



DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF ENSURING A SMOOTH TRANSITION OF CHILDREN FROM PRESCHOOL TO SCHOOL

A Guidebook for preschool and primary school teachers and other relevant stakeholders



Petra Zgonec, Petra Bozovičar, Mateja Mlinar, Kristina Liepiņa, Victoria Rauch, Toni Crvelin

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*Different Aspects of Ensuring a Smooth Transition of Children from
Preschool to School : a guidebook for preschool and primary school teachers
and other relevant stakeholders*

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ABOUT THE PROJECT AND PROJECT PARTNERS

This publication was developed at the end of a 3-year long international project called **Transition Is Our Mission (TIM)**. TIM is an international project that operates under the auspices of Educational Research Institute Slovenia (ERI) and connects **8 partners from Slovenia, Croatia and Latvia**. With the TIM initiative, we want to contribute to raising the awareness of preschool and school professionals about the importance of ensuring a smooth transition of children from preschool to school and raising their competencies in this field. The project ran from September 2019 to August 2022 and was co-funded by the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union.



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Three national leading organisations were chosen to cooperate in the project:

- 1) the international consortium leader Pedagoški inštitut - Educational Research Institute, Slovenia, following ERI,
- 2) Pučko otvoreno učilište Korak po korak - Open Academy Step by Step, Croatia, following OASbS and
- 3) Izglītības iniciatīvu centrs - Center for Education Initiatives, Latvia, following: CEI.

Partners are members of the International Step by Step Association (following: ISSA), where they all strive to ensure quality education and were selected based on good and long-lasting cooperation in various initiatives. The main mission of all national leading organisations is to ensure quality education in preschools and schools. This is accomplished through trainings and other forms of support for professional development of preschool and school professionals (observations, expert meetings, conferences, publication of professional materials, etc.). Another way of achieving higher quality in education is with the help of various national or international initiatives and projects concerning process quality in education, including transition as one of the aspects of quality practice in preschool and school.

Further on, each of the national leading organisations selected one preschool and one school (to which children from this preschool enrol) in their country to become their partner in the project. These are the chosen preschools and schools:

- 1) Primary school heroja Janeza Hribarja and Preschool Vrtec Polhek, which operates under Primary school heroja Janeza Hribarja;
- 2) Croatia - Preschool Sisak Novi and Primary school "Braca Bobetko" Sisak;
- 3) Latvia - Valmiera 5th Secondary School, Preschool Ezitis.

All of them significantly contributed to the project through sharing their experiences from practice and reflecting on different strategies and other elements of ensuring transition.

The project is aimed at raising awareness, interest and competencies of preschool and school professionals for ensuring transition between the preschool and school environment.

In the first phase of the project, research on the current situation in the field of ensuring transition was conducted in order to share experiences and give insights into different practices of ensuring a smooth transition of children from preschool to school. A representative sample of preschools and schools from all regions in all three countries was involved in the project (SLO, HR, LV). Data were collected through e-questionnaires, which were answered by preschool teachers who worked with children in the last year of preschool and primary school teachers who worked with first-grade children. The data gained value through including views with smaller groups of parents and children from the same preschools and schools. These were obtained in focus groups or through individual interviews conducted in all three countries. All the main results of this research are gathered in the International Brochure with the comparison of results from Croatia, Latvia and Slovenia (https://drive.google.com/file/d/1W9u9abMfwnRCh5p2feSQ-MAhMH13_qdY/view?usp=sharing).

In the second phase, which was also based on the data of this research, a pilot module was developed that was intended for trainers to conduct trainings on the topic of ensuring transition. The module includes goals, content, processes and forms of actions as well as the time framework and all the materials needed for the training conduction. The module could be useful for any interested organisations that conduct trainings for preschool and primary school teachers. The module is available at <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Mh4i1xDdUToNf9qzsEZCrjVVZtOaZ0m/view?usp=sharing>

In the third phase of the project, joint trainings on transition for preschool and school professionals were conducted based on the previously described pilot module. 120 participants attended 5-day trainings on ensuring a smooth transition in each country. The invitations were first sent to professionals from preschools and schools that participated in the first phase of the project by answering the questionnaire. The interest in the training was very high, and there were many participants from institutions across all three countries. Joint trainings for preschool and primary school teachers allowed them to share their practices, expectations, dilemmas and challenges regarding transition and developed a common understanding of the importance and strategies to ensure a smooth transition from preschool to school.

Based on the conducted trainings, the Guidebook for preschool and school teachers that you are currently reading was developed. The Guidebook consists of three parts:

- 1) Comparison of educational systems at the level of each of the 3 countries
- 2) About the importance of ensuring smooth transition
- 3) Ensuring smooth transition within three continuities:
 - a. Developmental continuity
 - b. Pedagogical continuity
 - c. Professional continuity
- 4) The most important guidelines for further development of this field in the future:
 - a. For preschool and school teachers
 - b. For preschool and school manager staff
 - c. For policy makers

2

COMPARISON OF EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS AT THE LEVEL OF EACH OF THE 3 COUNTRIES

As the table below shows, there are similarities as well as differences between the education systems at the level of all three project partner countries. In order to better understand the context of the results of the research and other contents presented below in this Guidebook, we summarise some of the most relevant differences:

- In Latvia, children enter school one year later than in Slovenia and Croatia;
- In Slovenia, two professionals teach in the 1st grade;
- In Croatia, children take a knowledge test before entering school;
- In Slovenia, there are many primary schools with a preschool, which means that both the preschool and school share common leadership and the preschool unit is located in the school or near the school, which has a great impact on ensuring the smooth transition of children from preschool to school;
- In Latvia, preschool is compulsory 2 years before entering school, in Croatia one year and in Slovenia it is not compulsory;
- In Slovenia, we have a system that enables preschool teachers to be 'in transit' between preschool and school - this means that a preschool teacher goes to the 1st grade with preschool children, is there for one year and then returns to the preschool.

	SLOVENIA	CROATIA	LATVIA
Preschool institutions that provide education and care for children aged 0-6	<p>Non-compulsory</p> <p>Independent (public and private) preschools.</p> <p>Public preschool at school (1 organisation).</p>	<p>Non-compulsory</p> <p>Preschools, public (founded by the Republic of Croatia or the local government and self-government units), religious (founded by religious communities) or private (founded by other legal entities and natural persons).</p> <p>Preschool programmes: obligatory one year before entering compulsory primary school, held as a part of the regular preschool programme or as a separate programme in preschools or schools.</p>	<p>Non-compulsory</p> <p>Public and private preschools.</p> <p>Special pre-primary classes at general education institutions.</p> <p>Compulsory from the age of 5, for two years before entering primary school.</p>
Enrolment rate of children in ECEC institutions in the 2020/21 school year	<p>Age 1-5: 82.5% children (93.7% of the population aged 4-5)</p>	<p>Age 0-3: 21.20%</p> <p>Age 3-5: 36.43%</p> <p>Age 5-7: 42.37%</p>	<p>Age 1-5: 86%</p> <p>Age 5-7: 99.9%</p>
Compulsory education age	6	5	5
Primary school entry age	6	6	7

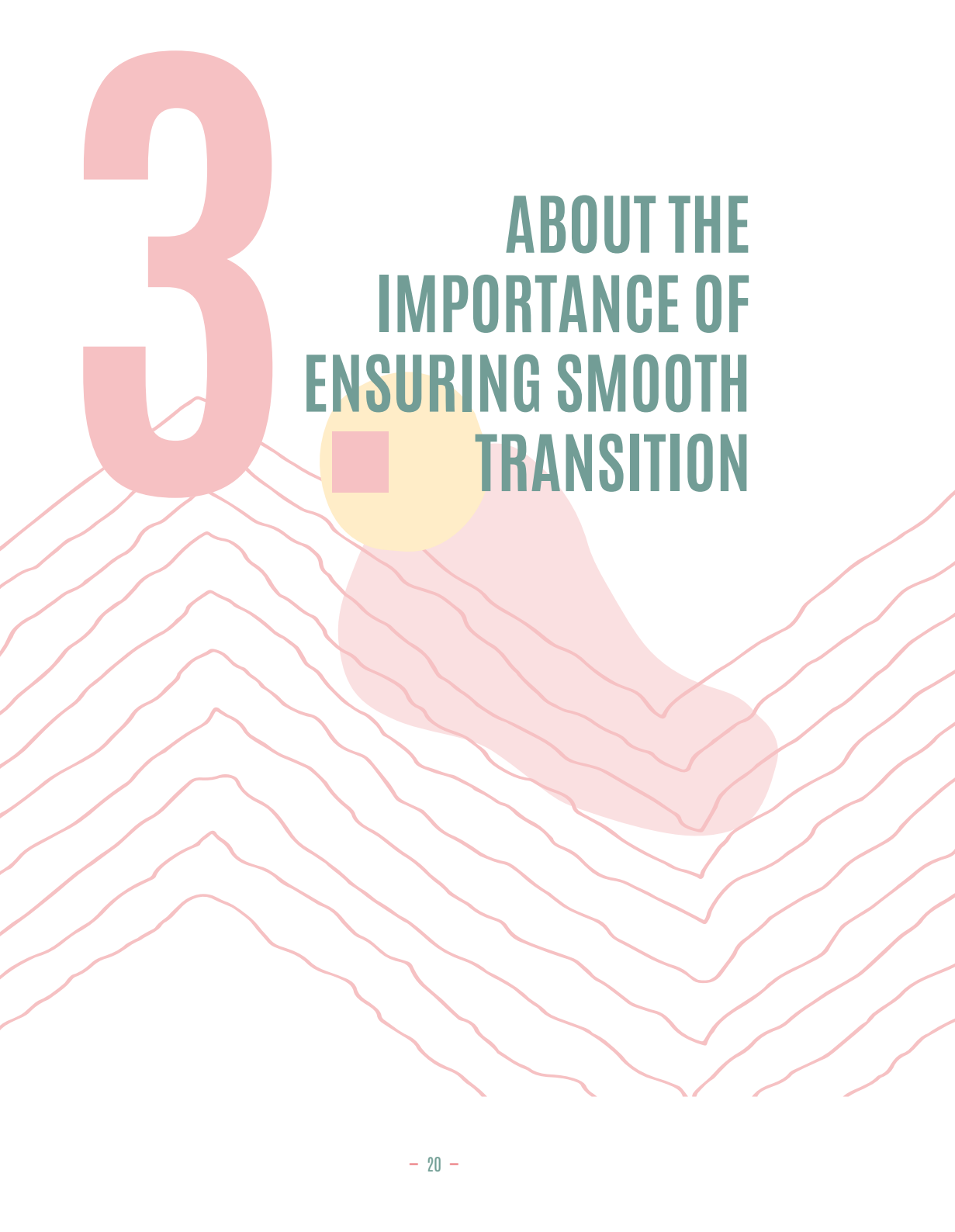
	SLOVENIA	CROATIA	LATVIA
Number of children in preschool classrooms	<p>2 age groups:</p> <p>1st age group: children aged 1–3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9–14 children (age homogenous class) • 7–10 children (heterogeneous class) <p>2nd age group: children aged 3–6</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 14–19 children, age 3–4 (homogenous class) • 14–24 children, age 4–6 (heterogeneous class) • 14–21 children, age 3–6 (heterogeneous class) 	<p>6–12 months (max. 5)</p> <p>13–18 months (max. 8)</p> <p>19–24 months (max. 12)</p> <p>in the 3rd year of life (max. 14)</p> <p>in the 4th year of life (max. 18)</p> <p>in the 5th year of life (max. 20)</p> <p>in the 6th year of life (max. 23)</p> <p>in the 7th year of life – starting school (max. 25)</p> <p>Heterogeneous classes:</p> <p>1–2 years of life (max. 10)</p> <p>1–3 years of life (max. 12)</p> <p>3–starting school (max. 20)</p> <p>4–starting school (max. 22)</p>	<p>The current normative regulation does not determine the number of children in the group at a preschool educational institution. However, this does not mean that an unlimited number of children can attend a group. The institution must comply with hygiene requirements – each child under the age of three needs 2.5 m² of group space and 1.8 m² of sleeping space, while each child over the age of three needs 3.0 m² of group space and 2.0 m² of sleeping space. The possibilities of high-quality implementation of the preschool education program must also be evaluated.</p>
Number of ECEC practitioners in preschool classrooms	<p>1 preschool teacher and 1 assistant per group.</p> <p>6 hours of regulated time co-working in the group each day.</p>	<p>3 ECEC practitioners in groups of children aged 6 months–1 year.</p> <p>2 ECEC practitioners for children of other age groups (the group is with 1 ECEC practitioner for most of the day).</p> <p>An hour or more of co-working (for programmes which last 7–10 hours).</p>	<p>2 teachers and 1 assistant per group (usually 1 teacher and 1 assistant are in the group at the same time).</p> <p>Non-regulated time of teachers co-working.</p>

	SLOVENIA	CROATIA	LATVIA
Education of ECEC practitioners in preschool classrooms	<p>Preschool teachers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • master's degree of preschool education or • secondary school degree in preschool education. <p>Preschool assistant teacher:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • preschool secondary education or • any secondary education with vocational retraining in preschool education. 	<p>Preschool teachers:</p> <p>min. bachelor's degree in preschool education (professional or academic study programme).</p> <p>Other profiles can be employed as preschool teachers only for shorter periods in case there is a deficit of preschool teachers in the labour market.</p>	Teacher-training programme (min. bachelor's degree required).
Increased postponed enrolment for a year	<p>2010: 4.5% (809 children)</p> <p>2017: 8.3% (1,846 children)</p> <p>2018/2019: 9.7% (2,096 children)</p>	<p>2013/14: 6.11% (2,459 children)</p> <p>2014/15: 6.58% (2,686 children)</p> <p>2015/16: 6.75% (2,825 children)</p> <p>2016/17: 7.77% (3,149 children)</p> <p>2017/18: 7.76% (3,105 children)</p> <p>2018/19: 9.00% (3,464 children)</p> <p>2019/20: 7.18% (2,727 children)</p>	<p>The child begins primary education in the calendar year in which they turn 7. Depending on the state of health and psychological readiness, a child may start the acquisition of basic education one year earlier in accordance with the wishes of the parents or one year later on the basis of the opinion of a family doctor.</p> <p>No official data on postponement of the enrolment is available in Latvia.</p>
Number of professionals in first grades	2	1	1

	SLOVENIA	CROATIA	LATVIA
Number of hours per week when professionals in first grades co-work in the classroom	<p>10 hours per week (15–23 pupils) 15 hours per week (24–28 pupils)</p> <p>If Roma children are included in the classroom: 15 hours per week (10–14 pupils) 20 hours per week (15–21 pupils)</p> <p>In a heterogenous classroom: 10 hours (12 pupils from 2 different grades) 10 hours (10 pupils from 3 or more grades)</p>	Non-applicable	Non-applicable
Education of professionals in first grades	<p>First teacher: Primary school teacher education</p> <p>Second teacher: master's degree of preschool education or secondary school degree in preschool education or primary teacher</p>	Primary school teacher education	Primary school teacher education

3

ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF ENSURING SMOOTH TRANSITION



Every child faces different transitions during their lifetime, and their learning and education are not exceptions. Every transition presents a challenge for the child and all involved stakeholders and plays an important role in the child's development and personal growth. Transition has the potential to become a success factor in development or, in the event of its failure, a traumatic, development-hindering experience.

The transition from preschool to school is one of the first and, undoubtedly, most important transitions in a child's life. Just as the transition "begins well before children start school and develops to the point where children and families feel a sense of belonging at school and when teachers recognize this sense of belonging" (Hayes, 2011)¹, the impact of transition on a child's development – positive or negative – lasts much longer than the process itself.

Transition from preschool to school is very complex and involves a number of important changes for a child – not only adapting to the new social role and meeting new friends and teachers but also adapting to the new learning environment, new daily routines and rules, different teaching style, increased learning expectations, etc.

¹ Dumcius, R., Peeters, J., Hayes, N. (2014). Study on the effective use of early childhood education and care in preventing early school leaving- Final Report. https://www.academia.edu/29044807/Study_on_the_effective_use_of_early_childhood_education_and_care_in_preventing_early_school_leaving_Final_Report

A supportive and stress-free experience at this stage is likely to influence whether or not children can develop their full potential at school, academically and socially.² Successful and smooth transition can have long-term positive outcomes for children both in their educational success and in terms of social and emotional development (Margetts, 2009; Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children and Young People's Services (C4EO), 2010).³ At the same time, negative experiences can cause lasting difficulties, leading to problematic behaviour and poorer educational performance (Niesel & Griebel, 2005; Woodhead & Moss, 2007; Moss, 2013).⁴ This is especially true for children coming from disadvantaged families.

Therefore, it is particularly important that a smooth and positive transition to school has been identified as a factor neutralising social and economic disadvantage and for promoting a pupil's resilience (A. Hayes, 2011). Children who have a positive start to school are likely to perceive school as an important place, to have a positive attitude to learning and positive expectations of their abilities to succeed at school (Dockett & Perry, 2007; Fabian & Dunlop, 2006; Margetts, 2007; Peters, 2010). Successful transition is significant for children's emotional well-being and for their cognitive development. Transition may also support early integration of groups from different backgrounds, thereby becoming a necessary element of inclusion. Positive transitions may minimise negative consequences of change such as school phobia, functional illiteracy, drop-out rates, etc., therefore neutralising the negative effects of unequal opportunities at the beginning of compulsory education (Vrinioti, Einarsdottir, & Broström, 2010).⁵

Ensuring a smooth transition must be well-prepared and child-centred. Just as every developmental stage keeps some aspects of the previous ones and assimilates new cognitive and non-cognitive patterns (Piaget, 1953), the educational level should follow the continuity and gradual transition of a child.⁶ Otherwise, it is very likely to encounter the 'fade-out effect', when the positive effects of preschool education can fade or disappear completely, if the transition is not well prepared (Magnuson et al., 2007; Barnett and Hustedt, 1995; Woodhead, 1998).

A smooth transition can be ensured by preschool and school educators who cooperate purposefully. Only such a transition increases the likelihood that professional, pedagogical and developmental continuity will be ensured between preschool and school, and that the positive effects of pre-school learning will continue inside and outside primary school.

Finally, another no less important aspect of the importance of a smooth transition should be mentioned – in terms of system characteristics, successful transitions are usually more cost-effective and likely to reduce the necessity of later compensatory educational support policies (Fabian & Dunlop, 2006).⁷

² OECD (2017), Starting Strong V: Transitions from Early Childhood Education and Care to Primary Education. https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/starting-strong-v_9789264276253-en#page17


³ Dr.Mary O'Kane (2016). Research report No 19: Transition from Preschool to Primary School, NCCA. <https://ncca.ie/media/2471/transition-research-report-no-19.pdf>

⁴ Dumcius, R., Peeters, J., Hayes, N. (2014). Study on the effective use of early childhood education and care in preventing early school leaving- Final Report. https://www.academia.edu/29044807/Study_on_the_effective_use_of_early_childhood_education_and_care_in_preventing_early_school_leaving_Final_Report

⁵ Dumcius, R., Peeters, J., Hayes, N. (2014). Study on the effective use of early childhood education and care in preventing early school leaving- Final Report. https://www.academia.edu/29044807/Study_on_the_effective_use_of_early_childhood_education_and_care_in_preventing_early_school_leaving_Final_Report

⁶ Dumcius, R., Peeters, J., Hayes, N. (2014). Study on the effective use of early childhood education and care in preventing early school leaving- Final Report. https://www.academia.edu/29044807/Study_on_the_effective_use_of_early_childhood_education_and_care_in_preventing_early_school_leaving_Final_Report

⁷ Fabian, H., Dunlop, A.W., (2006) Outcomes of good practice in transition processes for children entering primary school. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000147463>



4 ENSURING A SMOOTH TRANSITION WITHIN THREE CONTINUITIES

We do not provide a soft transition for children through a one-time cultural or sports event at the school that is attended by preschool children together with the educator or through a one-time event as part of which the children visit the school upon enrolment. While planning the transition, three types of continuity should be taken into account: professional, pedagogical and developmental continuity (OECD, 2017).⁸ In the following chapter, we will present the characteristics of each continuity. Nevertheless, the elements of all three continuities are interrelated, which allows us a holistic overview of the transition as well as an easier identification of what is already present in practice and which are the areas that could be improved in order to ensure a smoother transition of children from preschool to school.

⁸ OECD (2017). Starting Strong V: Transitions from Early Childhood Education and Care to Primary Education, Starting Strong. OECD Publishing: Paris. <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264276253-en>

4.1. Developmental continuity

4.1.1. More about the developmental continuity

Developmental continuity refers to the progressive development of new skills, by building on skills formed from previous learning experiences. According to Dewey, “what the child has learned in the way of knowledge and skill in one situation becomes an instrument of understanding and dealing effectively with the situations which follow”.

Developmental continuity refers to the involvement and cooperation of various stakeholders with the aim to support the child. In this context, developmental continuity includes:

- involvement of the child,
- cooperation of preschools or schools with parents on the topic of transition,
- cooperation between preschool and school in order to exchange information about the child and
- cooperation with external services (e.g. health service) (OECD, 2017).⁹

⁹ OECD (2017). Starting Strong V: Transitions from Early Childhood Education and Care to Primary Education, Starting Strong. OECD Publishing: Paris. <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264276253-en>

If we try to look at all of this in a more concrete way, we can point out 5 categories of activities within the developmental continuity:

(1)

Activities for children in order to get familiar with professionals and children from the school as well as the school environment and its daily routine, etc.

This includes:

- School teacher visits preschool children in the class;
- School teacher visits the preschool children in the class together with the first-graders;
- School teacher and their children attend a puppet show/concert, etc., organised by preschool children;
- School teacher and the first-graders attend an event in the preschool in which both preschool children and first-graders participate;
- Preschool teacher talks with the children about the school (about their expectations, fears, etc.);
- Preschool teacher and preschool children visit their future teacher and children in the 1st grade;
- Children can visit the school with the preschool teacher to get familiar with the school environment;
- Children with their preschool teacher can participate at school event (cultural/sports etc.) hosted by schoolchildren;
- The children with the preschool teacher attend an event/meeting at the school, at which both preschool children and first-graders participate.

(2)

Activities for parents in order to get familiar with professionals from school, the school environment, the way of working in the school, to communicate possible dilemmas, exchanging expectations, etc.

This includes:

- Preschool teacher and/or preschool counsellor organise individual open hours for parents on the topic of transition;
- Preschool organises a lecture for parents on the topic of transition (to which an external expert, school representatives, etc. can also be invited);
- Informal meetings for parents, organised by representatives of the preschool on the topic of transition, such as tea party, which can also be joined by representatives of schools;
- Meetings for parents on the topic of transition, organised by the representatives of the school, are also important;
- School teacher and/or counsellor can organise individual open hours at school for the parents of future first-graders on the topic of transition;
- School teacher and/or counsellor at school level can organise a lecture for parents on the topic of transition;
- Informal meetings for parents (e.g. tea meeting) on the topic of transition can also be organised at school level;
- A teacher and/or counsellor at school level organises a meeting for parents on the topic of transition (to present the work in the first grade, organising a visit to school, etc.).

(3)

In addition to activities for children and parents, activities that are intended for parents and children at the same time with the same purpose as we have already mentioned in the above two categories are also included in the development continuity.

These include:

- School teacher and/or counsellor organises cultural, sports, etc. event to which (only or also) future first-graders and their parents are invited (chestnut picnic, cultural event, etc.);
- School teacher organises a parents' meeting and workshops for future first-graders at the same time;
- School teacher/counsellor/management can organise a presentation of the school for all or for individual families;
- The librarian can organise reading lessons for children and parents in the school library (and even in this way a connection with the school can be forged), etc.

(4)

Cooperation of preschool and school professionals in order to transfer information about children. This serves as an important basis for creating the most supportive and stimulating learning environment for children upon entering the 1st grade. A child portfolio is one example of a useful tool that allows us such an exchange of information.

(5)

Cooperation of preschool and school with external services or institutions, such as the health service, which is related to the preventive medical examination of the future first-graders. In addition, it is also important to connect the preschool/school with other stakeholders at the level of the local environment in order to provide optimal support for children's development. Here we have in mind especially children from vulnerable backgrounds. A Play Hub is one such example.

(More about Play Hubs)

Members of the Local Action Team from different sectors supporting the operation of the Play Hub. The operation of Play Hubs is based on the TOY for Inclusion approach that promotes inclusive non-formal early childhood education and was developed by International Child Development Initiatives (ICDI) in partnership with NGOs and local authorities in 8 countries, including Latvia, Slovenia and Croatia. Play Hubs are a flexible solution that offers educational opportunities for all those children who are often excluded from formal educational services. The Play Hubs offer not only the opportunity to play and learn on the spot but also the opportunity to borrow a game or toy and to play with them at home. This service is especially valued by families whose financial situation does not allow them to buy new games or books often, as their children are provided with the opportunity to play and study with the materials offered by the Play Hubs. Play Hubs also promote transition from preschool to school by organising meetings or info-sessions for parents in cooperation with schools and preschools where parents have the opportunity to get answers to many interesting questions in a safe and familiar atmosphere.

It is important that for each generation of children and parents there are as many different forms of cooperation of different actors and activities, which can be provided within the developmental continuity both at the preschool level and at the school level!

It is important to ensure for each generation of children and parents as many and as diverse forms of cooperation and involvement of different stakeholders as possible, both at the preschool and at the school level. In addition, it is also very important that the engagement regarding this at the level of preschool and school is balanced, and that the preschool and school are as connected as possible in the realisation of this.

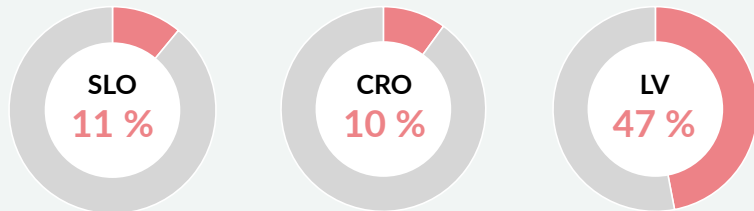
4.1.2. An insight into the current situation in the practice at the level of developmental continuity

In the tables below, we present some results of our research related to developmental continuity.

Preschool teachers

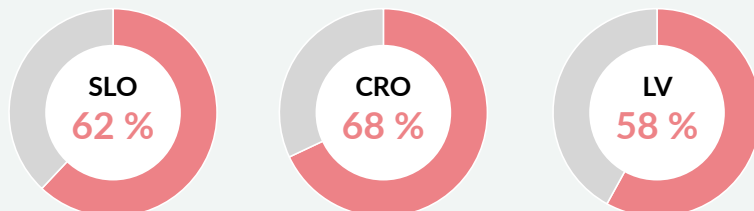
In the past school year (2018/19), did a school teacher visit your preschool and meet the future first graders with the aim of presenting life in school?

■ YES



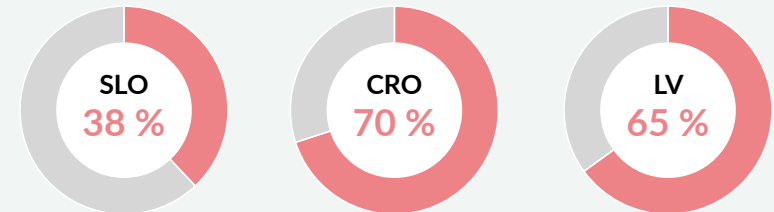
In the past school year (2018/19), did you organise any meetings/or visits to school for the future first graders?

■ YES



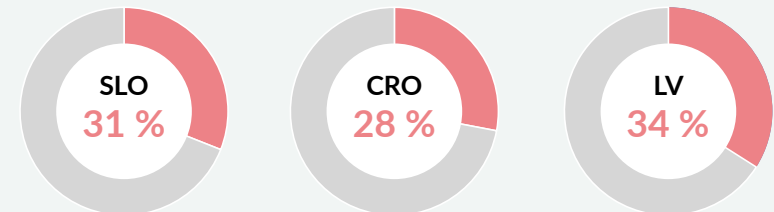
In the past school year (2018/19), did you organise any types of individual or group cooperation with parents of the future first graders with the aim of supporting children (and parents) in transition from the old to the new learning environment?

■ YES



In the past school year (2018/19), did you cooperate with primary school teachers that work with children of your preschool classroom in the current school year, with the aim of exchanging information about them?

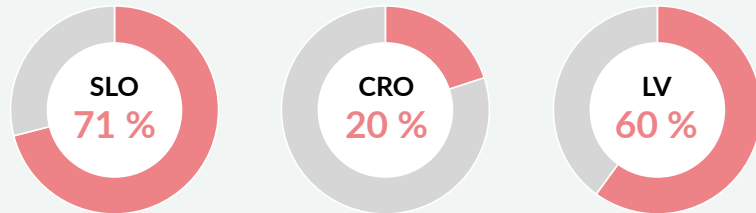
■ YES



School teachers

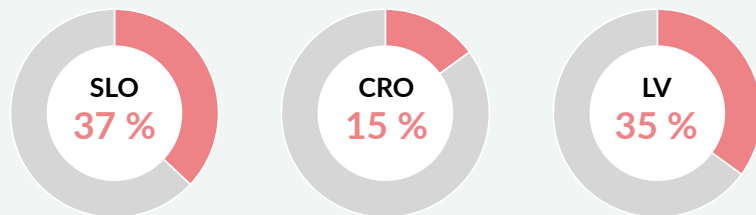
In the past school year (2018/2019), did you organise any meetings/visits in school for future first graders in cooperation with the preschool?

■ YES



In the past school year (2018/2019), did you organise any joint meetings/cultural, sport or other events to which you also invited future first graders and their parents?

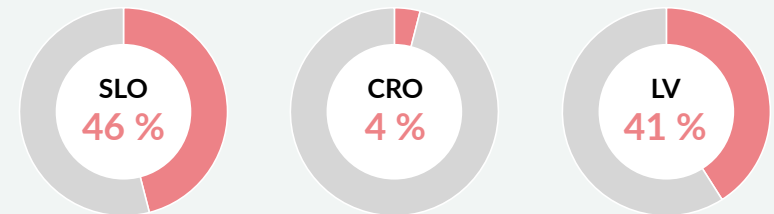
■ YES



Research has shown that cooperation with parents mostly exists in the form of individual parent-teacher meetings and is more common in preschool than school systems, while Visković (2018) recognizes that there is a need for involving parents in transition practices (e.g. jointly with the children) more often (Visković, 2018).

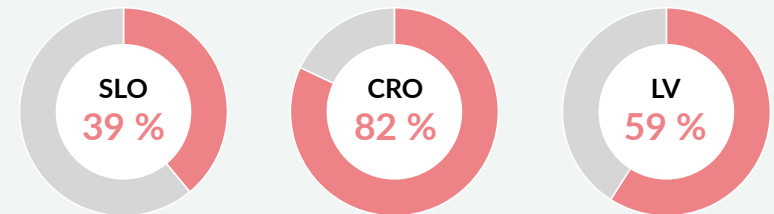
In the past school year (2018/19), did you organise any types of individual or group cooperation with parents of the future first graders with the aim of supporting children (and parents) in transition from the old to the new learning environment?

■ YES



In the present school year (2019/2020), did you cooperate with the preschool teacher that worked with your current first graders in preschool with the aim of exchanging information about them?

■ YES



Moreover, practice shows that when one system cooperates with parents, it rarely includes other stakeholders in the cooperation that would contribute to softening the transition (e.g. professionals from the other systems, experts from other institutions).

The most common reasons for not implementing developmental continuity (e.g. why school teachers do not organise meetings for parents of future first-graders or why preschool teachers do not organise a visit to the school) are the following:

- there is no need for such practice,
- there are organisational problems,
- management does not strive for this,
- nobody took the initiative.

Think about developmental continuity in your country/at the level of your institution/your practice:

- Does the school teacher visit your preschool children in the class?
- Do children visit the school with the preschool teacher to get familiar with the school environment?
- Does the preschool teacher and/or preschool counsellor organise individual open hours for parents on the topic of transition?
- Do you organise informal meetings for parents, organised by representatives of the preschool, on the topic of transition, such as tea parties, which can also be joined by representatives of schools?
- Does the school teacher and/or counsellor organise cultural, sports, etc. events to which (only or also) future first-graders and their parents are invited (chestnut picnic, cultural event, etc.)?
- Are there available organised reading lessons for children and parents in the school library for preschool children and their parents?
- Is there cooperation between preschool and school professionals in order to transfer information about children as an important basis for creating the most supportive and stimulating learning environment for children upon entering the 1st grade?
- What doesn't exist yet but would be important?
- Who else could you connect with?

4.1.3. Examples of good practice regarding developmental continuity

4.1.3.1. Preschool from Croatia

Title of activity

Joint visit of preschool teachers, children and their parents to school

Name of institution

Dječji vrtić Sisak Novi/Kindergarten Sisak Novi



Why we decided to present

It is very effective practice.

Purpose

The transition of children to primary school can be stressful for both the child and the parents, especially if they have no experience and are not sufficiently informed. A joint visit of preschool teachers, children and their parents to the new setting plays an important part in dispelling fear of the unknown.

Goals

1. Parents and children get information about the school and what it has to offer in an interesting way
2. Parents and children get to know the school premises
3. Children and parents get to know the teachers who will teach next year (if possible)

Frequency

Once a year

Time period of implementation

February/March (before school enrolment procedure takes place)

Duration of implementation

1.5 hours



From-to

17.00-18.30 (usual time for parent – teacher meetings)



Initiator of the activity

Preschool counsellor

Persons who are involved in organisation, planning and implementation of the activity and their tasks

Preschool counsellor (she contacts school management and arranges the time of the visit, the number of parents and children – one or more preschool groups – depending on the possibilities of school organisation and the specific conditions that need to be met (e.g. during the pandemic))

Preschool teacher (she prepares children for the visit and informs parents about the visit through posters in the parents' corners or/and by sending email invitations)

School management (they get in touch with teachers and invite them to prepare the presentations)

Teachers (they prepare the presentations with their pupils)

School pupils – 2nd, 3rd, 5th graders (with their teacher's mentorship, they prepare the program – 2nd and 3rd graders – preparing and leading a quiz and symbol sudoku for pre-schoolers, 5th graders – demonstration of robotics, school cooperative)



Target groups

- Preschool children in the year before entering school
- Parents
- Preschool teachers

Materials needed for implementation

- Smart board
- Computer
- Educational robots, materials for arts and crafts
- Printed brochure with key information about the school

Methods and forms of work

- Presentation
- Demonstration and trying on what has been seen



Steps before implementation (planning)

1. Arranging a meeting (time of the visit, number of participants, who will be involved, what will be presented)
2. Division of tasks
3. Inviting the parents
4. Preparing the preschool children for visit
5. School teachers and pupils preparing the presentations
6. School preparing small gifts for children with sweets and school supplies



Steps of implementation into practice

1. Welcoming speech held by school principal
2. Getting to know school premises (classrooms, library, play hub and toy library, sanitary facilities)
3. Pupils demonstrating some of the school activities that pre-schoolers can then try themselves
4. Meeting with next year 1st grade teachers (if possible), watching the welcome video made by 4th graders, trying on a full school bag
5. Time for questions



An anecdote/statement of a child, a parent, confirming the reasonableness of the activity

Parent statement: This is the first time I have visited a school after I was a student of this school myself. The school has changed a lot in the meanwhile. The visit exceeded all my expectations, I look forward to my child going to school.

“Today was the best day of my life. I really liked the school. The best for me was the school board and that I could play with a Lego robot.”
(Luka, 6 years)

“I liked the teacher the most because she sang with us and let us try on the school bags. And she asked us some questions and we knew everything!” (Petra, 6 years)

Recommendations

In our opinion the role of a preschool teacher in this visit is important because of her connection with children and parents. It also shows her interest in children’s future.

After implementation we realised it would be good to prolong the visiting time to 2 hours.

The activity is described by

Tihana Barać, preschool teacher

Marija Ščetko, school counsellor



4.1.3.2. Preschool from Latvia

Title of activity

Individual discussions with the child's parents about the child's development and achievements.



Name of institution

Valmieras PII "Ezītis"



Why we decided to present

Because it is very effective practice

Purpose

To inform parents about their child's development and achievements at the end of preschool education stage and provide advice for further development of knowledge and skills.



Goals

Parents are fully informed about the child's development and achievements. Parents receive recommendations about what to be taken into account and what to work on, so that the child can start school successfully.



Frequency

At the end of preschool education stage

Time period of implementation

April–May

Duration of implementation

About 1 hour



From – to

8.00–8.40, 14.00–15.30, 17.00–18.00 (depends on parents' choice and according to schedule)



Initiator of the activity

Preschool teacher

Persons who are involved in organisation, planning and implementation of the activity and their tasks

Both preschool teachers of the same preschool group

Preschool teachers' assistant, who is with the group's children during the interview – a description of the assessment of the child's educational performance.



Target groups

Parents of children in the last year of preschool

Materials needed for implementation

Written description of the child's achievements and recommendations

Methods and forms of work

Individual discussion with the children's parents

Steps before implementation (planning)

- Prepare a printable description of a child's educational performance including recommendations for further development and learning process. In accordance with the Regulations on National Pre-school Education Guidelines and Sample Pre-school Education Programs, at the end of the pre-school education, the teacher assesses and describes the achievements of the child in relation to the planned results of the acquisition of the compulsory content specified in these national regulations. Learning outcomes are described in terms of data/information obtained through the systematic observation and assessment of a child's performance. The description must be in writing and handed over to the parents by the teacher.
- Prepare a quiet place for a smooth conversation.

Steps of implementation into practice

- In April, parents are notified about the individual interview and they must register on a specific date and time (teachers have prepared a schedule for 2 weeks).
- The parent or both parents arrive for the individual interview on the chosen date and time. They are met by one or both teachers (if possible).
- Individual interviews take place in a separate room, in a peaceful atmosphere.
- Teacher tells the parents about the child's developmental process and achievements; asks questions about how parents strengthen the child's knowledge and skills at home; offers for them to share their thoughts about the child's development and ask questions.
- The teacher gives a description of a child's educational performance (an official document of the particular educational institution) and explain the information contained in it to the parents during the conversation, emphasizing the key aspects for a successful transition as well as provide recommendations for parents how they can help their child during transition process.
- Also, the teacher explains to the parents that, although not required by law, it would be in the child's best interest for smoothening transition to share this document with the future 1st grade teacher and encourages the parents to do so.

An anecdote/statement of a child, a parent, confirming the reasonableness of the activity

- Conversation with the teacher provided answers to the unclear questions about the child's successful start of the 1st grade.
- The conversations with the teacher reassured me and made it clear that everything was and will be fine with my child.
- During our conversation, I got advice on what I can do as a parent to make the child's transition from preschool to school successful.
- The teacher explained why it would be useful for the 1st grade teacher to show the preschool description of the child's achievements.

Recommendations

As mentioned above, the description of a child's educational performance (an official document of the particular educational institution) is prepared for parents and given to parents. But, as it contains many information what can help for smoothening child's transition to school, it is very important to encourage parents to share it with the child's future 1st grade teacher.

The activity is described by

Preschool teacher Evita Vēvere

4.1.3.3. Preschool from Slovenia

Title of activity

Joint parent meeting of the preschool counsellor and the school counsellor for parents of future first-graders

Name of institution

Primary school heroja Janeza Hribarja Stari trg pri Ložu, Kindergarten Polhek

Why we decided to present

- Because this is a rare practice.
- Because parents have expressed satisfaction with this way of providing information.
- Because the cooperation between school and preschool is important for the successful inclusion of a child in school.

Purpose

1. Introduce parents to the essential characteristics of a 5-6 years old child by areas – what he/she is already capable of and how they can promote his/her development at home.
2. Provide parents with all the necessary information about the child's enrolment in school and how they can prepare the child to enter school.



Goals

1. Parents receive basic information about the course of enrolment in school (when, where, how).
2. Parents are acquainted with the concept of maturity of the child to enter school and the procedure in case the child is not yet ready to enter school (postponement of schooling).
3. Parents are made aware of the possible problems that children may have when entering school.
4. Parents receive concrete guidance to promote their child's development in various areas of development.
5. Answering parents' questions about the child's transition from preschool to school.

Frequency

Once a year

Time period of implementation

February

Duration of implementation

1 hour

From - to

17.00-18.00

Initiator of the activity

School counsellor

Persons who are involved in organisation, planning and implementation of the activity and their tasks

- School counsellor (sends an invitation to parents, plans a meeting - via Zoom or live, participates in PPT presentation, answers parents' questions)
- Preschool counsellor (participates in the PPT presentation, answers parents' questions)
- Headmaster (answers parents' questions)

Target groups

Parents of future first graders

Methods and forms of work

- Projector (if the meeting is live) and whiteboard
- Computer
- PPT presentation with key information

Methods and forms of work

- Lecture to the whole group (parents)
- Conversation with the whole group (parents)

Steps before implementation (planning)

Preschool and school counsellor meeting before the parents' meeting (preparation of the PPT presentation, division of tasks, agreement on the date, organisation and implementation of the meeting)

Steps of implementation into practice

Inclusion of a joint parent meeting for parents of future first-graders in the annual work plan of the preschool counselling service and the school counselling service

An anecdote/statement of a child, a parent, confirming the reasonableness of the activity

"We should have heard that years ago."

"We should hear that many times."

Parents also thank us via email after the meeting for useful information.

Recommendations

Planning a meeting is easier when preschool and primary school are next to each other or in the same building.

The activity is described by

Nataša Lavrič, preschool counsellor

4.1.3.4. Primary school from Croatia

Title of activity

Incentive parenting

Name of institution

Primary school „Braća Bobetko“ Sisak

Why we decided to present

We realised we have non-regular attendance and justification of absence so we need to improve the quality of cooperation with parents. We ask ourselves how to help parents to help their children.

Purpose

- Teacher empowering and supporting parents of preschool children in creating and stimulating home surroundings.
- Impact on development of the child, his/her coping in the school environment and successful continuing education.

Main purposes:

- Children are familiar with the rules of the school
- and the way you carry and store personal belongings and accessories; all this results in an increase in self-confidence and motivation to start first grade; we improve mutual understanding and respect;
- we create trust and increase parents' self-confidence and awareness of their role in upbringing and education of the child.



Goals

Teachers and parents should guide children to increase ability to self-regulate; adoption of cultural habits; developing of social skills (listening, asking and answering questions following instructions; every children gets to know the way from home to school; knowledge of school premises; they established a relationship with the teacher and friends from the future class department; empowering parents through topics related to upbringing and education; to educate parents that through simple things in their lives they can equip their children with new knowledge; meeting teachers and creating relationships with them.

Frequency

From April to June (15 workshops) two times a week

Time period of implementation

At the end of the school year or at the beginning of the school year

Duration of implementation

90–120 minutes

From – to

In the middle of the day, after our lessons



Initiator of the activity

Teachers in class

Persons who are involved in organisation, planning and implementation of the activity and their tasks

Teachers of lower grades



Target groups

Children starting first grade and their parents

Materials needed for implementation

Didactic and pictorial material, picture books, writing and drawing accessories

Methods and forms of work

Individual, pair and group work

Steps before implementation (planning)

Before organising workshops, it was very important to us to find out which topics about raising children interest parents; acquisition of pre-mathematical and pre-reading skills in children; family rights and obligations; adult learning.

Organisation:

- space and time of workshop
- ways to invite parents (invitation layout, sending)

Technical support in work:

- the city of Sisak (didactic and pictorial material, picture books, writing and drawing accessories, drinks, sweets...)
- principal, secretary, school cleaner and janitor
- the day of visiting the settlement and children's homes
- schedule of workshops
- parents come to workshops with children
- to invite to workshops parents who do not live in Roma settlement
- during the first part of the workshop, parents work on topics related to education and upbringing; during the second part, parents work with their children

Steps of implementation into practice

Planning workshops (structure):



- **Warming up** – games are served to create an atmosphere
- **Exchange of experiences** – using activities from the previous workshop
- **Educational topic** – we try to make parents aware that they have parenting skills and to encourage them to jointly decide which are the most appropriate methods in the education of their children
- **Pre-reading and pre-math skills** – through various games and activities, we encourage parents to create an environment at home
- **Evaluation** – in this part, parents and children had the opportunity to express their satisfaction by leading and working in workshops. We conclude that they were honest in the evaluation because parents regularly come and cooperate with pleasure.
- **Break** – break was significant for establishing a positive relationship and exchanging seemingly incidental information that was very important for us to get a first picture of the families we work with.

An anecdote/statement of a child, a parent, confirming the reasonableness of the activity

- When we started, we were insecure, and now our self-confidence has increased. (parent)
- Workshops were useful and different. My child will learn more than in my time. (parent)
- I can't wait Tuesday because we learn something new, play and eat sweets. (child)



Recommendations

Examples of activities:

Educational topics

- parenting, development of self-esteem, positive discipline, development of desirable behaviours in children, emotions, parenting styles, going to school

Pre-readers

- learning the names of letters using the names of family members, the game of finding the same letters in space, reading and pronouncing letters correctly, acting out stories they heard etc.

Pre-mathematical

- counting objects up to 10, forming groups up to 10 objects, grouping objects (by colour, shape), shapes, number recognition, adding number 1, mathematical puzzles

The activity is described by

Refika Omerćehaić, class teacher

Svjetlana Balen, English teacher



4.1.3.5. Primary school from Latvia

Title of activity

Meeting of a 1st grade teacher to a child and his/her parent(-s)



Name of institution

Valmiera 5th Secondary School



Why we decided to present

It is a very effective practice.

Purpose

Get to know each other.



Goals

For parent and child:

- to get to know the class teacher
- to get to know the school and classroom
- to discuss different questions

For the class teacher:

- to get to know the parents and the child
- to discuss the assessment from preschool*
- to discuss different questions

* Preschool teachers prepare – a description of the assessment of the child's educational performance, assessing each skill in 7 areas (science, arts, mathematics, social and civic, technology, language, health and physical development) with one of four letters/levels: S – started to learn; T – continues to master; A – mastered; P – mastered in depth.



Frequency

Twice every year

Time period of implementation

At the end of August, before entering the 1st grade



Duration of implementation

30 minutes

From – to

Parents agree with the teacher on the time of the meeting.



Initiator of the activity

The meeting is set by the school management.

Persons who are involved in organisation, planning and implementation of the activity and their tasks

- Class teacher – schedule appointments with all parents.
- Parents – At the June meeting, parents choose one of the proposed dates and times for the August meeting. By the beginning of August, parents must submit to the school the child's medical card and a certificate issued by the preschool on the acquisition of the pre-school education program as well as description of the assessment from preschool.
- Parents and a child – come to the August meeting

Target groups

- Preschool children before entering school
- Parents



Materials needed for implementation

- The description of the assessment of the child's educational performance from preschool – if parents are willing to share.
- Some game or task to unobtrusively find out a child's knowledge and skills during the conversation.

Methods and forms of work

Conversation. Questions and answers.

Steps before implementation (planning)

- An appointment between the teacher and the parents.
- Read the description of the assessment from preschool of the child.
- Find a game or prepare tasks to find out a child's knowledge and skills.
- Prepare a class for the parents and children.
- Arrange tables for your conversation with the child and parents.
- Prepare a small gift (bookmark, candy, etc.).
- Prepare a game (puzzle) or colouring exercise to keep the child busy while talking to parents.

Steps of implementation into practice

At the meeting the teacher first get to know the child better. Teacher asks a child to introduce him/herself, tell more about his/her home, interests and other topics that child feels comfortable to talk about. After this introduction the teacher encourages the child to for example write his/her name on the board, count, read a sentence etc. (assessment of child's knowledge and skills). Afterwards the teacher discusses with parents about the child and his/her characteristics, impression about the preschool and transition period, his/her health and more about the whole family as well as encourages parents to ask and answer any questions they may have.

An anecdote/statement of a child, a parent, confirming the reasonableness of the activity

- "Thank you for answering my questions. Now everything is easier for me to understand." (quote from a parent)

Children quotes:

- "I love my class!"
- "I can't wait for the first day of school!"
- "I like that I will have a place for my belongings just like in kindergarten."

Recommendations

Carefully read the description of the assessment from preschool.

Prepared tasks for a child should not be too complicated and somehow individualised (choose adequate tasks, depending on the child's feedback).

The activity is described by

Primary school teacher Līga Veikšāne



4.1.3.6. Primary school from Slovenia

Title of activity

School teachers conduct activities in preschool

Name of institution

OŠ heroja Janeza Hribarja Stari trg pri Ložu

Why we decided to present

It is a very effective practice, important for children and their parents. Children get to know the world of nature, movement, foreign language and literature from some other, different perspective through activities. They get to know the school teachers, the school premises, thus integration into school for them is easier and friendlier.

Purpose

Teaching English, science and sport in the kindergarten as part of additional activities. These are free of charge and thus accessible to all children. They are carried out in the morning making it easier for parents to organize their free time.



Goals

1. Children get to know their future school teachers.
2. They get to know the school premises (classrooms, library, gym...).
3. They get acquainted with a foreign language in an age-appropriate way.
4. They get to know science through different methods of work.
5. They get to know new forms of work through ICT technology.
6. They get to know sports activities in the school gym and outdoors, new, unknown sports equipment, and others.

Frequency

- English lessons: once a week, in 5-6 age group
- Science workshops: once a week, in 2nd age groups
- Sports lessons: once a week, in 4-5 and 5-6 age groups
- Fairy-tale hours: once or twice a year, in 2nd age groups



Time period of implementation

October to April

Duration of implementation

Depending on children's interest

**From - to**

- English corner in the playroom: 9.00 - 9.30
- Sports activities: 9.30 - 10.15
- Science activities: 9.00 - 9.45
- Fairy-tale hours 8.30 - 9.15

**Initiator of the activity**

Management of a preschool

**Persons, who are involved in organisation, planning and implementation of the activity and their tasks**

- Sport teacher, science teacher, English teacher and librarian - providers of activities,
- Preschool teachers and assistant teachers - help with activities
- Management - coordination, provision of space, care for information transfer, support

**Target groups**

2nd age group children

Materials needed for implementation

- Sports accessories (beams, benches, cushions, various balls, basketball hoops, soccer goals...)
- teaching aids for science (microscope, magnifiers, beakers, test tubes, skeleton model, scales, measuring instruments...)
- interactive whiteboard
- large selection of books

Methods and forms of work

- English lessons: work in the language corner with a group of children in 5-6 age group. There are maximum of 5 children. Learning takes place through play.
- Science lessons: conducting experiments for an individual group of children in the science classroom at school, in the playroom, or outdoors.
- Sports lessons: performing sports activities, exercises stations, polygons in the school gym or school playground for the whole group.
- Fairy tale lessons: presentation of literary content in an interesting and original way in the school library for the whole group.

Steps before implementation (planning)

1. Selection of teachers who will carry out activities in the kindergarten.
2. Agreement on when, where and who for the activity will take place.
3. Brief presentation of the program to kindergarten teachers.
4. Coordinating the program with the curriculum.
5. Planning of the timetable.

Steps of implementation into practice

1. Introducing the teacher to the children in the group.
2. Presentation of activities to children.
3. Preparation of place and accessories.
4. Working with children.

An anecdote/statement of a child, a parent, confirming the reasonableness of the activity

Quotes from children:

- "I can't wait for English!"
- "We also do experiments like my brother, who already goes to school."

Recommendations

It is easier to carry out activities in kindergartens that operate within the primary school.

The activity is described by

Tatjana Leskovec



4.2. Pedagogical continuity

4.2.1. More about the pedagogical continuity

Pedagogical continuity refers to pedagogical aspects that facilitate children's transitions from ECEC to primary school, including curricula and pedagogical approaches, learning standards and development goals and structural aspects that affect children's daily ECEC and school experiences (OECD, 2017).¹⁰

Pedagogical continuity includes the unified pedagogical practice or pedagogical approaches of the preschool teacher in classes with children before entering and the pedagogical practice/approaches of the school teacher in the classes with first graders. In this context, we have in mind how the preschool and the school teacher establish interaction with children, how they encourage interaction between children, how the preschool or school teachers provide a stimulating learning environment (both physical and psychological), what teaching strategies they use, how they ensure inclusion in the department or class, etc. Of course, the pedagogical approaches of preschool teachers and school teachers are not identical, as they have children of different ages in front of them, but they are expected to be as unified as possible. In doing so, the impact of preschool on school is supposed to occur and not the other way around!

¹⁰ OECD (2017). Starting Strong V: Transitions from Early Childhood Education and Care to Primary Education, Starting Strong. OECD Publishing: Paris. <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264276253-en>

If we strive to implement child-centred practice, then this means that it is presented in both environments:

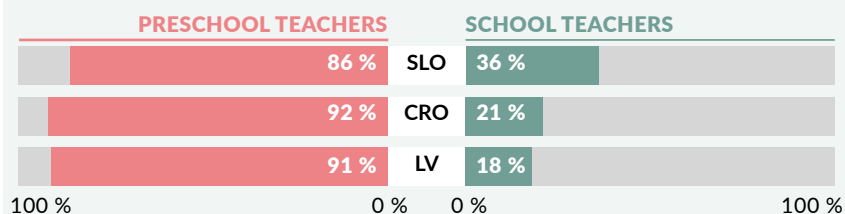
- The space is organised into activity centres.
- The learning process is carried out in different activity centres at the same time.
- In the classroom, there are posters, photographs, materials, toys and books that represent the diverse and multiple identities of children in the class in ways that do not show stereotypes.
- Children are included in the process: talk with them about what they already know about the certain topic, what they want to know about the topic and at the end of the process what they have learnt.
- The learning process is organised in a way that children work individually, in pairs, in small groups and in a large group.
- During the learning process, children are able to research and experiment.
- There are routines and procedures such as morning circle, inviting for everyone and fosters a sense of belonging.
- Active learning is ensured.
- Ensuring democratic processes in the class (children are involved in decision making, children are involved in creating classroom rules...).
- Collaboration with parents in the way that they are treated as partners.
- Assessment and planning the development of each child through children's portfolios, etc.
- Didactic material and toys are freely available for children to use (materials and toys are within reach of the child's hands and he/she can take them himself/herself).
- In the classroom, there is unstructured material available for children.
- Children's products and other materials are exhibited on the walls at the children's eye level.
- The duration of the learning process is not defined by the school bell.
- The structure of the day in preschool is similar to the structure of the day in school.

4.2.2. An insight into the current situation in the practice at the level of pedagogical continuity

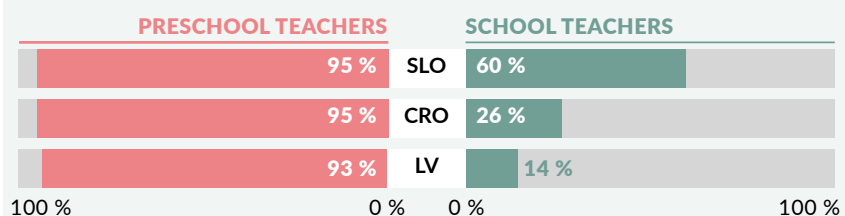
In the table below, we present some results of our research related to pedagogical continuity.

Practices presented in the class EVERY DAY

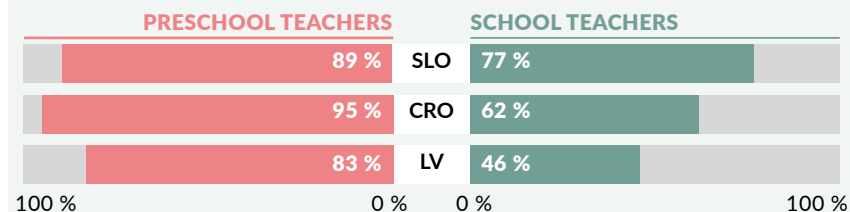
The learning process is carried out in different activity centres at the same time.



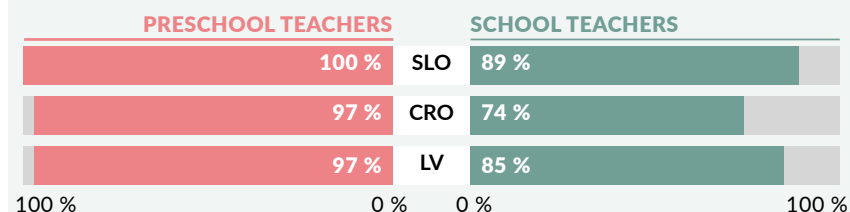
There are at least three activity centres available.



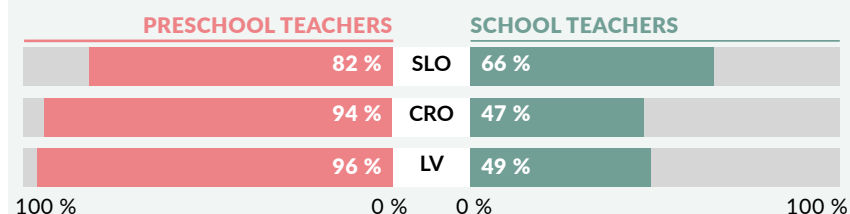
There is a quiet area in the classroom for children to isolate from the group if needed or to have a rest when they are tired.



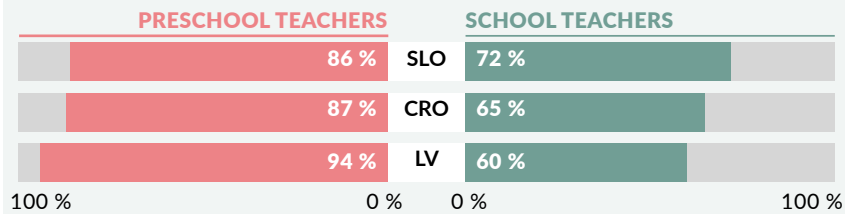
Didactic material and toys are freely available for children to use (materials and toys are within reach of the child's hands and he/she can take them himself/herself).



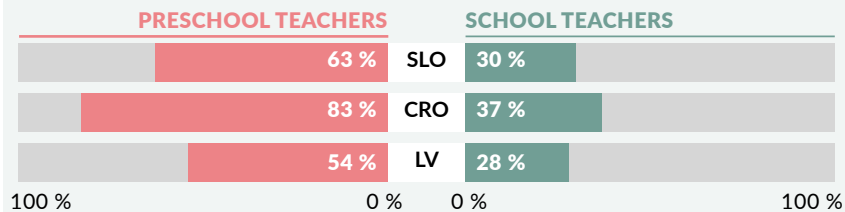
In the classroom, there is unstructured material available for children.



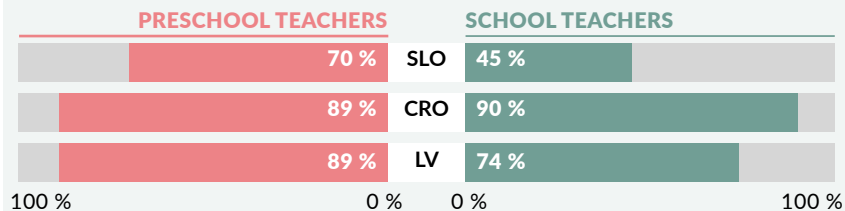
The learning process is organised in a way that children work individually, in pairs, in small groups and in a large group.



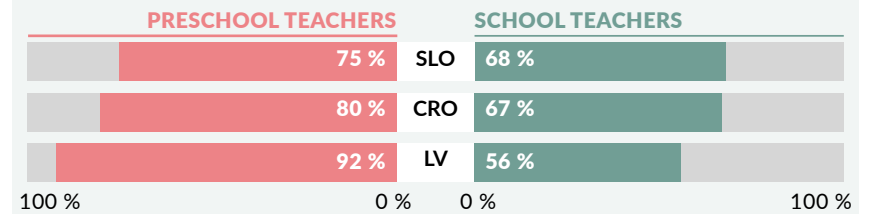
During the learning process, I also enable children to research and experiment.



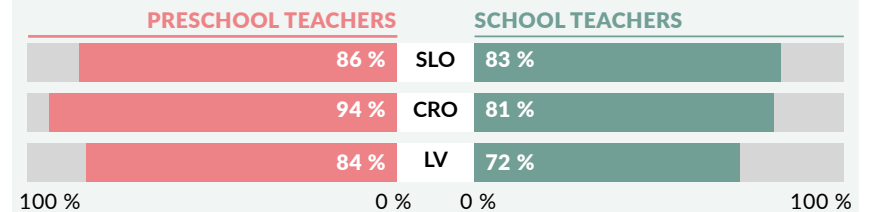
I encourage children to support each other as critical friends (follow and direct their work and behaviour if needed).



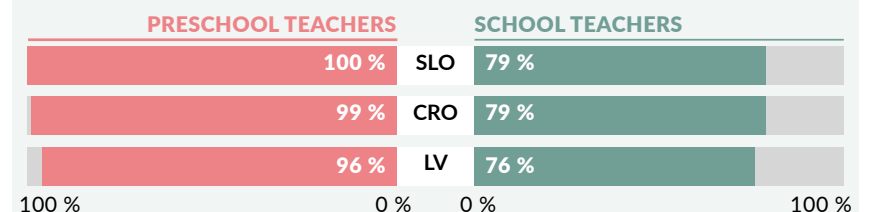
The beginning of the day is dedicated to conversation with children about their thoughts and impressions they want to share with others.



I plan and conduct activities which are aimed at children's cooperation and care for each other.



I respond to children with a hug, I hold their hands, take them in my lap, etc., when they express any need to be comforted, at arrival/departure...



Below are some comments that refer to the items in the table above and that show the differences in the pedagogical practice of preschools and schools. Some of these differences are also due to different country contexts.

The difference between preschool and school teachers regarding this practice shows the differences in the understanding of children's needs for closeness, comfort and safety from preschool and school teachers.

In Croatia, preschool and school teachers provide the most possibilities to explore and experiment. At the same time, the biggest difference between these two environments is also observed in the same country. With the aim of ensuring quality pedagogical practice and a smooth transition in preschool and school, it is important to provide children with many opportunities to explore and experiment in both settings.

The very low use of activity centres in Croatian and Latvian primary schools can be explained by the fact that the establishment of activity centres in the learning environment of preschool is a recommendation of the State Guidelines of preschool education, but in relation to the school environment, there is no such regulation. Therefore, the school classroom environment is most often arranged according to the teacher's traditional frontal teaching style.

Think about professional continuity in your country/at the level of your institution/your practice:

- Do I know what the pedagogical practice looks like in the preschool from which the children come to our school/in the school where the children from our preschool enrol?
- How is this practice similar to my practice?
- What is the difference?
- What do I need to change in my work to make pedagogical approaches more coherent regarding interaction, strategies, learning environment, etc.?
- In doing so, how can I ensure that the impact of preschool on school is going to happen and not the other way around, etc.?

4.2.3. Examples of good practice regarding pedagogical continuity

4.2.3.1. Preschool from Croatia

Title of activity

Morning circle

Name of institution

Kindergarten Sisak Novi, Sisak

Why we decided to present

Because it is very effective practice.

Purpose

The morning circle gives children a sense of security, the opportunity for everyone to be seen, heard and greeted. It also strengthens the sense of belonging to the group.

Goals

1. Building group cohesion
2. Developing of self-regulation and independence
3. Managing feelings, developing empathy
4. Developing learning skills (concentrating, looking, listening, speaking, thinking)

Frequency

Daily

Time period of implementation

Daily in morning term after breakfast

Duration of implementation

15–20 minutes



From – to

After breakfast – around 9.00–9.20



Initiator of the activity

Preschool teacher



Persons who are involved in organisation, planning and implementation of the activity and their tasks

Preschool teacher (decides about a topic and prepares materials for the activities)



Target groups

Preschool children (same educational group)

Materials needed for implementation

Secret bags or boxes, toys, costumes, short stories, poems, songs, weather chart, "days of the week" poster

Methods and forms of work

- Discussion with the whole group of children
- Individual demonstration

Steps before implementation (planning)

- 1) Making decision about the topic
- 2) Preparing physical environment (space) and materials



Steps of implementation into practice

- 1) Announcing the beginning of the morning circle with a special word.
- 2) Beginning with a group dance with singing that is performed in a circle (as a part of a group ritual). After the dance, everybody sits.
- 3) Morning greeting (can be accomplished through pairing verbal greeting with specified movement – wave, handshake, friendly touch or by passing an object).
- 4) Sharing – talking about the past day, weekend with family, feelings that make us happy or sad...
- 5) Group activity – aimed at getting academic skills, talking about a problem...
- 6) News and announcements – announcement of the content that will be covered that day.



An anecdote/statement of a child, a parent, confirming the reasonableness of the activity

- "For me, the circle is great because we agree to use nice words." Lamija, 6 years
- "In our circle, we have a council where we discuss a problem and solve it together." Mila, 6 years



Recommendations

To create a routine, it is good to start performing the morning circle from an early age (children of age 2-3). This can be done by simply forming a circle, performing a short group song and greeting each other.

If done on a regular basis and followed later in school, it can provide less insecurity and stress during the transition.

The activity is described by

Tihana Barać, preschool teacher

Marija Ščetko, preschool counsellor



4.2.3.2. Preschool from Latvia

Title of activity

Children's self-assessment in preschool



Name of institution

Valmieras PII "Ezītis"



Why we decided to present

It is a rare practice.

Purpose

Children's self-assessment experience helps to develop a positive attitude towards the learning process, which will be useful in the transition process and helps the child to better prepare for self-assessment at school, thus ensuring continuity.



Goals

- Child's ability to talk about his/her learning process.
- Child's ability to compare their own works and see the growth.
- Not to be afraid to make mistakes and see it as part of learning



Frequency

At the end of a covered topic or activity

Time period of implementation

Throughout the school year



Duration of implementation

Depends on the child's ability to evaluate himself/herself. The self-assessment process involves discussion with the teacher, why the child gave the specific rating to his/her work.

From - to

During the learning process



Initiator of the activity

Preschool teacher

Persons who are involved in organisation, planning and implementation of the activity and their tasks

- Preschool teacher (planning, organising, implementing)
- Preschool teacher's assistant (helps to organise and implement)



Target groups

Preschool children

Materials needed for implementation

- 3 buckets with rating stickers
- laminated children name cards

Methods and forms of work

Self-assessment, individual discussion

Steps before implementation (planning)

- Determine the result to be achieved in the learning process.
- Set evaluation criteria that are understandable to the child.





Steps of implementation into practice

- Introduce children to the result of the learning activity and with evaluation criteria, as well as once again discuss the meaning of each rating sticker.
- After the work is done, the child self-evaluates the result – put his/her name card in the appropriate bucket and then discuss it with the teacher.

An anecdote/statement of a child, a parent, confirming the reasonableness of the activity

- It's so hard to do well, but I try!
- Yes, I see that I used to paint over the edges before, but now I have painted more carefully!

Recommendations

Continue self-assessment at school.



The activity is described by

Preschool teacher Evita Vēvere



4.2.3.3. Preschool from Slovenia

Title of activity

Activity centres of the preschool in the department with preschool children



Name of institution

Primary School heroja Janeza Hribarja Stari trg pri Ložu, Kindergarten Polhek



Why we decided to present

It is the way of our daily work, and we believe it is a good method of educational work with children; it is modern and encouraging of children's desire for learning throughout life.

Purpose

Working in activity centres allows for individualization and is entirely child-oriented. With active involvement in the activities, the child develops at his/her own pace. Interactions between children and adults are encouraged, which contribute to the development of quality interpersonal relationships. Children have a choice, followed by independence and responsibility. It offers learning opportunities and acquisition of knowledge important for life and the development of skills.



Goals

- Learning through play, learning from personal experience.
- Providing developmentally appropriate learning opportunities for every child – enabling individualization.
- Encouraging children's activities, cooperation between children, creativity, independence, research, problem solving.
- Active learning in small groups.



Frequency

Every day

Time period of implementation

During the school year

Duration of implementation

One school year



From – to

Whole day



Initiator of the activity

Preschool teacher, assistant teacher

Persons who are involved in organisation, planning and implementation of the activity and their tasks

Preschool teacher, assistant teacher

Target groups

All children in the group



Materials needed for implementation

Didactic and pictorial material, furniture

Methods and forms of work

- Methods: games, conversations, demonstrations, analysis, research, observation, listening, storytelling...
- Individual, pair-work, group-work

Steps before implementation (planning)

- Observing children
- Analysis
- Activity planning
- Organisation of space
- Preparation and production of material

Steps of implementation into practice

- Activity centres planning and arranging
- Preparation of aids, teaching aids, didactic and pictorial material
- Activities implementation
- Ways of observing, progress monitoring, feedback
- Evaluation
- Presentation of activity centres.
- Division into groups according to the initial sound of the child's name (the educator pronounces the sound M and Matias, Manja... are assigned to the activity centre). In the next choice of corners, the teacher makes sure that other children try the activities first.

ACTIVITY CENTRE A (LIBRARY)

Number of children: 6

Goals:

- the child learns the role of librarian and library member;
- takes on the role of an adult;
- learns etiquette in the library;
- develops communication skills;
- experiences joy, comfort, fun with the book;
- gets to know the book as a source of information;
- develops imagination;
- develops pre-reading and pre-writing skills;
- learns to narrate independently.

Methods: text-task, role play, conversation, listening

Forms: work in pairs, individual

Didactic tools: books (educational, cardboard, fairy tales, poetry, for the youngest children, magazines), glasses, necklace, slippers, computer, pointers, seat cushions, cards, phone, notebook, pens, crayons, posters, rules of conduct, schedule

The corner is divided into two parts, namely the reading room, with magazines, mazes, crossword puzzles and the like, and the part with books. The children share the roles. The librarian puts on glasses if necessary and gets dressed accordingly. Their task is to copy the name of the member from the card into a notebook and offer advice in choosing books. The lender browses through the books and shows them to the librarian. he/she writes down the number of borrowed books next to the name. The librarian organises the reading minutes. he/she tells stories with illustrations in a book or by heart. The listening is followed by re-creation.

ACTIVITY CENTRE B (CREATIVE CORNER)

Number of children: 4

Goals:

- the child learns about the process of making a book;
- develops finger skills, fine motor skills;
- seeks solutions;
- develops the ability of imagination.

Methods: video work, observation, brainstorming, work evaluation

Forms: individual

Material: computer, different types of paper, glue, adhesive tape, stapler, scissors, paper cutter, magazines, stickers

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4XxCneGvmo0>

The children watch a clip showing a handmade book. Then they think about the ways of making a book from the material available in preschool. They make a book on their own, asking their peers for help if necessary. They make up a story and illustrate it. They present their products.

ACTIVITY CENTRE C (OFFICE)

Number of children: 4

Goals:

- developing finger skills, fine motor skills;
- developing accuracy and perseverance.

Methods: observation, demonstration

Forms: individual

Material: tweezers, pom pom balls, elastics, nail plate, letter templates, patterns, kinetic sand, buttons of different colours and sizes, worksheets, bracelets with bowls, music, headphones

Children can choose from a variety of activities. With tweezers, they insert the pom pom balls into the openings. They pick up the buttons from the kinetic sand with tweezers and sort them into containers according to size. They form patterns with elastics on the nail plate. We tie empty containers to the child's wrist with both hands. The children pick up the buttons from the plate once with their left hand and once with their right hand and sort them into containers attached to their hands. They must be careful not to scatter the buttons. They draw different patterns in the notebook from straight, curved, oblique, vertically closed, non-closed and other lines. While working, they listen to music or stories of their choice.

ACTIVITY CENTRE D (BOARD GAMES)

Number of children: 4

Goals:

- the child recognizes the initial sound in the word;
- develops language at all language levels (from phonetic and morphological to syntactic and semantic).

Methods: explanation, work with thumbnails

Forms: individual

Material: memory game

Before the memory game, we perform a brain exercise and count-appoint the child to start the game. They play a memory game. They say the opening sound of the word next to each picture. When they find a matching pair, in addition to the opening sound they form a meaningful sentence.

Teachers help children all the time. Longer presence and assistance are expected to be needed in corners B and D.

An anecdote/statement of a child, a parent, confirming the reasonableness of the activity

The boy plays in the “library” activity centre. When the preschool teacher approaches him and tells him that she would like to borrow a book, the boy picks up glasses without glass (glasses for playing), “wipes” them in a T-shirt and puts them on. Then he starts looking for a book on the shelf.

Recommendations

Replacement of corners when needed. Estimated time of play in the corner is 20-30 minutes. When a child completes an activity, they can go to another corner where there is a vacancy.

The same activities remain in the corners until all children try them, as long as the interest lasts; there is the possibility of complementing/ changing the activities according to the needs of the individual.

The activity is described by

Valerija Škrbec



4.2.3.4. Primary school from Croatia

Title of activity

Morning circle

Name of institution

Primary school „Braća Bobetko“ Sisak

Why we decided to present

Because it is very effective practice



Purpose

- For example: Main purpose is to support each child to establish membership in the class while developing a classroom community and culture.
- It also provides a routine that positively impacts the development of self-regulation and contributes to independence and a sense of security in the classroom.
- The circle routine is especially important for children with special needs and it is an essential part of their upbringing.

Goals

The morning circle takes place in the same way every day, with the same sequence of events:

1. We all sit in a circle together and the teacher starts with the activities he/she will present below.
2. Greeting – Children greet each other. This step is important for establishing social contact.
3. Calendar – put today's date, day of the week and the weather on the class calendar.
4. Announcement of activities for this day – we make a deal on a schedule for the whole day. This way the children get a sense of security and live the day more peacefully because they know what is coming next.
5. Song – for a pleasant end to the morning circle, we sing the song "Real friendship".

Frequency

Daily

Time period of implementation

First school hour

**Duration of implementation**

10–15 minutes

From - to

7.50–8.05

**Initiator of the activity**

School teacher

Persons who are involved in organisation, planning and implementation of the activity and their tasks

School teacher

**Target groups**

Children from one class

Materials needed for implementation

Grade calendar

Methods and forms of work

- Discussion with the whole group of children
- Individual demonstration
- In pairs

Steps before implementation (planning)

1. Decision making about the theme, components, physical environment
2. Preparing equipment and materials

**Steps of implementation into practice**

1. Morning greeting – opportunity to learn names and pronounce them correctly, build verbal and nonverbal communication skills, respect each other (can be accomplished through pairing verbal greeting with specified movement – wave, handshake, friendly touch, etc. or by passing an object)
2. Sharing – opportunity to learn more about each other, to develop empathy, to practice waiting your turn, to practice verbal presentation
3. Group activity – can contribute to the building of academic skills, serve as an easy transition to the content that will be covered that day or be a relaxing activity to move away from difficult topics (can be accomplished through
4. News and announcements – announcement of the topic to be dealt with

An anecdote/statement of a child, a parent, confirming the reasonableness of the activity

- Reading and writing skills are not the most important, they are usually adopted very quickly by children. It is more important to adapt, to be disciplined, ready to cooperate with respect for the people around you, and this is achieved in the classroom of my child in the morning circle. (parent)
- The kids really enjoy the Morning circle and they don't want to miss it.
- "Teacher, I will never forget our morning circle! That was the most beautiful thing for me at school!" (child)

Recommendations

To follow the steps of the morning circle and make it a practice

The activity is described by

Refika Omerčehaić, class teacher

Svjetlana Balen, English teacher

4.2.3.5. Primary school from Latvia

Title of activity

Child's self-assessment



Name of institution

Valmiera 5th Secondary School

Why we decided to present

It is a very rare practice.

Purpose

Self-assessment of acquired skills and/or knowledge at the end of the lesson/activity



Goals

- To identify the aim of the lesson/activity – result to be achieved (at the beginning).
- To self-assess the knowledge and skills acquired during the lesson/activity (at the end).

Frequency

At the end of a covered topic

Time period of implementation

Throughout the school year

Duration of implementation

The assessment itself takes about 5 minutes; more for project/group/pair work assessment. It depends on the result to be achieved.

From – to

During the learning process



Initiator of the activity

Subject teacher

Persons who are involved in organisation, planning and implementation of the activity and their tasks

Subject teacher:

- Nominate the knowledge and skills to be acquired during the lesson/activity.
- Prepare tasks that will help to acquire new knowledge and skills.
- Prepare self-assessment for students.

Children:

- Get acquainted with the knowledge and skills to be acquired during the lesson/activity.
- Complete tasks that help to acquire new knowledge and skills.
- Performs a self-assessment.

Parents:

- Gets acquainted with the child's self-assessment and can see the child's knowledge and skills in a specific area.

Target groups

Primary school teachers

Materials needed for implementation

- Teaching materials required for the lesson
- Hand-out with self-assessment

Methods and forms of work

Methods and forms of work depend on the goal to be achieved in the lesson/activity and the skills and knowledge to be acquired.

Steps before implementation (planning)

- Nominate the knowledge and skills to be acquired during the lesson/activity.
- Prepare tasks that will help to acquire new knowledge and skills.
- Prepare self-assessment for students.

Steps of implementation into practice

- Introduce students to the result to be achieved of the lesson/activity.
- Introduce students to the tasks to be done in the lesson.
- Observe and guide students during the learning process. Help and explain if necessary.
- Discuss the importance of self-assessment and criteria.
- To hand out the self-assessment.
- Discuss the results of the self-assessment.

An anecdote/statement of a child, a parent, confirming the reasonableness of the activity

Children's most frequent assessments:

- "I already know it very well./I already understand it./I already can do it."
- "I still have to learn it."
- "I have to be more careful..."
- "Next time I will do it differently./Next time I'll try to do it better."

Recommendations

- To make transition process smoother, it is very important to build on self-assessment skills that children have already acquired in pre-school, using techniques and criteria already familiar to children.
- The teacher can collect self-assessments to see what children already can do and know, and what they need to work on. It also helps to track the adequacy of self-assessments.
- And, also, it is very important to discuss assessments with children – why they assessed their work in that particular way, what made them think so, etc.?

The activity is described by

Primary school teacher Līga Veikšāne

	S started to learn	T continue to learn	A mastered	P mastered in depth
I can determine even and odd numbers.				
I can name two-digit numbers.				
I know the order of numbers up to 100.				

4.2.3.6. Primary school from Slovenia

Title of activity

Activities centres and lesson organisation in the first grade

Name of institution

Primary School heroja Janeza Hribarja Stari trg pri Ložu

Why we decided to present

- It is a very effective practice.
- Thus, pupils acquire new knowledge faster and in depth and consolidate learnt knowledge.
- It encourages mutual help and cooperation.

Purpose

Organization of lessons in the activities centres encourages the acquisition of new knowledge and its consolidation. It offers a pupil the possibility of participation as well as retreat. The given material is available for use for a longer period of time; pupils use it in accordance to their own interests and as a means for meeting the learning goals.

Working in small groups is efficient, it requires more active pupil participation and promotes mutual help and cooperation.

Goals

- They enable the organisation of learner-focused lessons.
- They promote action, initiative, autonomy, constructivist approach, cooperation, responsibility, success.
- They enable active learning.



Frequency

Several times a year

Time period of implementation

Whole school year



Duration of implementation

A school year

From – to

All morning or individual lessons



Initiator of the activity

Teacher in class

Persons who are involved in organisation, planning and implementation of the activity and their tasks

Teachers in the first grade

Target groups

First grade pupils

Materials needed for implementation

Didactic and pictorial material

Methods and forms of work

Individual, pair and group work

Steps before implementation (planning)

- Organisation of classroom
- Planning of activity
- Preparation and making of material

To be concrete: Some activities centres in the classroom are permanent, for example the maths (the themes are changed according to topics and revising). Some of the centres are added according to the themes and current activities (for example: human body, sense organs, the weather...)

Sometimes, the work is organised according to learning abilities. In those cases, we leave the learning materials in the classroom for some time, so the students can use it whenever they wish.

Steps of implementation into practice

- Planning and arranging of the activities centres
- Preparation of accessories, teaching aids, didactic and pictorial material
- Implementation of activities
- Observation methods, progress monitoring, feedback
- Evaluation

To be concrete: maths, literacy, creative, music and reading activity centre

An anecdote/statement of a child, a parent, confirming the reasonableness of the activity

After the children worked in activity centres we asked them what they learnt that day. One of the boys said: "We weren't learning at all today, we were just playing. It was such a fun."

Recommendations

The place must be organised according to a clearly defined purpose and content of the lesson or topic. All activities must be linked and designed according to the objectives of the curriculum and in accordance with pupils' abilities and needs.

The borders between the corners must be clear and the materials arranged according to the skill that pupils are acquiring or practising. The rules in each corner should be clearly presented (in pictures) and should not change.

The activity is described by

Nataša Vesel Plos, Helena Novak Obreza



4.3. Professional continuity

4.3.1. More about the professional continuity

Professional continuity is the preparedness of the preschool staff and primary school teachers to facilitate children's transition to primary education.

It requires (that):

- staff and teachers receive adequate pre-service and in-service training (aligning the level and bridge the content of pre-service training, more and relevant transition-specific training, joint education of educators and teachers, interinstitutional learning communities (educators, teachers, counsellors), etc.)
- support from the structural and procedural environment in which the professionals operate (comparable working environment, salary and work benefits and the degree to which levels of status and recognition vary between preschool and primary school professionals, legal provisions for the exchange of information, time and physical conditions to co-operate, etc.).

Professional continuity can be seen as a facilitating factor or even precondition for ensuring continuity of pedagogical and developmental practices (OECD, 2017).¹¹

If we try to look at all this in a more concrete way, professional continuity can be provided:

- if there is a unified formal education of preschool and school teachers
- by implementing further training programs for both target groups at the same time (So if preschool and school teachers participate in joint trainings on certain topics regarding ensuring smooth transition at the same time)
- by employing a preschool teacher as the 2nd professional worker in the 1st grade (in order to ensure pedagogical continuity) if system (like in Slovenia) enables two professionals in the class
- with the cyclical transfer of ECEC professionals from preschool to primary school if the system (like in Slovenia) enables preschool teachers to be 'in transit' between preschool and school – this means that preschool teacher with preschool children goes to the 1st grade, is there for one year and then returns to preschool
- by forming inter-institutional learning communities that are for joint professional meetings of preschool and school teachers and educators in order to reflect their own pedagogical practice and to develop common understanding of what is important in this period, etc.

¹¹ OECD (2017). Starting Strong V: Transitions from Early Childhood Education and Care to Primary Education, Starting Strong. OECD Publishing: Paris. <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264276253-en>

4.3.2. An insight into the current situation in the practice at the level of professional continuity

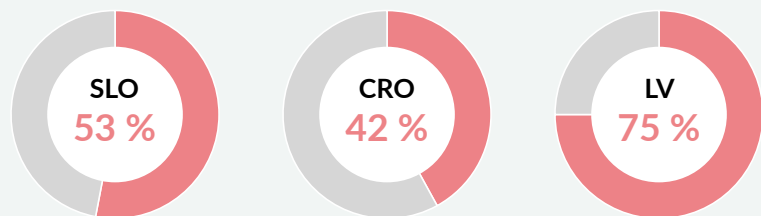
We asked preschool teachers if they have participated in joint trainings for preschool and primary school teachers in the last 5 years.

As can be seen from the table below, quite a few of them stated that they participated in such trainings, but it should be noted that in Slovenia and Latvia, most of these teachers state that they have attended such trainings less than once a year in the last five years, while most teachers from Croatia stated that they have attended such trainings more than once a year.

It is also important to emphasise that from participants' answers and the content of trainings that they attended, it was not possible to identify if the content of trainings refers to ensuring smooth transition. In this context, the interpretation of these numbers is quite impossible.

Preschool teachers

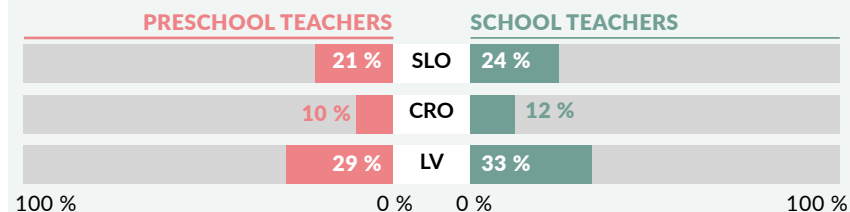
Participation in joint trainings for preschool and primary school teachers in the last 5 years



We asked preschool and school teachers if they have observed the practice in preschool/primary school in the past school year.

As can be seen from the table below, only a third or even less professionals observed the practice in the class of another institution. However, it should be emphasised that the percentage would be lower if only those visits were made that were intended exclusively for this purpose. Most of them stated that it was a one-time event and most often as part of a teacher's visit with preschool children and vice versa.

Did you observe the practice in preschool/primary school in the past school year?

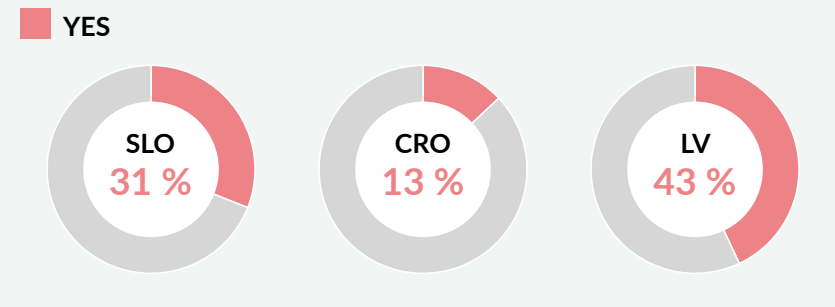


We asked school teachers if they have participated in the past school year in meetings with preschool teachers with the aim of unifying educational approaches in preschool and primary school.

As can be seen from the table below, there are some school teachers at the level of all three countries that participated in meetings with preschool teachers with the aim of unifying educational approaches in preschool and primary school. Most of them who participated in such meetings stated that it was a one-time event, while most school teachers who do not have such experience stated that the reason for that is because it was not enabled/offered.

School teachers

In the past school year 2018/19, did you participate in meetings with preschool teachers with the aim of unifying educational approaches in preschool and primary school?

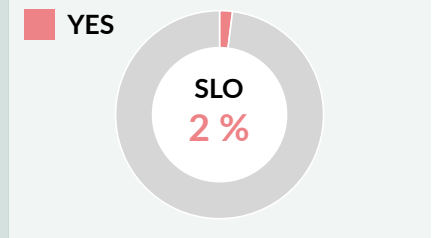


We asked Slovenian preschool teachers if they have experience of cyclical transition, i.e. that together with preschool children from their department they pass from preschool to school, are employed at the school for one year and then return to preschool?

As can be seen from the table below, only 2% of educators surveyed said they had this experience, although the possibility of this is systematically regulated at the state level. There is a legal basis for this and based on this the school may employ preschool teachers for one year that have an employment relationship in a preschool.

Preschool teachers

Do you have experience of passing from preschool to school with your preschool children, being employed at the school for one year and then returning to preschool?

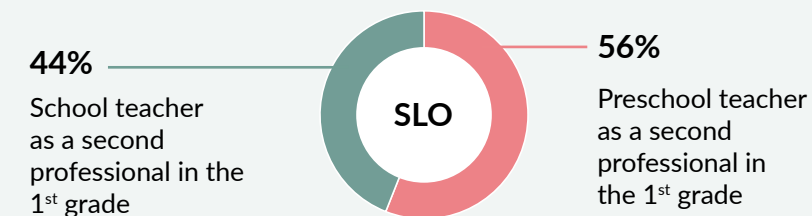


We asked Slovenian school teachers to indicate the education of the second professional in their class – we were interested in whether there is a preschool or school teacher in their class as a 2nd professional.

According to the table below, in a little more than half of the cases (56%), a school teacher is employed as a second professional in the 1st grade, while in 44% of cases, a preschool teacher is employed as a second professional. This option, which is also provided at the state level in Slovenia in order to ensure pedagogical continuity, is often unrealized, because it is much easier for management from an organisational point of view to employ a school teacher (in this case, it is easier to arrange replacement in case of sick leave, etc.).

School teachers

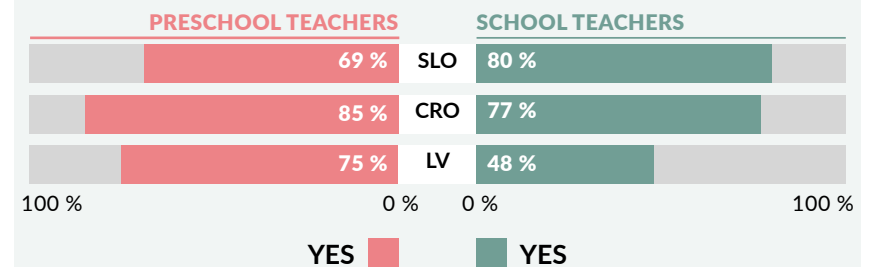
Please indicate the education of the second professional in your class.



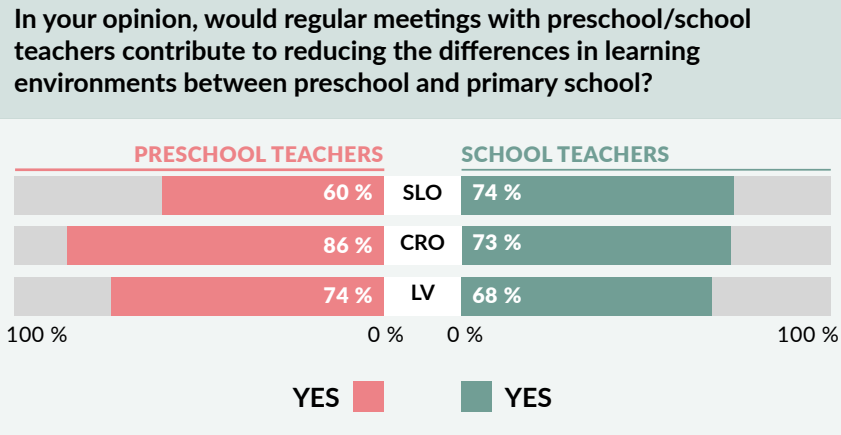
We asked preschool and school teachers if they would attend additional trainings on the topic of soft transition of preschool children to primary school with the aim of ensuring better support for children in transition?

As can be seen from the table below, about 70% of preschool and school teachers from all three countries would attend additional training. Only the Latvian school teachers are not as interested in that. This is useful information for pre-service educational institutions and in-service training providers.

Would you attend additional trainings on the topic of soft transition of preschool children to primary school with the aim of ensuring better support for children in transition?



We asked preschool teachers whether, in their opinion, regular meetings with primary school teachers would contribute to reducing the differences in learning environments between preschool and primary school? We asked school teachers the same question.



Think about professional continuity in your country/at the level of your institution/your practice:

- Do I have information on joint training of educators and teachers?
- How often do I attend them?
- If there are no such trainings, to whom can I address the initiative?
- Am I in contact with the preschool from whom I will get children in 1st grade next year?/Am I in contact with the school teacher to whom children from my group will go next year?
- How often do I observe practice in preschool?/How often do I observe practice in 1st grade?
- What follows after observation?
- What tools do I use to help myself with observation?
- Do we have inter-institutional learning communities that are for joint professional meetings of preschool and school teachers in order to reflect on their own pedagogical practice and to develop common understanding of what is important in this period, etc.? If not, where can I get more info about that?
- Who can take the initiative for this?

4.3.3. Examples of good practice regarding professional continuity

4.3.3.1. Preschool from Croatia

Title of activity

Professional learning community (PLC)



Name of institution

Dječji vrtić Sisak Novi



Why we decided to present

Because this is a very rare practice. Within our education system, there is a loose connection between preschool and school professionals. In most cases, they rarely cooperate and even less often they have the opportunity to meet and learn together and from each other.

Purpose

The purpose is to empower preschool and school professionals (preschool and school teachers and counsellors) to initiate change and improve the quality of work in institutions in the field of transition from preschool to school.



Goals

- To develop a common understanding among preschool and school professionals about stimulative learning environments
- To discuss and improve the quality of teaching
- To observe and reflect on videos that illustrate quality practice
- To exchange examples of good practice
- To find and develop new ways of achieving pedagogical and developmental continuity



Frequency

Once a month

Time period of implementation

In the afternoon from 16.00 to 18.00

Duration of implementation

One year



From - to

From October to May



Initiator of the activity

School and preschool management

Persons who are involved in organisation, planning and implementation of the activity and their tasks

- Preschool and school principal (they agree on mutual cooperation and participation in the PLC)
- Preschool counsellor (she invites and motivates preschool teachers in the year before starting school to participate in PLC, participates in finding new ways of achieving pedagogical and developmental continuity)
- School counsellor (she invites and motivates school teachers of the fourth grade to participate in PLC, participates in finding new ways of achieving pedagogical and developmental continuity)
- Preschool teacher (prepares the activities and didactic materials needed for the observation)
- School teacher (prepares the activities and teaching aids and didactic materials needed for the observation)
- PLC facilitator (prepares meeting agendas, establishes a meeting schedule, facilitates the meetings)



Target groups

- Preschool teachers in the year before starting school
- First grade teachers
- Preschool and school counsellors

Materials needed for implementation

- Computer
- Projector
- Action plan sheets

Methods and forms of work

- Presentation
- Observation
- Reflection
- Discussion with the whole group



Steps before implementation (planning)

- Informing preschool and school practitioners about what the learning community is
- Agreeing on the time and place of meetings
- Agreeing on norms of behaviour
- Selection of topics for quality improvement

Steps of implementation into practice

- Warming up activity
- Reflecting on carried out activities from the last meeting – with the use of videos
- Developing a common understanding of quality practice – discussion about one quality indicator based on the use of different materials and activities (joint reading of articles or chapters from professional literature, videos...)
- Planning the next steps – making individual action plans – planning which of the ideas discussed will be put into practice by the next meeting
- Closing the meeting – conclusion and evaluation



An anecdote/statement of a child, a parent, confirming the reasonableness of the activity

“Soon after the beginning of PLC, I thought – what did I need this for, how am I going to do it and now towards the end I have completely changed my mind. I am glad that I got involved, I feel really good, I learned a lot about myself and from others.” (Preschool teacher)

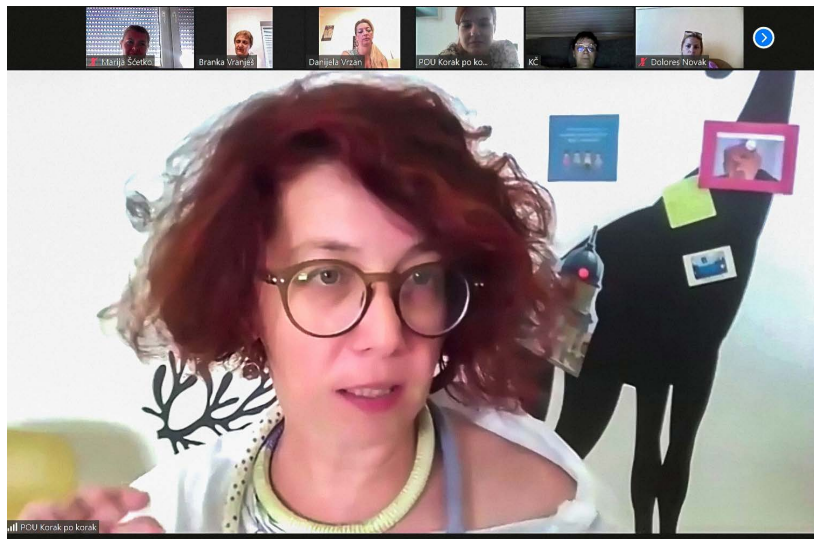
Recommendations

Participation in the learning community should be voluntary because it directly affects the motivation for doing all the work.

The activity is described by

Sandra Kramarić, preschool principal

Marija Ščetko, preschool counsellor



4.3.3.2. Preschool from Latvia



Title of activity

Experience exchange meetings for pre-school teachers and 1st grade teachers between one school and one preschool.

Name of institution

Valmieras PII "Ezītis"



Why we decided to present

Because it is very effective practice



Purpose

Strengthening of the cooperation between preschool and school and raising awareness of its importance for a smooth transition



Goals

- Building a common understanding of the transition process
- Mutual acquaintance between both institutions and with their practices through observations of the learning process in preschool and discussions

Frequency

Once a year

Time period of implementation

March



Duration of implementation

2-3 hours

From - to

9.00-12.00



Initiator of the activity

Preschool head and deputy headmaster

Persons who are involved in organisation, planning and implementation of the activity and their tasks

- Preschool head and deputy headmaster – agree with the management of the particular school on a possible date and time for the meeting.
- Deputy headmaster – plan and organise the course of the meeting, inform about the meeting and agree with the pre-school teachers and their assistant on their participation.
- Preschool teachers (for children attending preschool in the last year before school) – demonstrate the learning process and participate in discussion after demonstration.
- Preschool teachers' assistant – participates in the organisation of the learning process during the demonstration.

Target groups

- School teachers
- Preschool teachers (for children attending preschool in the last year before school)

Materials needed for implementation

Computer, filming camera and internet connection, if the meeting takes place remotely – virtually or if preschool decided to also demonstrate some recorded learning processes.

Methods and forms of work

- Demonstration of learning process.
- Discussion with the whole group (preschool teachers, school teachers, deputy of headmaster).

Steps before implementation (planning)

- Agreement on the date and time.
- Deputy of headmaster informs preschool teachers and their assistants about the visit of primary school teachers.
- Preschool teachers inform the children of the group about the visit of primary school teachers.

Steps of implementation into practice

- Primary school teachers arrive in pre-school and are expected by the headmaster and deputy headmaster.
- Primary school teachers are observing the learning process.
- Discussion with the whole group (preschool teachers, school teachers, deputy of headmaster) about the observed learning process at preschool and about the similarities and differences between learning process in both institutions.

An anecdote/statement of a child, a parent, confirming the reasonableness of the activity

Primary school teachers:

- “We found a reference point from which to start learning process with future first graders”;
- “Preschoolers are much more developed and knowledgeable than we thought”.

Recommendations

Regular exchange of experience between primary and pre-school teachers is very useful. It provides not only an opportunity to understand trends in children’s behaviour and learning abilities, but also helps to strengthen cooperation built on mutual understanding between preschool and school. One meeting is not enough to ensure smooth transition, but it can be used as good starting point for future cooperation and partnership.

The activity is described by

Preschool teacher Evita Vēvere

4.3.3.3. Preschool from Slovenia

Title of activity

Professional meetings (actives) between preschool and 1st triad teachers

Name of institution

Primary school heroja Janeza Hribarja and preschool Vrtec Polhek, Stari trg pri Ložu

Why we decided to present

Because it is very effective practice.

Purpose

To ensure better cooperation between school and preschool and to help children to work with each other.

Goals

- Exchanging experiences and examples of good practice, forming action planes
- Solving dilemmas and problems
- Cooperation between school and preschool

Frequency

Twice a year


Time period of implementation

November/December and June

Duration of implementation

One hour

From - to

15.00-16.00 

Initiator of the activity

School headmaster and assistant for the preschool

Persons who are involved in organisation, planning and implementation of the activity and their tasks

- Leader of the meeting (she prepares the content of the meeting, sends the invitations to other teachers, leads the meeting)
- Preschool/School teachers - (they prepare different materials, suggestions, dilemmas, if needed. They report about the tasks given in the previous meeting. They prepare common activities for children.

Target groups

Preschool/school teachers

Materials needed for implementation

- Computers
- Interactive board

Methods and forms of work

- Lecture to the whole group of teachers
- Discussion with the whole group of teachers, individual in pairs

Steps before implementation (planning)

- The leader prepares the content of the meeting, sends the invitations.
- The leader prepares different material, if needed.
- Teachers prepare for the meeting; they provide different materials and prepare the report about their previous work.

Steps of implementation into practice

- Meeting of professionals in a suitable space at the school
- Presentation of the asset agenda and leading, directing the meeting
- Formation of groups that will work together (one preschool group and one school class)
- Creating an action plan, reporting on past work
- Initiatives, proposals, roadmap

**An anecdote/statement of a child, a parent, confirming the reasonableness of the activity**

When we started with the assets between kindergarten and school, we often thought about the purpose of the meetings, we were sceptical, maybe we even thought it was pointless. Of course, every start is difficult. But when we look back now, on the whole path we have walked, we see progress and that all fears have been superfluous. We laugh many times at our initial concerns and resistance and make joke of it.

**Recommendations**

After several meetings, we found that senior students could also be included.

**The activity is described by**

Mirjam Štefančič



4.3.3.4. Primary school from Croatia



Title of activity

Interinstitutional observations of practice

Name of institution

Osnovna škola "Braća Bobetko Sisak", Sisak



Why we decided to present

Because this is a very rare practice. Practitioners in Croatia generally have no insight into what the practices of practitioners from another system look like.



Purpose

To gain insight into the practice of a practitioner from another institution and to create a common understanding on certain pedagogical concepts among practitioners.



Goals

- Preschool and school practitioners get to know each other and develop trust among themselves
- To share ideas and expertise
- To provide opportunities to discuss challenges and successes with trusted colleagues

Frequency

Every month during one school year

Time period of implementation

From October to May

Duration of implementation

- If done via Zoom platform using videos – 16.00–17.30
- If done by live observation of practice – 9.00–10.30/11.00



From – to

Around 1,5–2 hours



Initiator of the activity

School and preschool counsellors

Persons who are involved in organisation, planning and implementation of the activity and their tasks

- Preschool teacher (she prepares the activities and didactic materials needed for the observation)
- School teacher (she prepares the activities and teaching aids and didactic materials needed for the observation)
- Preschool counsellor (she invites and motivates preschool teachers in the year before starting school to participate in observing practice, participates in making the video)
- School counsellor (she invites and motivates school teachers of the first grade to participate in observing practice, participates in making a video)
- Preschool and school principal (they agree on mutual cooperation and participation in the observation of practice)



Target groups


- Preschool teachers in the year before starting school
- First grade teachers
- Preschool and school counsellors

Materials needed for implementation

- Video camera
- Mobile phone
- Computer
- Projector
- Observation tools

Methods and forms of work

- Individual demonstration
- Observation
- Self reflection
- Discussion and reflection with the whole group



Steps before implementation (planning)

- Forming a group of practitioners
- Creating a time frame of implementation
- Agreeing upon ways of observing and reflecting
- Planning the activities for the observation and preparing the necessary teaching aids and didactic materials
- In case of a Zoom meeting, implementation of activities and creating a video

Steps of implementation into practice



- Warm up game/ice breaker
- Teacher self-reflection (teacher being observed specifies the focus area of the practice that will be observed and analysed and talks about expectations and feedback that she wants to gain through colleagues' reflection)
- Conversation before observation of practice (teacher gives the context to the observation that can help the observers to understand the background of the lesson/activities being observed; it also gives the opportunity to develop trust among practitioners)
- Observation of practice (observers can take notes about the facts they see or hear)
- Teacher and observer reflection (teacher being observed briefly talks about the activities carried out and her observations and dilemmas; observers ask questions, ask for clarifications, share their experiences, offer ideas for improvement, teacher being observed can comment on reflection and has a chance to say which suggestions he/she thinks will help)
- Conversation after observation (everyone has the opportunity to say what they have learned, what made them think about, what they will apply in their practice...)

An anecdote/statement of a child, a parent, confirming the reasonableness of the activity



For the first time, I had the opportunity to see what and how it is done in preschool. I have to admit I thought kids in preschool were just playing. Now I see that preschool children can do a lot and learn a lot by playing. (School teacher)

Recommendations

In order to achieve the best results, we recommend that inter-institutional observations of practice be conducted within the professional learning community PLC).

In our experience, it takes a longer time to build trust among practitioners if meetings take place by using Zoom or other platforms, especially if practitioners do not know each other beforehand.

The activity is described by

Refika Omerćehaić, class teacher

Svjetlana Balen, English teacher

4.3.3.5. Primary school from Latvia

Title of activity

Joint learning activity for preschool and school teachers of Valmiera region – sharing experience of the learning process for the same children in preschool and 1st grade



Name of institution

Valmiera 5th Secondary School



Why we decided to present

It is a very innovative practice

Purpose

Facilitating smooth transition through introduction with work methods in preschool and 1st grade.



Goals

- Show video lessons in which the structure and different teaching methods of the lesson are shown
- Discuss common and different teaching methods and techniques in preschool and primary school
- Answer colleagues' questions about the lesson



Frequency

Once a year, two years in a row

Time period of implementation

February or March

Duration of implementation

Meetings for 2–3h, every day one week in a row



From – to

14.00–17.00



Initiator of the activity

Relevant Pedagogical Association/Local authorities/municipal pre-school and primary school study field coordinators

Persons who are involved in organisation, planning and implementation of the activity and their tasks

- Representatives Of the Relevant Pedagogical Association/ municipal pre-school and primary school study field coordinators
- Preschool teachers who are working with 6 year old children
- Primary school teachers who:
 - Will be working with the same children (in the 1st year of activity).
 - Are working with the same children (in the second year of activity).



Target groups

Preschool and primary school teachers of Valmiera region

Materials needed for implementation

Materials for lesson, camera, computer, microphone

Methods and forms of work

- Presentation of the video lesson
- Discussion

**Steps before implementation (planning)**

70 preschool and primary school teachers film their lessons and think about teaching methods used in their classrooms.

Steps of implementation into practice

5-7 videos are shown at one meeting grouped around specific topics (teachers can choose to attend learning activity with specific topic). Afterwards the structure and different teaching methods in preschool and primary school are discussed jointly exploring ways to bring these practices closer together to facilitate a smooth transition.

**An anecdote/statement of a child, a parent, confirming the reasonableness of the activity**

Teachers' comments during the online meeting.

- "Now I see a daily routine in primary school."
- "I will try to use the morning circle at school as well. This could help children prepare for the day."
- "Children spend a lot of time outside, also to study. I will try it too."
- "It was useful to see the activities of the children in the centres."
- "I saw the real learning process at school. I will use some ideas on a daily basis."

Recommendations

These meetings are very useful for preschool teachers who will be working with preschoolers next year and for primary school teachers who will be teaching 1st graders. Implementing this joint learning activity online allows a large number of teachers to get involved.

The activity is described by

Primary school teacher Dace Ciguze.



4.3.3.6. Primary school from Slovenia

Title of activity

Role of Assistant teacher (second teacher)/preschool teacher in the first grade

Name of institution

Primary School heroja Janeza Hribarja Stari trg pri Ložu



Why we decided to present

It is an innovative practice for other countries. In Slovenia, this working arrangement has been established since the introduction of nine-year school (devetletka).

Purpose

With their methods, the preschool teacher, as an Assistant teacher (second teacher) in class, provides a softer approach to teaching. With their experience and knowledge of working with younger children, they bring different methods and forms of work to school. Cooperation between a class teacher and a preschool teacher is very important, as children at this stage of development learn mostly through didactic games, pictorial material, movement activities and others.

It is essential that both teachers plan, implement and evaluate the activities and work together as a team.

Goals

- Together they plan work and activities to achieve the set goals.
- Mutual learning.
- They monitor and evaluate pupils' work and progress.
- They prepare activities according to the individual's needs as well as those of the class as a whole.



Frequency

According to the standard number of pupils in the first grade, the following is determined:

- 10 hours for 15 to 23 pupils
- 15 hours for 24 to 28 pupils

Time period of implementation

Before noon

Duration of implementation

A year

From - to

September 1-June 24



Initiator of the activity

/

Persons who are involved in organisation, planning and implementation of the activity and their tasks

- Class teacher and preschool teacher
- School principal (establishes a working team)

Target groups

First grade pupils

Materials needed for implementation

/

Methods and forms of work

Ongoing negotiation, evaluation, planning, teaching

Steps before implementation (planning)

- Selection of working team (school principal)
- Planning of class activities
- Preparing of accessories and teaching aids
- Implementation of activities
- Ways of observing and monitoring of progress, feedback
- Evaluation

**Steps of implementation into practice**

- Sharing and exchange of ideas between both teachers.
- Division of teaching roles according to one's stronger areas – distribution of knowledge and skills.
- Possibility of close monitoring of pupils' progress.
- Teaching is further individualised, differentiated and personalised.

An anecdote/statement of a child, a parent, confirming the reasonableness of the activity

- First graders often role-play in their free time. During observation, they often divide the roles of teachers among two pupils.
- One child said proudly: "I have two teachers and they are the nicest teachers in our school. I would love if they stay with us until the 9th grade."

**Recommendations**

Cooperation between a preschool teacher and a class teacher is beneficial to pupils especially. They tend to be more successful and work-motivated; lessons are conducted in an interesting way and possibly in smaller groups. In this regard, both teachers are given more opportunities to observe the pupils closely and monitor their learning progress and knowledge.

The activity is described by

Nataša Vesel Plos,
Helena Novak Obreza



5

THE MOST IMPORTANT GUIDELINES FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF THIS FIELD IN THE FUTURE

The purpose of the guidelines is to provide preschool and primary school teachers and administrative staff with support and advice on how to improve transition in their specific contexts in order to maintain positive effects of preschool education and allow children to move to school easily and ensure equality of educational outcomes for all children¹², as well as draw the attention of policy makers (municipal and national level) to the importance of ensuring a smooth transition from preschool to school.

¹² OECD (2017), Starting Strong V: Transitions from Early Childhood Education and Care to Primary Education. https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/starting-strong-v_9789264276253-en#page17

5.1. For preschool teachers and primary school teachers

1. **Ensuring continuity** (continuity of curriculum/teaching programmes, developmental goals, pedagogy and pedagogical approaches, etc.) is essential for smooth transition. The transition can be facilitated and continuity can be ensured by reducing the differences between preschool and school. In turn, it requires mutual understanding and knowledge of the work and practice of the other party involved. There are various ways in which this can be achieved:

- **Organisation and participation in meetings with preschool/primary school teachers with the aim of unifying educational approaches**

Such meetings can be organised as a follow-up activity after the observations of practice to discuss dilemmas and differences in approaches that were noticed during the observations. If there is no opportunity for observation, such meetings may take place without them with the aim of presenting and discussing educational approaches and finding the elements of unifying them in the context of each institution.

- **Mutual observations of preschool and primary school practices**

Possibility for preschool teachers to observe practice in school and for school teachers to practice in preschool is one of the simplest and at the same time most effective ways to get to know a practice in another educational institution. In this way, the school teacher can really see how much learning work is taking place and how it is taking place in preschool, and preschool teachers can better understand which aspects of school preparation need more attention and which less. It is important that preschool teachers do not try to teach children the skills and knowledge they will acquire later in school. For school teachers, on the other hand, it is important to see what children already know and do not allow them to lose it when they start school but build on it.

- **Strengthening and maintaining child-centred approach, exploring and learning through play**

It is important that a child-centred approach is strengthened and maintained at preschool and school, allowing children to learn actively and self-directedly. Providing children with many opportunities for active exploring and experimenting is part of it that is important for both settings. Also, as the main form of teaching and learning in preschool is learning through play or lessons based on play, the transition can also be smoothed by continuing to use play elements in school.

- **Unifying elements of the daily routine**

Familiar elements of daily routine represent another factor that facilitates children's transition from preschool to school. There are several elements of a daily routine that school teachers can successfully take over from preschool teachers and vice versa, and it is up to each teacher to decide which elements are best suited to the needs of the children and context of his/her class. Morning circle is an example which is easy to use and has a major impact on the well-being of children in the transition process. It is a daily ritual widely used in preschool and easily applicable to the school, as it does not require any special space. In turn, preschool teachers could consider offering time for quiet play for those children who no longer want to sleep instead of the usual preschool bedtime after lunch.

- **Organisation of learning environment**

The exchange of experiences and the transfer of good practice between school and preschool teachers regarding the design of the learning environment is another aspect that helps to ensure a successful transition. The biggest difference in terms of learning environment between preschool and school is related to the activity centres. If 98–100% of preschool teachers organise at least 3 activity centres in their classrooms, the reduction in the use of activity centres as a daily practice in schools varies by 17 to 70%, giving way to a more traditional classroom setting according to the teacher's frontal teaching style.¹³ Activity centres not only facilitate the transition as a familiar element of the learning environment for children, but they also help to provide an individual approach to each child, and they increase the availability of the unstructured materials for children in their learning process – also, in this respect, the difference between preschool and school varies in terms of a decrease of 20% to 50%. The experience of preschool teachers can be a good support for school teachers in setting up and using activity centres, ensuring quality pedagogical practice and smooth transition.

2. Smooth transition can only be achieved through **close and purposeful cooperation between preschool and school**. If such cooperation doesn't exist, every teacher, whether working in preschool or school, who recognizes the importance of transition can be the initiator of such cooperation. If cooperation between preschool and school already exists, teachers can support collaboration by engaging and contributing in the activities that are offered. Cooperation can include following activities/practices:

- Joint trainings for preschool and school teachers;
- Meetings of preschool and school teachers to learn about each other's practices, to unify approaches, to share information on children's development, etc.;
- Participation at the professional learning communities of preschool teachers and teachers (PLC);
- Joint planning and implementation of various activities for smoothening the transition process;
- Sharing and transfer of good experiences from each other: between school and preschool, school and school, preschool and preschool;
- Enriching cooperation with fun, joyful events for both preschool and school teachers, to maintain play elements in the learning and increase motivation.

¹³ TIM, Transition is our Mission, 2022 http://iic.lv/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/TIM_international-Brochure.pdf

3. Ensuring cooperation between different contexts

The smooth transition cannot be achieved by focusing solely on the child: positive communication and cooperation are needed, fostering mutual understanding and joint efforts not only between preschool and school teachers but also among parents, families and others involved in the process. Cooperation can be ensured by the following activities:

- Offering a variety of activities to increase parents' awareness of transition and development of innovative activities to involve parents in the transition.
- Listening to parents – all parents may have questions, concerns and expectations about the first year of school. It is important for the teacher to find out about them, what can be done through conversations, interviews, questionnaires, etc.
- Providing parents with comprehensive, timely and clear information on issues regarding transition to address or reduce their questions and concerns. It is essential that a variety of strategies to reach families are used, adapting them to the capabilities and needs of each family. It can be online conferences or phone calls, messaging groups or e-mails, individual or group meetings, social media, etc., but the most important thing is that the information reaches all parents and the most vulnerable families in particular.
- Informing parents, sharing information about children's development in simple, parent-friendly and clear language.
- Organising individual meetings with the parents/family of each child before the graduation from preschool (preschool teachers) and before starting school (school teacher).
- Careful consideration of children's views and expectations, attention to children's needs and addressing them. Questionnaires for children or conversations about their expectations, their feelings and thoughts about school can be used.

- Developing different activities for presenting the new environment to children and their parents. These can be activities where preschool children visit the school and take part in school lessons or where school children visit the preschool and talk with children about their school experience, as well as activities intended only for parents or for families together. The more different activities are offered and implemented, the better children will be able to get to know the school, which will allow them to feel more confident during the transition.
- Ensuring the continuity of receiving special support for children and families. Often, children and families receive individual support from various specialists already in preschool, according to their needs. It is important that this support is provided during the transition process and continues at school.
- Recognizing the need for additional support and requesting support – as ensuring a smooth transition is a very complex process involving a wide range of people, the teacher does not have to feel lonely in the face of difficulties and challenges and does not have to try to overcome them alone, which is not even possible. Instead, it is important to seek support and help, first and foremost from colleagues and the management of the own institution but also from parents, professionals and colleagues from other educational institutions and specialists.

5.2. For administrative staff of preschool institutions and schools

Although the direct implementers of a qualitative transition are teachers, responsibility for managing smooth transition is mainly in the hands of the administrative staff of preschools and schools. It is the management of the educational institution that is responsible for providing all the necessary support to teachers so that they can carry out their work in a high-quality and professional manner, including ensuring a smooth transition. And, it is the administrative staff that can build a strong and equal partnership between preschool and school, which is crucial for smooth transition of children from preschool to school and is recognized by teachers as the most appropriate additional support in it.

The role of management in ensuring a smooth transition involves many aspects and can be implemented through a wide range of activities:

- **Organising joint trainings for preschool and school teachers**
Management of educational institutions have the overall responsibility for professional development of their teachers. In order for teachers to be able to ensure a smooth transition, they need to be well prepared for both the transition process and the cooperation that is a prerequisite for its success. Joint trainings of preschool and school teachers on qualitative transition are one way to address this need. It is crucial that management understands the importance of transition from preschool to school and supports professional development in this field by initiating and organising joint trainings and encouraging and enabling teachers to take part in such training programmes.
- **Building strong and equal partnership between preschool and school**
The management of educational institutions also plays a very important role in initiating and maintaining cooperation with other educational institutions, and only with the support and active participation of management can such cooperation

become an equal partnership. It is important to remember that leaders of educational institutions act as role models for teachers – seeing cooperation at the management level will make teachers more motivated to cooperate themselves.

- **Encouraging and providing opportunities for teachers from both institutions for active collaboration**
It includes initiation and organisation of different activities for fostering cooperation such as interinstitutional observations, meetings for unifying pedagogical approaches or sharing information on child development, providing feedback from primary school to preschool and vice versa, reciprocal visits and other. It also includes technical support, such as providing teachers with the time, place, etc. for these activities.
- **Creation of interinstitutional professional learning communities (PLC)**
PLC is a method that ensures regular and continuous cooperation between preschool and school professionals with the aim of building a common understanding of the transition and working together to ensure its quality implementation. It is very important that administrative staff are not only involved in the forming of PLCs but together with teachers also take active participation in it. The participation of management representatives in the PLC not only reaffirms to teachers the importance of the transition but also serves as an additional motivator for cooperation, helps to create a common vision and collectively plan development paths and helps management to follow the process.
- **Ensuring cooperation with parents**
The management of educational institutions also has a very important role to play in cooperation with parents, not only in establishing direct contacts with parents and being present in the transition process but also in encouraging and motivating teachers to cooperate with families. It is important for management together with teachers to plan activities for cooperation and supporting parents during transition. The plan could include a variety of activities for informing parents

– finding the best ways to provide parents with all necessary information about educational institutions and transition, thus reducing parental concerns and ignorance and raising their awareness about the transition as well as activities providing different opportunities for parents to actively participate in the transition process.

- **Ensuring a balance between information exchange and data protection**

The management of educational institutions should facilitate the exchange of information between preschool and school teachers, and, at the same time, it must ensure that all data protection rules are complied with. Therefore, the management needs to provide teachers and staff with clear guidance on what information they are allowed and supposed to share, encouraging them to communicate details that can help provide the best support for each individual child during the transition from preschool to school.

- **Providing additional support or specialists**

In order to ensure the quality of pedagogical work in any educational institution, it is important that the management of the institution is open to listen to and consider the needs and suggestions of teachers for additional support in ensuring the smooth transition of children from preschool to school. Although teachers acknowledge that they receive support from colleagues, management and parents during the transition, there are an alarming number of professionals, especially among preschool teachers, who do not receive any support, and this should be a sign that management needs to respond.¹⁴ In situations where teachers need support from specialists such as a psychologist or speech therapist, the management has a role and responsibility in responding to these needs by taking necessary steps to engage additional specialist support if an educational institution doesn't have one.

- **Monitoring and advocacy of good transitional practices**

It is the management of educational institutions that can make a major contribution to raising awareness among both society and policy makers regarding the importance of ensuring a successful transition from pre-school to school. It is the heads of educational institutions who can objectively evaluate examples of good practice and, by sharing it with their colleagues in other educational institutions as well as informing their municipality, promote the dissemination of such good practice as well as the understanding and support of local policy makers for a smooth transition process.

- **Ensuring that education is accessible to all children**

Ensuring access to education is one of the direct responsibilities of the management of an educational institution, so it is very important to ensure that not only the transition but also the whole institution is inclusive. It is very important to recognize that inclusion, diversity and multilingualism are becoming crucial in order to facilitate an inclusive transition and avoid the risk of accidental exclusion practice.

¹⁴ TIM, Transition is our Mission, 2022 http://iic.lv/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/TIM_international-Brochure.pdf

5.3. For policy makers

For a smooth transition from preschool to school to become a common practice, its importance needs to be understood not only by educators but also by society and policy makers at all levels. Recognizing the impact of transition, policy makers can provide a very wide range of support within their remit, promoting a smooth transition. Policy makers have the opportunity not only to create a supportive regulatory and political environment for a smooth transition from preschool to school but also to provide the necessary funding. In order for the contribution of policy makers to have a more meaningful impact on facilitating a soft transition, the following aspects need to be addressed:

- It is important for policy makers to have a holistic view of education in general and not fragmented across different stages of education. Therefore, the transition from preschool to primary school should not be taken out of this context, but should be seen as an important element of quality pedagogical practice. At the same time, it is important to see the transition itself as a holistic practice, as it addresses pedagogical, developmental and professional aspects involving teachers, staff and managers of preschools and schools, parents and other relevant stakeholders.
- Close and meaningful cooperation between preschool and school is crucial for ensuring smooth transition. For this cooperation to become an equal partnership, a decreasing discrepancy between the status and perspectives of preschool and primary school teachers is needed. This could include measures to reconcile working hours, salary and benefits so that preschool teachers have “the same level of work as equivalent in primary education with similar qualifications and competences.”¹⁵
- Recognizing that good and systematic cooperation between preschool and school facilitates the transition, policy-makers should use all opportunities within their competence to facilitate such co-operation. It can be done through providing accommodating legal environments and allowing staff of preschools and schools sufficient time to cooperate, which includes also time for planning and joint creation of transition practices.

- Another option for facilitating cooperation could be investing in inter-institutional professional learning communities (PLC) consisting of teachers, management staff and counsellors from preschool and school. PLC, through regular and continuous cooperation, helps to create shared pedagogical understanding about the transition, unify pedagogical approaches and change the working culture and practices in both institutions.
- Joint trainings of preschool and school teachers on quality transition should be given special emphasis as a necessary part of pre-service or in-service training. Preschool and primary teachers need to be commonly taught about transition in their pre-service training and in professional development.
- Less favourable staff – child ratio in the first year of school compared with final year at preschool encourages the search for ways to reduce the number of children in the class, especially if children with special needs or migrant children are included. Other solution for smoothening transition could be the Slovenian experience that provides a fixed number of hours per week for two teachers in the first grade.
- It would be important to develop clear guidelines on compliance with data protection and children’s confidentiality rules, so that they do not interfere with the professional exchange of information on children’s development between preschools and school teachers.
- Pedagogical practice shows that the integration of both levels of education – preschool and school – in one place is also a factor that facilitates the smooth transition. Separate preschool and school locations can be a physical barrier to continuity, making coordination of transition more time-consuming. Therefore, it is important to seriously consider options to bring preschool and primary schools in the same premises.

¹⁵ OECD (2017), Starting Strong V: Transitions from Early Childhood Education and Care to Primary Education. https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/starting-strong-v_9789264276253-en#page17

- There is a widespread situation where school and preschool have different expectations for how children should be prepared for school. It is important to remember that the focus in such situations should be changed from children ready for school to school ready for children in general. Additional measures that could be taken in this situation include reforming curricula (or creating a new one) to ensure better pedagogical continuity. The result obtained should be a balanced and integrated curriculum with roughly equal emphasis on play, self-regulation and pre-academic activities, developed with active participation of preschool and primary school teachers.
- As parents are also crucial to a successful transition, policy makers can contribute by supporting parental education and raising their awareness of the importance of transition. It can be done through facilitating the development and provision of various support materials for parents as well as by encouraging and motivating educational institutions to offer parents a variety of opportunities to participate in the transition process.
- There are often situations where preschool and school teachers need additional support in their joint efforts to facilitate smooth transitions. The need for support varies from situation to situation, from context to context. Such support can be provided by a variety of professionals – counsellors, psychologists, speech therapists or teacher assistants for children with learning difficulties, depending on the specific situation. It is very important that such additional support is available during transition, as it is very likely to reduce the necessity of later compensatory educational support policies (Fabian & Dunlop, 2006).