

# conclusions



25 ways to  
do better!

**IV**  
**X National Congress of  
Early intervention**

19 and 20

October

2023

**COIMBRA**

**Early Childhood Intervention: How to do it better?**

## Early Childhood Intervention: How to do it better?

After a 5-year break, ANIP organized its **XIV National Early Intervention Congress** dedicated to the theme “**Early Childhood Intervention: How to do it better?**”, which in itself clearly defines the main objective of this Congress.

This Congress has a **very special meaning for ANIP! We are celebrating ANIP's 25 years of life** and work dedicated exclusively to Early Intervention!

And it was the best celebration possible! During these 2 days, with the participation of more than 300 people, a fruitful collaboration took place, exchanging experiences and reflections, bringing together practices, policies and scientific evidence, with a view to sharing what has been done so far, what is currently being done , but fundamentally, think about what we can all, together, “**do better**” in **Early Childhood Intervention in our country**.

It is important to highlight the great quality and diversity of the communications presented, which effectively brought relevant contributions to the answer to the main question of this Congress: **How to do better in Early Childhood Intervention?**

Presentations and reflections by experts and researchers, national and foreign; of elements of the National System of Early Childhood Intervention (SNIPI), either sectoral managers at different levels of coordination of the system, or of direct intervention professionals who work in Local IP Teams; of other professionals from different disciplinary areas, as well as families themselves, whether or not they benefited from IP services, allowed the creation of an important space in this amphitheater for dialogue between scientific evidence, policies and practices and for confronting myths and misconceptions that still exist. persist. All of this will, without a doubt, be another **contribution to DOING MORE AND BETTER in ECI**, that is, to consolidating the quality and effectiveness of our **National Early Childhood Intervention System (SNIPI)**.


We highlight as main themes, not only covered by foreign experts, but which are also common to many of the other communications:

- **The importance of the first years of life in the child's development and learning**, the interactions that take place establish with parents and main caregivers and the basic conditions that are provided to children and families;
- **Evidence of the crucial role of ECI” as a support and resource to support families and primary caregivers** so that they can promote the child’s development and learning and not so much as a “service for the child” – a family-centered intervention, in natural contexts of the child and based on the routines of the child and family.
- **The importance of positive and collaborative relationships in the organization and provision of ECI services** – relationships professionals-families, family-child, professionals and services among themselves – ECI as an integrated system, of collaborative relationships and shared responsibility, with special attention to the necessary conditions to be provided to ECI professionals.

It was pleasing to see a high level of participation in the presentation of **Free Communications and Posters**. Unfortunately, only **6 Communications** could be seen, while **around 35 Posters were exhibited and presented**. As a whole, we can highlight two large groups of presentations:

- Presentations written by SNIPi Professionals, namely ELI, which reflect the reality of IPI in different parts of the country, their experience, the practice of professionals, work methodologies, perceptions of professionals and families;
- Presentations by researchers and other professionals, of studies and investigations related to early intervention and carried out within different Portuguese Universities and also in Brazil.

It is important to highlight that the collaboration and active participation of families, mothers or fathers, at different times and communications was a relevant contribution to the reflection and debate on **How to do better in Early Childhood Intervention?**



The participation of the **SNIPI Coordination Committee**, with the presence of its **national coordinator and representatives of the 3 ministries (social security, health and education)**, as well as **Eurlyaid directors**, was, without a doubt, a crucial space for reflection. It not only allowed a fruitful dialogue of vision and diverse experience between Portugal and other European countries, particularly the inspiring role that Portugal has had (see the ANIP publication *“Recommended Practices in Early Childhood Intervention: a Guide for professionals”* already translated into 10 different languages) It also allowed us to debate the future, reflecting on what advances and challenges we can or should face for Early Childhood Intervention.

Finally, taking into account the important and diverse contributions shared over these two days, it can be concluded that paths have been outlined here that will enrich us in the search for practices and decision-making based on duly validated evidence and that result from integration and balance between scientific evidence and the values and experiences of professionals and families.

**Celebrating ANIP's 25th anniversary**, we conclude from these contributions and highlight **25 WAYS TO DO BETTER in Early Childhood Intervention!**

## CONCLUSIONS...

### 25 WAYS to do better in Early Childhood Intervention!

01

**Greater investment in the first years of life**, assuming ECI as a priority, in line with strategies recommended by the scientific community and international organizations.

02

**Recognition of the complexity and multidimensional nature of child development** and factors that influence it and that support the Recommended Practices of Early Childhood Intervention today.

03

**Recognition of the importance of a collaborative, integrated policy with shared responsibility between different sectors (health, social security and education)**, which is operationalized with more effective organizational models of intervention to deal with the complexity of problems, avoiding fragmented policies, such as the “**Integrated Governance**” model has proposed, as a “*sustainable process of creating, developing and maintaining intra- and inter-organizational collaborative relationships, to manage complex problems with greater effectiveness and efficiency*”. **We need to demand that policies are integrated!**

04

**Better recognition of the important steps that Portugal has taken, in terms of innovative policies and practices** in this field, internationally recognized and serving as an inspiration and model for other countries, particularly in the construction of a national system of early childhood intervention. With specific legislation for IPI (DL no. 281/2009, October 6), it defines IPI as an integrated system of intersectoral collaboration and “**with the involvement of families and the community**”.

## CONCLUSIONS...

### **25 WAYS to do better in Early Childhood Intervention!**

**05**

**Better compliance and reconciliation of children's Rights and the Duties and Commitments of government entities**, both set out and assumed by Portugal in the two conventions: **Convention on the Rights of the Child** and the **Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**, so that services can be guaranteed that can respond to the most vulnerable children at an early age, **giving them the opportunity to reach their full potential.**

**06**

**Greater financial investment by government authorities in human resources and means** that allow **greater coverage of children covered by ECI services**, taking into account the growing number of children referred to ECI in the last 5 years and at earlier ages. *“Leave no one behind.”* An idea also shared by the SNIPI National Commission as one of the SNIPI challenges.

**07**

**ECI services need to base their action on a clear understanding of what are the basic care conditions that children at the earliest ages need to develop**, taking as a reference, in guiding their practices, a developmental model and a conceptual framework evidence-based, integrating scientific evidence and the values and experiences of professionals and families.

## CONCLUSIONS...

### **25 WAYS to do better in Early Childhood Intervention!**

**08**

**ECI services need to be integrated into a more comprehensive and inclusive system of services aimed at early childhood development that provides ALL families with the necessary conditions to raise their children, as well as immediate access to the services that they and their children need. need as early as possible.**

**09**

**Need to strengthen and improve the integrated IPI system, in view of its great potential, ensuring effective coordination, intersectoral collaboration and leadership at different levels of the system, as well as intrasectoral collaboration.**

**10**

**Better definition of a skills profile and greater demands on the qualification of early intervention professionals, ensuring in-service training in line with the conceptual model and recommended practices in Early Childhood Intervention.**

**11**

**Need to clarify the role of supervision and the profile of the supervisor, in order to ensure that IPI professionals and ELIs regularly benefit from reflective, continuous and collaborative supervision, which allows for better quality and effectiveness of the services provided. An idea even shared by the SNIPi National Commission as one of the SNIPi challenges.**

## CONCLUSIONS...

### 25 WAYS to do better in Early Childhood Intervention!

12

**Establishing positive relationships is a key condition for “doing better”**, at various levels, considering that relationships are at the heart of collaboration, as we saw previously, when talking about integrated governance.

13

**We need to establish positive relationships with parents** to support them in **promoting positive interactions with the child**, because young children need responsive care to develop secure attachments.

14

**We need to establish positive relationships with parents** to support them in **building positive relationships with other parents** and the community in general.

15

**We need to establish positive relationships with other professionals** in early intervention teams, ensuring cohesive work in a transdisciplinary team.

16

**We need to establish and promote positive relationships with and between other services**, building bridges and promoting inter and intra-sector collaboration. As Bronfenbrenner says and was reinforced in these two days “*child needs at least one adult who is irrationally crazy about him or her*”, this idea also applying to caregivers and ECI professionals.



## CONCLUSIONS...

### 25 WAYS to do better in Early Childhood Intervention!

**17**

**We must take into account what science tells us, removing certain myths and misconceptions** that lead to ineffective practices on the part of professionals, traditionally used with older children and which are inappropriate ways of intervening with younger children and their children. families. Let us remember how we can **help the flower to develop: by intervening in its environment!**

**18**

**The clear recognition that the needs of children and their families are multiple and complex** (health, education, social support), therefore requiring concerted measures and solutions and transdisciplinary, integrated and family-centered interventions.

**19**

**We must take into account what science tells us, regarding the strong evidence of the low effectiveness** and short-lasting effects of parallel and fragmented support for the child and/or family and disconnected from their natural contexts, the complexity of IP requiring work in transdisciplinary team in which the case mediator plays a crucial role.

**20**

**To do better, we need to unconditionally believe in the strengths and crucial role that families have in the development of their children**, developing positive relationships between case mediator and family: availability, active listening, effective communication and collaboration with other professionals, even using social networks (e.g.: WhatsApp) as a way of continuing communication with families. Let's remember the *"white spaces"* ( McWilliam scheme) - **that's where children learn!**

## CONCLUSIONS...

### **25 WAYS to do better in Early Childhood Intervention!**

**21**

**To do better, the practices of ECI professionals must value support for the family,** promote their skills and involvement in the entire process, as well as their confidence and awareness that it is they themselves who make the difference in the development of the family. your son.

**22**

**To do better, we need to LISTEN to families,** their needs and views on **22** aspects to improve and your satisfaction with the services. **Giving families a voice...**

**23**

**To do better, we must abandon the specialist model in relationships** between professionals and families or other caregivers, so that positive relationships, equity and partnership can be created, for example, in the way documents (e.g. PIIP) can reflect best practices.

**24**

**We must take into account what science tells us to implement more effective ways of working with families** and other caregivers, such as **Collaborative Consulting**, in order to build collaborative relationships and empower caregivers.

## CONCLUSIONS...

### 25 WAYS to do better in Early Childhood Intervention!

**25**

And finally, in order to be able to do better, SNIPI must ensure systematic monitoring and evaluation of ELI practices and their results and must promote collaboration with higher education institutions with a view to increasing studies and research, enabling a greater connection between theory, research results and the practices of professionals in the field, highlighting the need for the SNIPI Advisory Council, as previously exposed by the SNIPI National Commission as one of the SNIPI's challenges.

### Let's do better in Early Childhood Intervention!

We finish by repeating what Dr. Luís Borges, then President of ANIP, wrote a few years ago, in the Preface to the ANIP publication *“Recommended Practices in Early Childhood Intervention: a Guide for professionals”*:

**“**

We placed the seed in the ground and it strengthened. Today we have a GOOD GARAGE but we have to take care of it, and, therefore, By sharing efforts we can look confidently to the future of early intervention in Portugal.”