

Erasmus+

PEDAGOŠKI INŠTITUT



# START

**A good start for all: Sustaining  
Transitions across the Early Years**



vbjk

Vernieuwing in de  
Basisvoorzieningen  
voor Jonge Kinderen



The Project is funded  
by the European Union



ALMA MATER STUDIORUM - UNIVERSITÀ DI BOLOGNA

IL PRESENTE MATERIALE È RISERVATO AL PERSONALE DELL'UNIVERSITÀ DI BOLOGNA E NON PUÒ ESSERE UTILIZZATO AI TERMINI DI LEGGE DA ALTRE PERSONE O PER FINI NON ISTITUZIONALI

# BACKGROUND

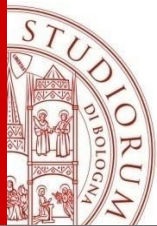


- Council Conclusions on Education and Training 'ET2020': [http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework/index_en.htm)
- Studies funded by the European Commission on the role of ECEC in tackling Early School Leaving (Rimantas, Peeters, Hayes et al., 2014)

Thematic Working Group on ESL (Final Report, 2013): [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education\\_culture/repository/education/policy/strategic-framework/doc/esl-group-report\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/repository/education/policy/strategic-framework/doc/esl-group-report_en.pdf)

- Increased academic attention on transitions, but different perspectives:
  - School-ready children or children-ready schools?
  - Educational continuity, strong and equal partnership, pedagogical encounters...





# Where does the project come from?

## Shared concerns...

...the difficulties children experience over transitions have a long-term impact on their well-being and learning trajectories...

**SMOOTH AND INCLUSIVE TRANSITIONS**

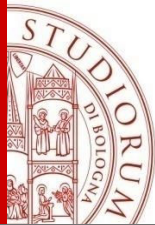
Fragmentation of pedagogical approaches and practices (SPLIT SYSTEMS - ECEC/CSE)

**SHARING MEANINGS AND NEGOTIATING PRACTICES BY INVOLVING ALL ACTORS**

...children who do not speak the dominant language and whose families come from different socio-cultural background are the ones experiencing more difficulties in this process...

**PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH**

→ Children are required 'to be ready' and to 'adapt' to what comes next (kindergarten, school...)



# ...and will to change perspectives...



## School readiness

- Learning in ECEC is functional to what come next (and ultimately the goal of schooling is to prepare responsible workers for labour market) - HIERARCHY
- early intervention for disadvantaged children
- Schoolification / pre-primary approach to early education (formalised learning, narrow curriculum approach)

OMOLOGATION

## Strong Equal Partners

- Each educational level is equally important, based on the acknowledgement that children learn in different ways at different times in life
- Interplay between continuity/discontinuity - COMPLEMENTARITY
- Inter-institutional cooperation respecting the pedagogical identity of each setting
- Mutual exchange re: approaches & methods

## Vision of a meeting place

- Dialogic perspective and shared vision - COMPENTRATION
- Negotiated values and pedagogical assumptions (image of the child, vision of learning, understanding of diversity...) -
- co-construction of educational contexts valuing multiple way of learning ('100 languages')
- Extended collegiality & shared reflection on practice and approaches

ETEROGENEITY

# The countries involved

Corby, UK:

- Pen Green Centre & Research Base
- Rockingham Primary
- Our Lady of Walsingham

Belgium /Flanders (Ghent & Aalst):

- VBJK
- Mezenestje childcare centre
- Sint Maarten kindergarten
- Mensen vor Mensen (AP)



Slovenia (Ljubjana & Tisina):

- Educational Research Institute
- OSTisina (pre- and primary school)

Italia, RER:

- Bologna University
- DD Vignola (pre- and primary school)





# Our partners...



UNIVERSITÀ DI BOLOGNA

# ...how? *Ricerca-formazione*

Participatory research approach involving all stakeholders (multiple perspectives): practitioners/teachers, children, families, community groups

Sustaining the empowerment of all actors involved starting from their needs and aspirations  
*(what matters to them about transitions?)*

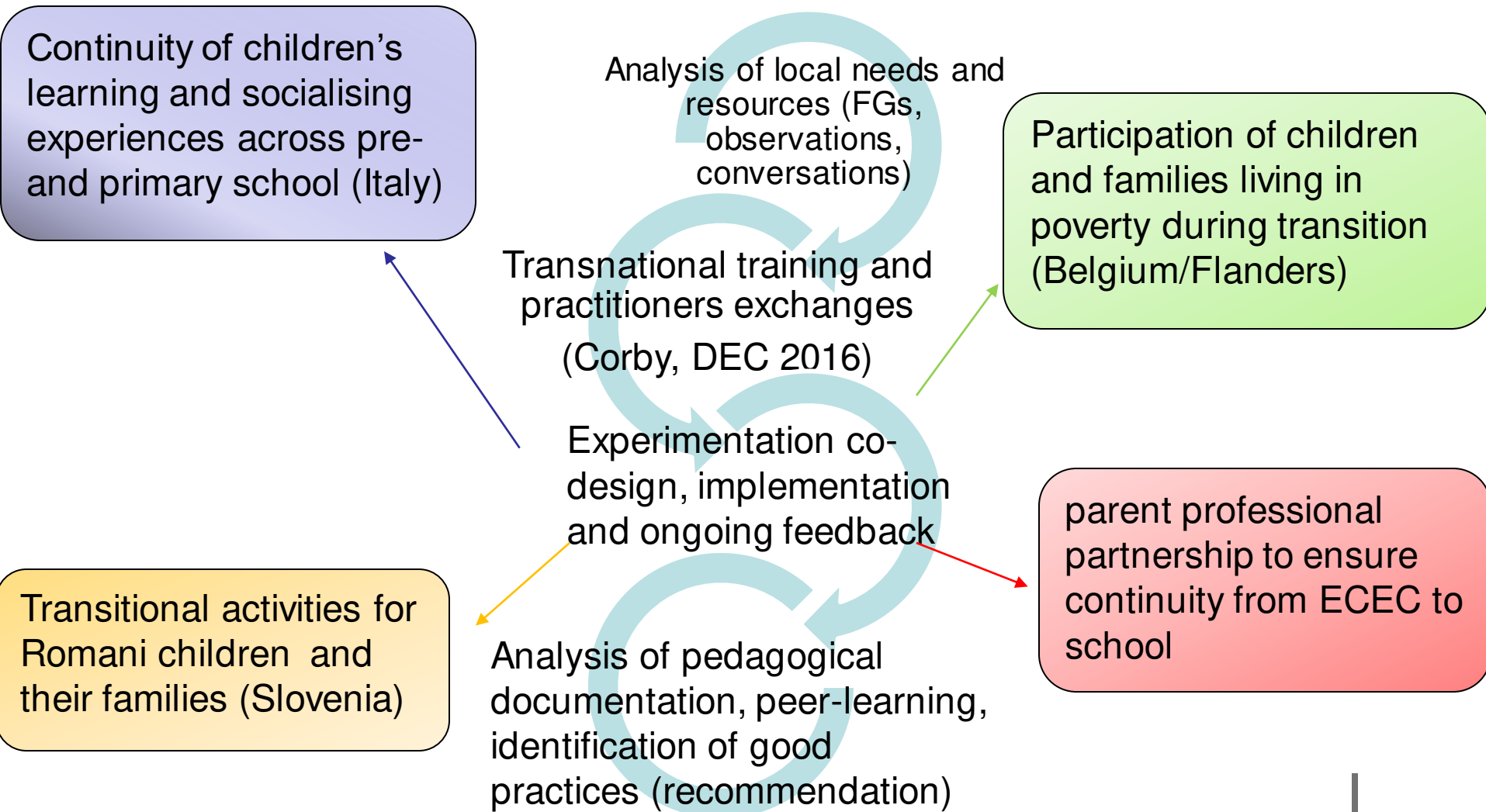
Recursive interaction between research and experimentation, between theory and practice

Peer-learning and reflection in groups  
Pedagogical guidance

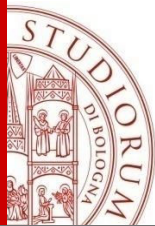




# *Participatory action research* as shared framework







# The Italian case study

- ✓ **Background:** from a split system (childcare and early education) into a unitary ECEC system (0-6) + vertical curriculum 3-14
- ✓ **Focus on DD Vignola:** starting from existing good practices to research-lead experimentation
- ✓ **Methodology:** generating change by combining practice-based research and action-training sustaining teachers' collective reflection on their practices
- ✓ **Sustainability over time:** from experimentation of continuity practices to educational innovation

# Policy background (I)

## MOVING FROM A SPLIT SYSTEM...

- *Nido* (childcare centres): attended by children aged 0-3
  - *Centri per bambini e genitori, spazi lettura, centri gioco* (so called 'experimental services'): attended by children 0-6 and their families
- under the **Ministry of Welfare, regulated at Regional level** (children's attendance 30% in E-R but great regional disparities)
- *Scuola dell'infanzia* (Kindergarden) children aged 3-6
- under the **Ministry of Education, regulated at National level** (children's attendance approx. 95% on national average)

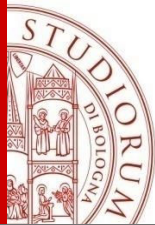




# Policy background (II)

**TOWARD A UNITARY SISTEM of 0-6 services** → from Law Proposal 1260 (advocated by *Gruppo Nazionale Nidi e Infanzia*) to Law Decree 65/2017:

- ✓ *Nidi* fully recognised as educational services under the **Ministry of Education**
- ✓ **Funded with the State contribution** (in addition to local, regional funding)
- ✓ **Integration of education and care along the continuum** of children's development from 0 to 6
- ✓ Diversification of provision to increase **accessibility** and **inclusion of diversity** (*Poli per l'infanzia*)
- ✓ **National curriculum for 0-3 services**
- ✓ ECEC staff professionalisation: **Bachelor in early childhood** compulsory for educators, **pedagogical coordination** extended to state pre-schools, as well as compulsory **ongoing professional development**



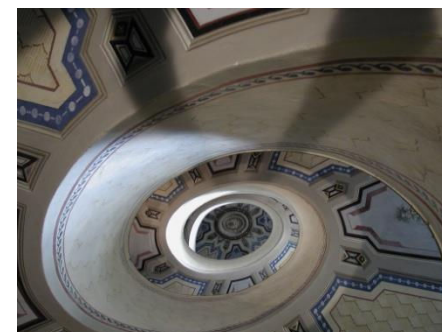
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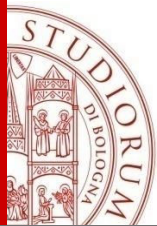
- LEARNING ALONG A CONTINUUM** → continuity of EDU-CARE approach beyond the 0-6, influencing primary school?
- School-ready for children perspective VS risks of school readiness:
- ✓ National curriculum 3-14
  - ✓ Comprehensive school institutions: pre-schools, primary and lower secondary schools
  - ✓ Initial professional preparation of pre- and primary school teachers at Master level (Scienze della Formazione Primaria, including specialisation for special needs teachers)



# The school context:

## Direzione Didattica di Vignola





# Starting from existing good practices...

**Joint planning of continuity projects** run every year (*ad hoc committee involving pre- and primary school teachers*)

**School visits** (older children as tutors) during which **joint activities / games** are carried out (*Sillaballando*)

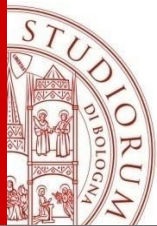
**Welcoming week:** children reporting their experience in preschool through artefacts (*libroni*)



Exchange of information about **children's learning pathways** involving pre- and primary school teachers (*documento di sintesi*)

**Documentation** of transition processes involving parents (collective meetings)





# ...to research-led experimentation

## Needs analysis

SEPT-DEC

- Children's experiences of transitions (drawings and observations)
- Parents' experiences of transitions (meetings with teachers and questionnaires)
- Teachers's experiences and expectations (collegial meetings)

## Action-based

training

DEC-JAN

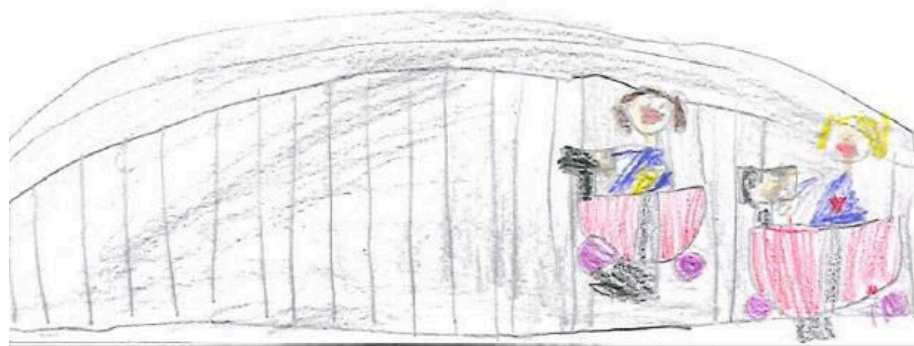
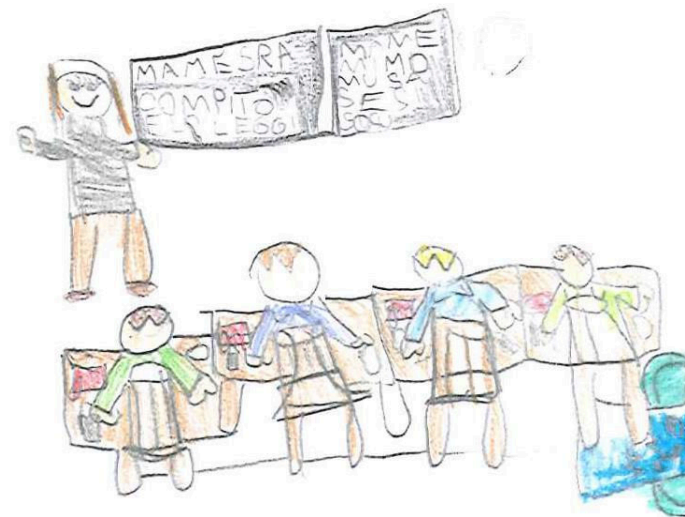
- More attention toward parents engagement (*'listening to parents' rather than 'talking to parents'*)
- Focus on children's learning experiences rather than activities (learning environment)
- Team learning among pre- and primary school teachers: reciprocal observation and joint reflection in team (researcher as a facilitator, supported by internal coordinator)

## Designing experimentation (A-R)

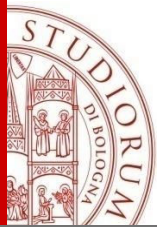
FEB-JUN

- Welcoming and giving voice to parents (open classroom for 2-days, individual meetings)
- Re-structuring classroom learning environment: circle-time, combining teacher-led and child-led activities (free-choice), more flexible organisation of time and space (tana della lettura)
- Support in planning, observation and coaching (researcher as a 'trainer', supported by coordinator)









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# CHILD

Why: To be re  
To be late

How: ① Organisations  
(entering times, process)

② Changes in scheduling  
(More Flexible, more up to date)

③ Observations

WHEN Beginning of  
(After observation in different contexts)

# PROFESSIONALS

Why: 'professional culture' exchanges  
enhance reflectivity & professional growth

How: ① reciprocal observations in pre- and primary school settings focused on:

- the child - acknowledging their experience as point of departure
- the learning environment in primary expected from them in primary

② reporting in peer learning groups (obs tools) + feedback

③ reflections on videos (in pre documenting child)

WHEN: reciprocal observations starting in January  
preparation meeting with teachers

learning and discussion groups in whole duration of the project

① from the collective reflection on reciprocal educational & learning environment will in September

# FAMILIES

WHY Listening & understanding  
Engagement (meaningful)

HOW ① Questionnaires (open ended) what are their expectations? [multilingual translation]

② Documentation about their children [free choice, what they want teachers to know about their child/ren when they enter the school [primary]]

③ open day dedicated to parents and children in primary school (workshop for children, time for parents to talk to first grade teachers)

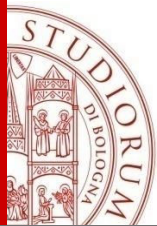
④ welcoming practices over the first two days of schooling, children & parents together at the entrance

WHEN: ① in pre school during parent meeting in February

② first interviews with parents in primary school (October)

③ at the end of school year (May)

④ beginning of primary school year



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# Looking ahead: from experimentation of continuity practices to educational innovation

- **Crucial role of coordinator in connecting research to school practices** (contextualisation, feasibility, coaching of teams, orienting school policies,...)
- Systemic conditions: **no-contact time available for practice-based research and reflection** (observation, collective meetings, ongoing training,...)
- **Creation of learning networks beyond the duration of the project** for the dissemination of good practices at local level (sustainability over time) -> **teachers as trainers!**



Check out the project website for updates:

<http://start.pei.si>