

Technical Support to implement reforms to support the development of family centred early childhood intervention services in Greece - ECI Greece

Grant Agreement n° 101048313

Family Centred ECI Training Package for Staff of ECI Services

## PPT 3: Evolution of the ECI theoretical framework and the most up-to-date definitions



Funded by the European Union via the Technical Support Instrument and implemented by EASPD, in cooperation with the European Commission's Directorate-General for Structural Reform Support



## Legal and political basis for early childhood intervention

- **UNCRC:** Article 6 - Children have the right to develop to the greatest extent possible
- **UN Committee on the Rights of the Child:** General comment on the application of the rights of the child in early childhood
- **UNCRPD:**

Article 7: Children with disabilities enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis with other children.


Article 25: States shall provide early identification and intervention as appropriate, and services designed to minimize and prevent further disabilities

## Legal and political basis for early childhood intervention

- UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF and the World Bank Report on "Education for All", 1990
- UNESCO
  - Holistic Early Childhood Development Index (HECDI)
  - Global Partnership Strategy for Early Childhood 2021 – 2030
  - Global Monitoring Report on "Education for All".
- UNICEF Report, "The State of the World's Children: Early Childhood", 2001
- OECD: "Starting Strong Report", 2006
- European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education – "ECI Key Policy Messages", 2012
- The European Commission Working Group on Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC): Report of the Expert Group of the Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (DG EAG) of the European Commission.

## What is Early Childhood Intervention?

- To whom is Early Childhood Intervention addressed?
- How is it provided (how, by whom, where) ?
- What does it involve?
- What is the objective?



Early Childhood  
Intervention.  
Evolution of  
perspectives and  
interventions

## 1<sup>st</sup> Generation Programmes

- Pure biomedical and therapeutic character
- Performed exclusively in special settings
- Focused exclusively on children with different conditions.
- Aimed at improving or preventing the worsening of children's conditions/deficits
- Followed a one-dimensional scientific approach (Bairrao & Almeida, 2003).

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Generation Programmes

Early Childhood  
Intervention.  
Evolution of  
perspectives and  
interventions

- Moving away from single focus on the child
- Recognition of the crucial role played by the family and social support networks in promoting the development of the child and reinforcing the capabilities and confidence of parents
- First references to empowerment, focusing on family strengths and resources

## 3<sup>rd</sup> Generation Programmes

Early Childhood  
Intervention.  
Evolution of  
perspectives and  
interventions

Focus on:

- daily experiences and learning opportunities of children
- support for parenting capabilities
- family, community resources and social inclusion.

## What is Early Childhood Intervention? Contemporary Definitions

The term early childhood intervention is used for “services provided to children from birth to 3 years of age who are at risk or have developmental delays or disabilities”.

Such an intervention differs from intervention in older children as it a) focuses on the family activities and routines; b) includes many disciplines: speech therapists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, special educators, social workers, psychologists, who provide their services outside traditional educational settings and in a non-traditional educational way.

American Speech Hearing Association (ASHA, 2003)



## What is Early Childhood Intervention? Contemporary Definitions

“ECI is a composite of services/provision for very young children and their families, provided at their request at a certain time in a child’s life, covering any action undertaken when a child needs special support to:

- Ensure and enhance her/his personal development;
- Strengthen the family’s own competences, and
- Promote the social inclusion of the family and the child.

These actions are to be provided in the child’s natural setting, preferably at a local level, with a family-oriented and multidimensional teamwork approach.”

(European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, Early Childhood Intervention Analysis of Situations in Europe. Key Aspects and Recommendations 2005, p. 17).

## What is Early Childhood Intervention ? Contemporary Definitions

“Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) is the process of providing specialised support and services for infants and young children with disability and/or developmental delay, and their families in order to promote development, well-being and community participation.

The aim of early childhood intervention is to ensure that parents and other important adults in the child’s life can provide young children with disability and/or developmental delay with experiences and opportunities that help them gain and use the skills they need to participate meaningfully in their everyday lives.”

Early Childhood Intervention Australia (ECIA), 2016  
[www.ecia.org.au](http://www.ecia.org.au)

## What is Early Childhood Intervention ? Contemporary Definitions

The goal of ECI is to provide support and services to the families of children between 0 and 6 years of age, with developmental delay, disability or serious risk of developmental delay due to biological and/or environmental conditions, actively involving the formal and informal social support networks, which in turn will directly and indirectly influence the functioning of the child and the family.

The specificity of ECI consists precisely in this focus on promoting child development through an intervention plan that optimises learning opportunities in the natural contexts of their daily lives, developed together with the family and other relevant care providers in the child's life.

“Recommended Practices in Early Childhood Intervention: A Guidebook for Professionals” ANIP, Associação Nacional de Intervenção Precoce, 2016

## What is Early Childhood Intervention ? Contemporary Definitions

“The everyday experiences and opportunities afforded infants, toddlers, and young children by the children’s parents and other primary caregivers in the context of naturally occurring everyday learning activities that are intended to promote children’s acquisition and use of behavioural competencies shaping and influencing prosocial interactions with people and materials”

(Dunst, Raab, Trivette, & Swanson, 2010, p. 62)



European Association of Service providers  
for Persons with Disabilities

Research data  
supporting  
contemporary  
definitions of  
early childhood  
intervention

- Children develop best in nurturing environments - (Biglan, 2012)
- Basic environments for young children are relational, children learn and develop through relationships, the quality of which literally changes their brain neurologically and neurochemically. (Richter, 2012; Cozolino, 2006)
- The key features of care relationships are attunement, engagement and responsiveness, (Moore, 2009)
- The participation in everyday settings is vital for the health, development and quality of life of all children (Law et al, 2006)
- These key developmental and learning features apply to children with or without disabilities (King et al., 2002; Moore, 2009; Warren & Brady, 2007)

## What do Early Childhood Intervention services provide?

1. Community approach to identifying potentially eligible children
2. Developmental screening and/or supervision in collaboration with physicians
3. Referral management by intensive care units, doctors, parents, social services, kindergartens, etc.
4. Integrated & specialized development assessments
5. Family , parental care, nutrition and safety assessments
6. Development, implementation and monitoring of Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSP)
7. Regular visits to the child's natural environment

Emily Vargas-Barón, Building and strengthening integrated national early childhood intervention (ECI) systems, 2021

## What do Early Childhood Intervention services provide?

8. Case management
9. Reviews of assessments & Individualized Family Service Plans
10. Optional: Manufacture of toys, peer group sessions, family counselling, respite services, etc.
11. Transition services (e.g. nursery, kindergarten, day care centre)
12. Advocacy & public information/awareness-raising services
13. Networking activities

Emily Vargas-Barón, 2021

# Guiding Principles of Early Childhood Intervention

Availability

Proximity

Affordability

Interdisciplinary  
working

Diversity of  
services



European Association of Service providers  
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European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2004



# Early Intervention

## PART 1: Traditional vs. Routines



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The action has received funding from the European Union via the Technical Support Instrument and is implemented by EASPD, in cooperation with the European Commission's Directorate-General for Structural Reform Support

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Thank you!