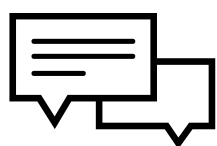
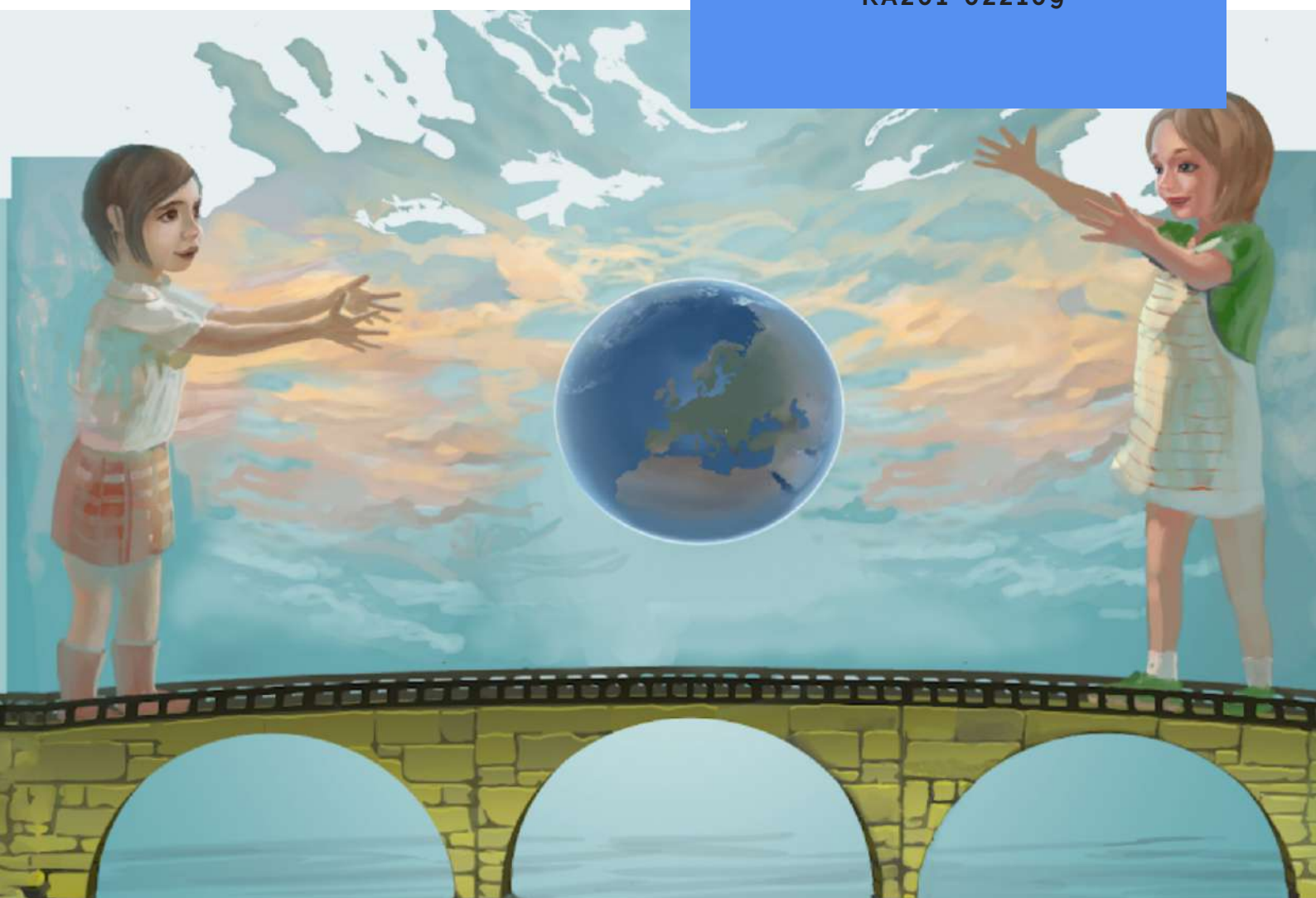


# POLICY RECOMENDATIONS



**MUTUAL**

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**PROJECT:** MULTILINGUAL AND MULTICULTURAL LEARNING IN EARLY YEARS - MUTUAL

**COORDINATOR:** Centrum för flexibelt lärande (CFL), Hälsinglands, Sweden

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## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

During the last 3 years four organizations from 4 different European countries have been involved in the Erasmus plus project MUTUAL: Multicultural and multilingual learning in early years. The aim of the project was to develop and test a more comprehensive approach to inclusion of children with refugee/migrant background in the early years and also to improve the quality of the practices in early education as well as attainment of vulnerable children in preschool (both priorities under EC document Early Childhood and Care).

The reason and the need for the project came from the fact that we are all working with increased number of children who were born abroad or who have both parents born in another country and we are determined to do more to meet their needs.

In the past generations the migrant children were integrated in the kindergarten and early years classrooms together with native speaking children without any additional support. This was based on the belief that children have no difficulty picking up the language of instruction and cultural clues and do not need special help overcoming language barriers. They have been equally discouraged to use the mother tongue in preschool as it was believed this would have an impact on learning the language of instruction. These practices have been initially brought into question in late 90s.

It is now recognized that in the first years the change of environment present a difficult challenge for the family as well as the children and whether the children and their families find themselves in an accepting environment has a great effect on their emotional and later academic welfare. Addressing the cultural as well as language barrier seems crucial in this process (Teaching Young Children a Second Language: Gordon. 2007). It is now equally recognized that the children who do not speak the language of instruction as their first language need up to five years to reach the level of proficiency which does not affect their learning (Gordon, 2007).

The child care professionals, the kindergarten teachers, childminders and other carers are often among the first persons from the new cultural and educational environment that the young migrant families build the relationship

However the challenges the early years teachers as well as other child care professionals are facing are sometimes overwhelming. The examples from the partner country show the following pictures: in childcare in Soderhamn (areas of (areas of Lillberget, Kilsmyra and Ljusnevågen) the children come from as many as 25 different linguistic and cultural environment. The situation is similar Bradford and in some parts of Leeds, UK, with up to 30 different languages in kindergarten. In Czech Republic they are facing the increased population from Poland and Ukraine, in Greece the immigrant population in some areas now equals the local population.

Over the last three years we have therefore been developing the grounds to share, disseminate and further develop the approach of multicultural/multilingual education in early years. We have developed tools, materials and trainings to equip early years practitioners, child care professionals,

preschool teachers, child minders, special needs workers, volunteers, with the skills of how to encourage the pluricultural/plurilingual education through early years education and care. Essential in this process was the close cooperation and involvement with parents, local communities as well as policy makers. The results are available at our web page: <http://mutual.erasmus-projects.eu/>

The project has also gathered some important considerations from early years teachers which were collected through our research and evaluation work.

It is believed that the biggest challenges faced by the pre-school teachers working with migrant/foreign-born children could be reduced by the:

- Training of pre-school teachers and other staff in multicultural education should be integrated into the curriculum of preservice education as well as available (without additional expenses) in the form of inservice training. The training should cover the skills of how to help children to acquire the social and emotional competences in diverse classrooms, including topics of identity; the skills of how to use the key words signing method to overcome language barriers, the skills of how to involve migrant parents in the life of the kindergarten. They are gathered in the curriculum framework prepared by the project partners.
- Additional personnel and educational resources provided to kindergartens with high number of migrant children to be able to assess their needs better. Lower adult-child ratio.
- Stronger cooperation with local actors (NGOs, governmental agencies, social and health services) to meet the needs of the children and their families better
- Stronger ties between the migrant and local communities: activities for parents and children, meetings, workshops, where parents and children from both communities mingle together.
- Support to pre-school personnel: providing interpreters, teacher assistants, volunteers from the migrant communities when needed.
- Exchange of experiences among pre-school teachers in work with migrant/foreign born children and parents.

We would like to make you aware that the project has developed the Training program MUTUAL, which will continue to be available in partner organizations after the project.

The training is however also offered to early years teachers and child care professionals from other European countries via KA1 Erasmus plus project opportunities and is advertised at the School Education Gateway webpage.

## Project partners



Hälsinglands  
Utbildningsförbund

Centrum för flexibelt lärande (CFL), Hälsinglands  
utbildningsförbund, Sweden

<http://www.hufb.se>



Tiny Signers, UK

<http://www.tinysigners.co.uk/>



Schola Empirica, Czech Republic

<http://scholaempirica.org/>



PIA d.o.o. Velenje, Slovenia

<https://www.pia.si/>



University of Thessaly, Greece

<http://uth.gr/en/index.php>