



EURLY AID NEWSLETTER : January 2018

Dear Members

EURLY AID is pleased to inform you about the upcoming annual participatory conference which will take place in:

Kharkiv, Ukraine, October 10-12th 2018

in cooperation with the following partners :

SI “Institute of Health Protection of Children and Adolescents of National Academy of Medical Sciences of Ukraine“, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Social Policy and Ministry of Education, National Assembly of Persons with Disabilities of Ukraine(NAPD), UNICEF (tbc), Twinning project, Charity Fund Early Intervention Institute (CFEI), Kharkiv, HealthProm UK.

Title and theme of the conference:

Early Childhood Intervention: changing paradigms through participatory practices with families, professionals and society.

January 2017 ECI was included in the political agenda of the **Council of Europe**:

“Europe needs significant reforms for the ECI system if we want to transform it into *a free and universal systems approach of high quality connected services for all children and families reconfiguring early childhood and family support services and guarantee their rights.*”

The past several decades have seen remarkable progress in understanding child development, particularly neurological development. Neurodevelopmental science has contributed for the scientific evidence of EI establishing a strong empirical base that demonstrated the importance of **early years for life learning experience**. Neuroplasticity refers to the **modifying capacity of the brain through experience**. This capacity varies throughout life but it is stronger in the first years of life. So early years constitute a “window of opportunity” for developmental change and to repair trajectories of the brain architecture that may be rupture due to children genetic predispositions and developmental problems. The models that have

emerged suggest that development is dynamic and, from the very beginning, involves the **continuous interaction** of genetic, organismic, and **environmental** factors. So adults, particularly family and caregivers close to the child, play a key role in development. Initially, children's main learning environment is the **family**, with early childhood programs and **community settings** playing an increasingly important role as they grow older.

The empirical rationale supports the importance and advantages of ECI for children with a disability or developmental delay through the research evidence in early intervention. It indicates that evidence-based best practices in early childhood interventions have short and long term positive effects on children and family functioning and adaptation. These reasons are a strong foundation for policy and funding provisions but they need specific guidelines concerning what and how services and supports should be provided in order to benefit children and families.

Key ingredients of evidence based practices are:

- Adopting a family centred approach to ECI
- Articulation of services
- Inclusion and Natural environments
- Transdisciplinary teamwork
- Continuity of services and family support within the transition from ECI to the (pre) school education system.

ECI is intended for **all** children who are at developmental risk or have a disability. As said: it focuses not only on the child, but also on the family and the community and **helps to strengthen vulnerable families**, and in this way, contributes to the **prevention** of children's **institutionalization**, the rate of which is still dramatically high in Ukraine and other countries.

To realize a successful transition towards a modern ECI system, there is a need for paradigm shift and participatory approach in the work with families, training of professionals and development of community based services.

Participatory (capacity-building) practices are practices that take a proactive stance, as opposed to a deficit-oriented or treatment approach, and involve children and families use of existing strengths as well as the acquisition of new competencies to support families in ways that help them have the skills, knowledge, time and energy to promote competence and other positive aspects of child and family functioning and development.

During the past years a broadening network of committed organisations in Ukraine, focussed on developing an official, nationwide, professional and acknowledged early childhood intervention system developed. The system was validated in April 2017 when the Memorandum of Understanding was signed in Kiev by national-, local Ukrainian and international partners. This Memorandum focuses on realising the government plan of measures, pronounced in Dec 2016 by the cabinet of ministers. A pilot period has been defined to realise this between 2017 and 2020.

Eurlyaid wishes to express her enjoyment and gratitude for the cooperation with all the organisations involved in this development. We are convinced the conference will contribute to the aim of a paradigm shift by:

Further combine efforts and share results about the work done in the field of ECI all over Ukraine, Europe and beyond those borders during this conference.

Summarising:

The important aims at this conference are to support and contribute to:

- 1) constructive impact on the main recipients of ECI: children and families and to improve inclusion and quality of life
- 2) constructive impact on professionals because they are providers within these practices and it implies ways of delivering services. Knowledge and? awareness are key elements.
- 3) constructive impact on organisational and political level towards governments, local and national, that provide these services.

Information about venue, costs, registration and concept program will be published on the conference website soon.

On behalf of the board of Eurlyaid,

We will keep you informed and hope we may welcome you at this conference!