

D3.4: Recommendations for common policy across the EU regarding professional development as an element of quality in ECEC and child wellbeing for all

Executive summary

This report's discussion and recommendations build on Workpackage 3's (WP3) work within CARE, including: 1) a review of the systems of professional development, pre-service and in-service across European countries and the impact that structural and processual shifts have on European ECEC quality and child development (D3.1), 2) a meta-review of extant European studies that examine the impact of professional development on child outcomes, conducted as a meta-analysis (D3.2); and 3) results from a comprehensive review of innovative approaches to professional development in ECEC and exemplary case studies from three European countries (D3.3).

The overall aim of the report is to highlight priorities in ECEC professional development, based on WP3's findings and develop recommendations regarding high-quality provisions for common EU-policies.

This led to the identification of six policy priority areas, namely: i) the academisation of professional development; ii) in-service and ongoing professional development; iii) the leveraging of communities of practice (CoP) and communities of innovation (CoI); iv) quality in professional development; v) innovative approaches to professional development; and vi) addressing the vulnerable through professional development.

The good practices highlighted in the report have been chosen as examples, given their success. However, these must be regarded as practices that may inspire changes, which must nevertheless be adopted to cultural and systemic contexts. In an attempt to overcome the dualisms of structured-interactive systems and structural-processual approaches to quality enhancement, we acknowledge that the recommendations herein can be applied to ECEC settings across Europe, though actors and methods may vary. The strive is to strengthen European ECEC without suggesting radical system changes that disregard historical legacies. In light of this, WP3's findings and recommendations address implications for policy, practice and research for each of the six policy priorities identified.

Since ECEC's policies, systems and professionals' work is constantly evolving, involving new challenges and new requirements, work content and expectations also change from year to year. In order for ECEC as a whole to be able to meet European objectives of strengthening child outcomes for all, enhanced and continued professional development (both pre-service and in-service) is crucial.