures for parent work evaluated here have made a noticeable positive impact, attitudes towards gender equality and diversity, as well as family and gender norms which have grown over a long time, do not change 'overnight'.

### Feedback from the open answers from participants (parents/guardians)

**In Austria**, regarding the organization and setting, participants generally mentioned that the events were well prepared and the organization was good. Some also mentioned that they would have valued more information before the events and would have appreciated access to more general information about the topic. Regarding the growth of knowledge provided by the events as well as their motivation to act differently in the future, a number of participants mentioned that they generally have an awareness and knowledge on gender and diversity issues and are working hard on teaching this to their children. One person mentioned the importance of the parents/guardians’ evenings and others stated that they will talk more about this topic with their children. Aspects which parents/guardians liked the most were, according to the open answers, the loving preparation and cosy, creative, funny atmosphere, as well as the joyful participation and involvement of the children.

Some quotes:

- *“It was interesting to see that children can be understanding and non-judgmental if we let them.”*

- *"I did not know that in the crèche, at that age, you can observe gender-stereotypical behavior."*
- *"Equality is and has always been important in our family and it is practiced."*
- *"That the children were made aware of the different stereotypes, and that they learned that men and women can do everything not just gender-role specific things!"*

**In Bulgaria**, regarding the setting and organization of the events, many participants stated that they would like to participate in events of this kind again. Some added that the educators were well-informed. The participants also wrote that they have gained knowledge through the events. One person stated that they were already aware of the topic, while two others wrote that they now think differently.

Some quotes:

- *"Interesting topic, but I think it's too overexposed."*
- *"It is important that parents are familiar with the topic. This way we will better educate our children."*

**In Italy**, regarding the parents' evening, participants mentioned that the emphasis on the presence of fathers was valuable. Regarding the design of the activities (both the informative display of books for children and the parents/guardians' evening), they expressed that they enjoyed the group's work and the presentation of the painted books, with one participant mentioning that they would have liked more time to learn about the texts. A number of participants stated that they already had knowledge and awareness of the topics discussed and that their opinions were reinforced through the parent work activities. Others expressed that the actions made them reflect on the topic and was eye-opening (e.g. with regards to unconscious stereotypes).

Some quotes:

- *"These books succeed in a simple and intuitive way to explain the equality of diversity, as is the fact that we can be very different visually and temperamentally but we are still human beings with intellect."*
- *"We discussed topics/aspects that I had never considered."*
- *"I realized how easy it was to create stereotypes that I didn't think I had."*
- *"Good opportunity for reflection on the importance of not giving too much weight to stereotypes."*
- *"I believe the situation is changing and this evening the presence of fathers involved in childcare has confirmed it."*
- *"I will offer children more differentiated readings and more accurate books."*

### Feedback questionnaires: Involved educators

In Austria 22 female educators and in Bulgaria 12 female educators filled out the feedback questionnaire. Educators' questionnaires were not filled out in Italy. Instead, the expert responsible for carrying out the parents' evening filled out a report. Information about this is found in the following section where the open answers are summarized.

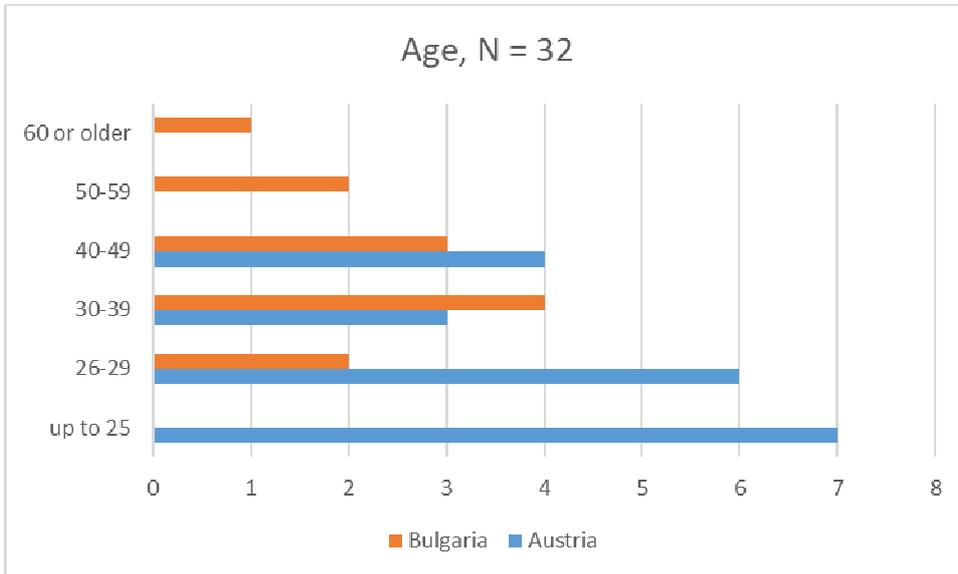


Figure 10: Age of respondent educators in Austria and Bulgaria

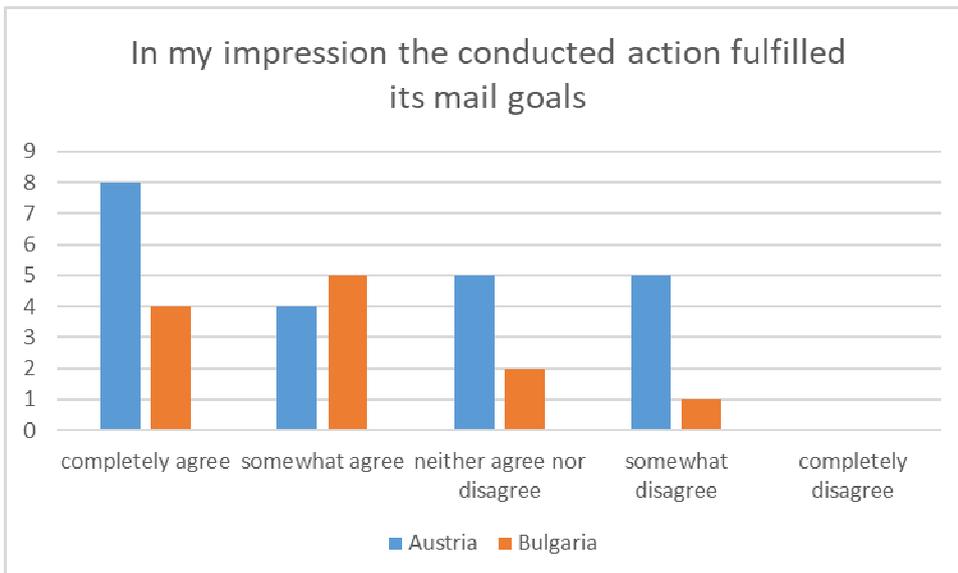


Figure 11: Agreement among educators to fulfillment of goals of the event

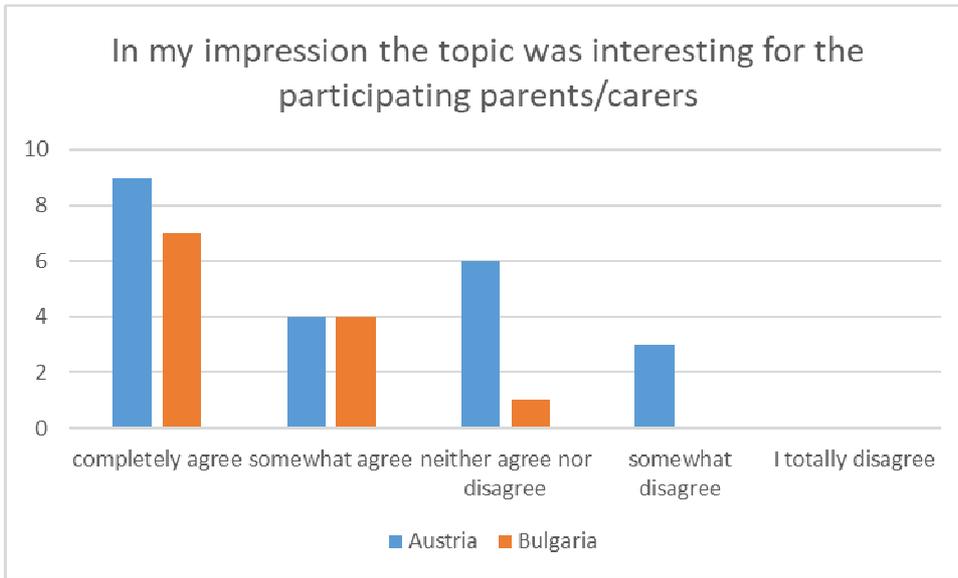


Figure 12: Agreement to question about the interest of the event for the parents/guardians in Austria and Bulgaria



Figure 13: Agreement to question about an increase in motivation of parents/guardians to engage with the facility in Austria and Bulgaria

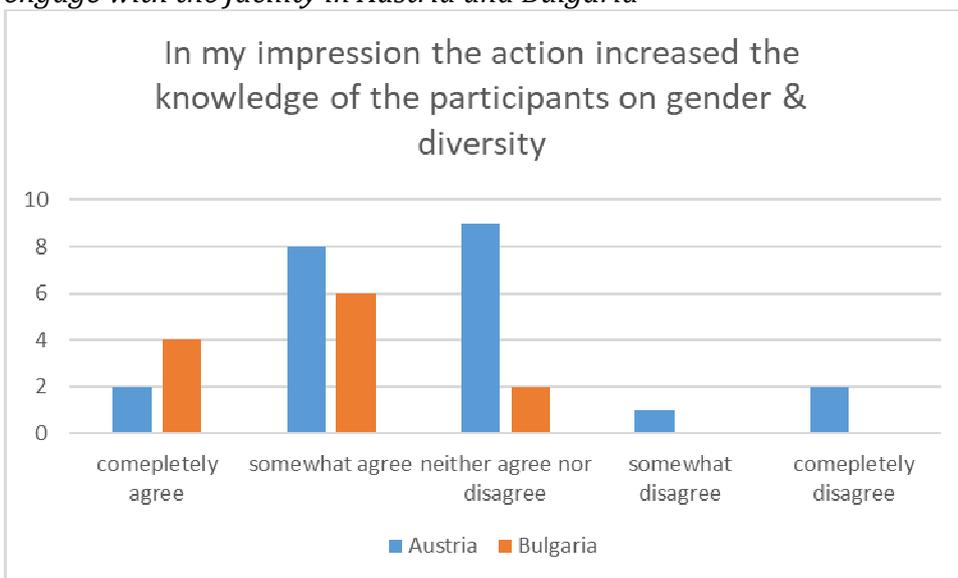
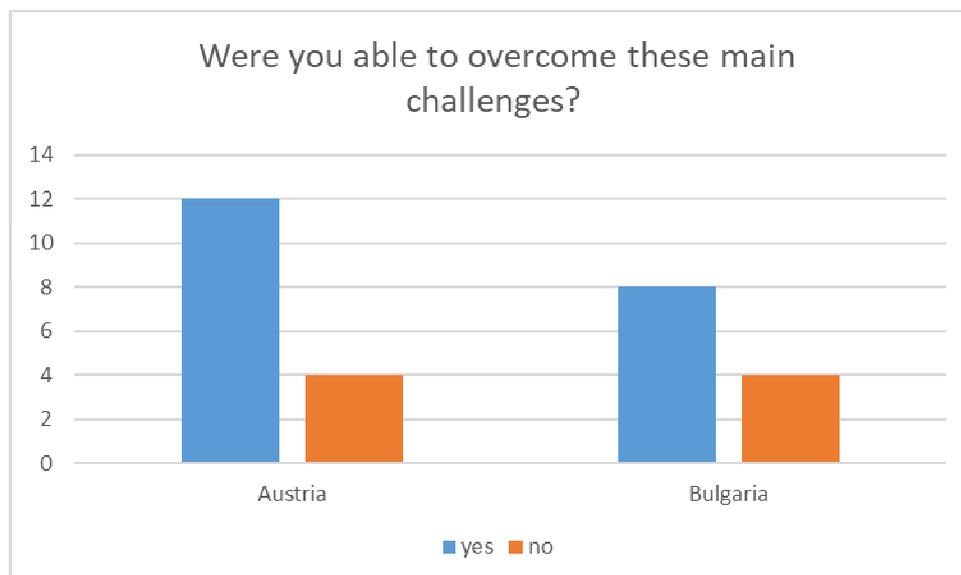


Figure 14: Agreement to question about an increase of knowledge among the parents/guardians in Austria and Bulgaria

The results of the feedback given by educators about their impressions of the events carried out show a majority of positive and neutral responses to the event meeting the main goals, to the event being interesting for participants, to the events' potential for raising engagement of participants with the facility and to the events' efficiency in strengthening knowledge among participants. The questionnaire responses show that educators are satisfied with the outcome of the events which were carried out (in the open questions they describe many activities which went very well and were enjoyed by participants). It is also noticeable that they think that parents are motivated to take an active role in the facilities following the events – detailed explanations how and why can be found in the answers to the open questions below.

### **Feedback from the open answers from involved educators:**

**In Austria**, asked about their opinion regarding the meeting of main goals for the events, educators stated that the creative materials which were presented throughout the facility and performances gave parents/guardians food for thought. Some educators also stated variations of the impression that parents/guardians were not strongly interested in gender and diversity issues. It was also stated by many educators that they themselves/those involved in organizing the events succeeded in working with children on the topics in the time leading to the events, but they would have valued to have more time and resources to involve parents/guardians more thoroughly. They also mentioned that some parents/guardians have a very stereotypical view of gender roles and the messages of the events were not fully understood by some parents/guardians. One person remarked that one year would have been a good timeframe to devote to an in-depth project on gender and diversity. The educators expressed the wish to have more expert involvement in the preparation of the events. They were supported by project researchers/trainers during the preparation, which they appreciated (and it would have been possible for them to involve experts even more strongly). Creativity, cooperation and team work were described as important to overcome challenges (i.e. mainly the short time-frame).



*Figure 15: Ability of overcome main challenges in implementing events for parents among respondent educators in Austria and Bulgaria*

Some quotes:

- “I think especially the posters (which were a bit provocative) have given food for thought to the parents/guardians.”
- “The video with scenes from everyday life was well received.”
- “We did well but the time with parents/guardians was too short.”
- “For the parents/guardians, the event was interesting, because they could see that their child has different interests in the crèche than at home, plays different games, e.g. boys play also with dolls in the crèche.”
- “We have motivated the children to think differently; with many, the role models are already re-structured.”

**In Bulgaria**, asked about their opinion regarding the meeting of main goals, educators also remarked that it was hard to fully involve parents/guardians in this topic due to too little time beforehand. Respondents also remarked that creative ideas (fathers’ presentations, theatrical methods) were well received. Educators also remarked on stereotypical ideas about gender roles which are hard to overcome. They would have needed “more time spent on the topic and more resources for parents/guardians”. According to the educators, there are still some parents/guardians which do not participate when invited. Asked about challenges, a number of respondents stated that it was a challenge to present the event as interesting to children and parents/guardians at the same time. Useful for overcoming challenges was cooperation and creativity. Educators would have liked to have more expert guidance to prepare themselves for this topic. A wish for more training and to include the subject in the compulsory curriculum was expressed a number of times.

Some quotes:

- “We could carry it out well but time was too short (with parents/guardians).”
- “Parental involvement in dramatization was a very good idea.”
- “Some parents/guardians have stereotypes about the roles of the man and the woman. This can hardly be changed. We need to work more with these parents/guardians.”
- “Some parents/guardians are interested some not.”
- “Children and parents/guardians have learned a lot about new issues on gender equality.”

- “Children love to talk about families. They felt good to be together with their parents/guardians in kindergarten.”

**In Italy**, only the expert who facilitated the parents’ evening and workshop filled out the feedback questionnaire. She reported that the parents/guardians clearly expressed an attitude of enthusiasm and recognition for the stimuli offered. During the first moment of activity with parents/guardians on stereotypes, several clichés emerged related to masculinity and femininity, which were questioned and challenged during the confrontation. This initial work made it possible to build a toolbox of terms and knowledge and then be able to read the stereotypes in the books illustrated in the next step. It was a challenge to succeed in a short time in questioning and undermining the stereotypes related to femininity as a challenger (example: "women because they live the experience of pregnancy are more inclined to the care of children") and masculinity ("the dads in the first years of life of children / and are less useful in care", "males by nature are less sensitive"). However, through the use of concrete examples and drawing attention to contradictions new perspectives were made available. Also, the educators present, who had participated in educator training in February 2019, were described by the expert to be a precious resource in the discussion and in reinforcing the importance of offering plural models of masculinity and femininity in the educational work with boys and girls.

## **4. Conclusion & transferable insights from this work package**

To conclude this report, this chapter offers a number of transferable insights gained from working on engaging parents/guardians for a greater awareness of gender and diversity issues in early-childhood education and care. These insights are intended to be useful for facilities in Europe who prepare and implement parent work measures focused on creating and strengthening a prejudice-aware environment.

### **4.1 ECEN educators as multipliers: Sharing new perspectives on gender and diversity**

Largely, the ECEN educators involved had no prior training on how gender and diversity structure everyday working and learning in early childhood education facilities. Although they were oftentimes aware of how they personally are affected by societal inequalities (e.g. unequal pay and career opportunities for female educators), for many of them the DEE training course provided the first focused reflection on the wider societal inequalities. This is true for the participants in Austria, Bulgaria and Italy as well. As is often the case when confronted with societal norms which may have felt uncomfortable but have largely been taken for granted, it is a longer process to deconstruct them. First of all it is important to realize that privilege is invisible to those who have it<sup>2</sup>. DEE has helped to start this process and pay attention to the impact of gender and other social markers in society.

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<sup>2</sup> See McIntosh, Peggy (1989): White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack, In: Peace and Freedom Magazine, July/August, S. 10- 12.

When being asked to analyze everyday interactions and behaviors using the “gender lens”, sometimes a binary and essentialist approach is the first step in understanding how inequalities come into existence and how they are held up. The DEE project was therefore an important step towards a more complex understanding of the interplay and impact of social categories such as gender, ethnicity, social class, dis/ability, and being able to use this understanding for effective involvement of parents/guardians in the facilities.

One learning for future projects therefore is to put emphasis on trying to avoid reinforcing stereotypes in the process of raising awareness for them; so: do not reconstruct during deconstructing.

## **4.2 Careful and sustainable approach: Measures and events can have a lasting impact**

Participating educators largely were conscientious and careful in preparing and carrying out the events and measures. According to the educators’ feedback questionnaires, many felt that this topic needs time to prepare and support around it. Some also felt they would have profited by having more information and more preparation regarding knowledge.

In order to involve parents/guardians, educators have to be in intensive contact with parents/guardians, which can often be difficult due to the demands on educators in managing everyday work as well as lack of interest/time among the parents/guardians. The DEE project gave educators the opportunity to reflect on and actively work in involvement of parents, with the goal of strengthening gender and diversity awareness. They were supported in this process and have expressed a number of learnings they take away for their future practice. Many expressed the wish to work on this long-term, since they realize measures and events on this topic need time to prepare and digest. Sustainable parent work needs time, for example time to communicate issues and measures well before and after events, as well as time to prepare a united position towards gender and diversity issues as a facility. All involved can see the benefits for their children and the educational process and showed enthusiasm to engage with parents on this topic in the future.

## **4.3 Bridging divides: Discussing gender and diversity issues is obvious to some parents/guardians, unnecessary to others**

Explicitly focusing parent work and activities in the ECEN on gender and diversity issues provoked on the “extreme” poles two kinds of reactions among parents/guardians: To some parents/guardians, stereotype- and prejudice-aware education and care is an obvious topic and they feel that they are already very conscious of it, while the opposite pole consists of parents/guardians who feel this specific focus is unnecessary (and in some cases even dangerous to the development of their children). In many circles in all three countries, also influenced by current political events, “gender” has turned into an emotionally charged topic (e.g. manifested in resistance to gender sensitive language,

opposition to accepting the “third option” for gender identity categories), while traditional gender roles are being re-invented again (re-traditionalisation).

This leads to an ambivalent and challenging situation for educators involved in promoting gender and diversity awareness – between fulfilling expectations (e.g. also from parents/guardians: “children should learn appropriate rules to live in societies”) and gender sensitivity in daily work. The conclusion is that educators need to be provided by profound and continuing training on transmitting to parents/guardians the benefit of stereotype- and prejudice-aware education and care. Apart from a general training course as provided in the DEE project (which focusses on daily work with children and self-reflection), there should be trainings on communication with parents/guardians, e.g. in the form of an argumentation training (communication strategies against common stereotypes and resistances towards the topic). Also, materials such as brochures on how to communicate against anti-feminism and anti-equality rhetoric should be made known and easily available.<sup>3</sup> According to participants’ evaluations many parents/guardians would have been happy to be offered more information. This means that it is beneficial to prepare some ECEN-centred texts about the roles of gender and diversity in education and care of young children and the specific implementation of stereotype- and prejudice-aware work carried out within the ECEN. The inclusion of experts from outside the facilities in parents/guardians’ events is also beneficial for educators and parents/guardians alike. As was done during DEE, awareness-raising professional literature needs to be made available to all persons involved in the educational process.

## **4.4 Joyful and creative events: Engaging parents/guardians through creativity**

The participating ECEN educators had creative ideas for events and measures which were enjoyed by the parents/guardians who filled out the satisfaction evaluations. It works well to engage parents/guardians through joyful and creative events in which children have a central role. According to the evaluation, what parents/guardians enjoyed most was spending time with their kids and watching them perform (e.g. songs, poems, play acting). This use of creative tools would also work well for events where parents/guardians are present as the target audience and where the focus is more on giving information/ transmitting knowledge.

Educators know how to approach “their” parents/guardians and which kind of events are popular in their context – all the while recognizing that parents/guardians are a heterogeneous group and so there have to be different strategies to engage them and work on gender and diversity issues.

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<sup>3</sup> Some recommendations in English and German are:

<https://www.wave-network.org/wp-content/uploads/WebFINALSelfdefenseGuide.pdf>

<http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/dialog/13544.pdf>

[https://static.uni-graz.at/fileadmin/Koordination-Gender/Allgemeines/Broschuere\\_Gender\\_Studies\\_Online.pdf](https://static.uni-graz.at/fileadmin/Koordination-Gender/Allgemeines/Broschuere_Gender_Studies_Online.pdf)

## **4.5 Everyday life approach: Discuss gender and diversity in relation to personal life**

A personal-life approach is useful in order to bring parents/guardians on board for a stereotype- and prejudice-aware education. The events and activities carried out during DEE made visible that when the specifics of family life (who is doing which tasks, which members are there, what are their jobs, what do they like to do for fun, etc.) are a topic, parents/guardians as well as children joyfully participate (in the words of one educator: "Children love to talk about families"). ECEN educators can build on the trustful relations with children and parents/guardians to implement gender and diversity in a sustainable way. They also usually know what is perceived as weird and threatening and can address concerns in a subtle way.

## **4.6 Getting into contact: Opportunities to involve parents/guardians for more gender and diversity awareness**

### **Start with interested volunteers and work from there**

Inviting fathers to talk about their professions worked well in Bulgaria. A central learning therefore is to start with interested parents/guardians and work with them to help bring others on board. Awareness raising for a prejudice-free environment could start with those parents/guardians who are willing to engage with certain topics. Educators should pay attention to where such willingness is signaled and pick it up.

### **Learning from children**

**The research in the DEE project also brought to light promising ideas for working with children towards prejudice-aware environments. Children are often open and when something is presented to them as self-evident they deal well with it (e.g. different family forms, same-sex couples, or gender-atypical professions). Allowing parents/guardians to "learn from children" was noticeable as an important approach in engaging parents/guardians. What does this mean? When facilities plan diversity or gender equality related projects towards which there are at first reluctant attitudes among the parent community, it can be helpful for parents/guardians to see that their children are actually happily involved in what happens in the facility. When children report to their parents/guardians about, for example, events where male nurses or policewomen are present in the kindergarten, then parents/guardians can gradually be more enthusiastic about topics or approaches as well. The analysis of the DEE parent work measures also showed the importance of presenting and addressing issues like equal opportunities and diversity in a way which allows the educators to show their competence and specific skills. Continuous educators' training is therefore essential for a good work with parents/guardians and children towards prejudice-aware environments. Morning & afternoon drop-offs and pick-ups are valuable**

The self-observations showed that the daily "transfer rituals" are a promising space to reach parents/guardians (and also fathers). When they pick up their children, take the opportunity to talk

about the child and give insight into the annual program of the kindergarten. Educators could prepare themselves to talk to each of the children`s parents/guardians once a week and talk to them for five to ten minutes (“how is your child affected by this topic”).