



EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION ON EARLY CHILDHOOD INTERVENTION

**EURLY AID - E.A.E.C.I.**



Š I A U L I U  
U N I V E R S I T E T A S

# TO BE A PROFESSIONAL IN EARLY CHILDHOOD INTERVENTION



**Stefanija Alisauskiene**  
**Siauliai University,**  
**Lithuania**

[s.alisauskiene@cr.su.lt](mailto:s.alisauskiene@cr.su.lt)

KRISTIANSAND, NORWAY

2009

## Objectives for the workshop:

- To introduce some issues on ECI professional training in Lithuania
- To present some data on:
  - a) what kind of competences ECI professionals (in LT) develop at university bachelor and master study levels and at in-service training courses
  - b) how professionals assess their preparedness to work in the field by themselves
  - c) parents opinion regarding ECI professionals preparedness to work in a field
- To discuss “*What does it mean to be a professional in Early Childhood Intervention?*”

## Some issues on ECI professional training in Lithuania

- **Early Childhood Intervention – new field of practice and research in Lithuania. System of Early Intervention began to function in 1996.**
- Early intervention services (EIS) for young children (mostly from 0 to 3 years of age) at risk and for children with developmental disorders started to be establish *in 1996 on behalf of Health care system.*

## Some issues on ECI professional training in Lithuania

- EIS is so far regulated by the documents of the Health care ministry and it is groundlessly considered as a *treatment of the child*.
- **Regulations say:**
  - EI for children at risk or with developmental disorders –**health care service**, which ensures early enough **identification** of disorders, early **multi-support** for children and their families. This ensures primary, secondary, tertiary **prevention**, interventions and integration of child and family into society and educational system.
  - EIS is organised on the principle of teamwork.

### **Team consists of:**

Social paediatrician (coordinator), Psychologist, Speech therapist, Physiotherapist, Special pedagogue, Social pedagogue/worker, Ergotherapist, nurse.

## Some issues on ECI professional training in Lithuania

- In LT support for young children (from 0 to 6) at risk or children with developmental difficulties and their families is provided by professionals from different fields belonging to different ministries (Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health Care, Ministry of Social Welfare etc.).
- Taking into consideration the fact, that EI professionals working in a teams come from different fields and provide with support extremely vulnerable persons (e. g. young age children with developmental problems and their families), the requirements for professional competences are very high – ***professionals need to have not only their specific knowledge and skills, but also a common competencies, necessary for early childhood intervention.***

## Some issues on ECI professional training in Lithuania

- Professionals (special pedagogues, speech therapists, physiotherapists etc.) working in EIS and kindergartens during their studies at university gain some competences necessary for ECI, complementary competences they can develop during in-service training courses or in/through/from practice, however we lack of ECI professional training system.
- There are many efforts to provide professionals with relevant professional training in the field of ECI, but till now there is lack of standardised programs for ECI professional training.
- The system of professional training for ECI in LT just started to be created, although the content of professional training of professionals working in the field can be analysed according to the documents (diploma, certificates etc.) and professionals' reflections.

## Survey organisation and methods

- The **aim** of the survey - to analyse, what kind of competences ECI professionals gain at university bachelor and master study levels as well as in-service training courses, and to ascertain how professionals assess their preparedness to work in the field by themselves.
- The **methods** used: content analysis of documents (data from certificates of training put into open-ended questionnaire, based on the online assessment instrument of EBIFF project); answers to the open-ended questionnaires, interviews with ECI professionals.
- **Participants:** 54 ECI professionals 3 family members took part in the survey  
(35 professionals presented their training certificates for the content analysis, 19 answered to open type questionnaire and 3 parents have been interviewed).

## Survey organisation and methods

For the Survey we used the experience of Leonardo da Vinci project *European passport on professional education in Early Intervention* in order to be aware what should an „early childhood interventionist“:

- Know (about/how)
- Be able to do?
- Which personal competences are necessary?

The assessment of relevant ECI curriculum contents has been grounded on these relevant key areas:

- Recognition/detection
- Joining the family
- Teamwork
- Individual intervention methods
- Personal competencies
- Specific competencies

# Results

## Some data on what kind of competences ECI professionals develop at university

**Table 1 Position of professionals**

<b>Professionals</b>	<b>Number of certificates</b>	<b>Number of interviewed</b>
Speech therapists, special pedagogues	16	9
Physiotherapists, their assistants	9	9
Social workers	3	-
Pediatricians	3	2
Nurses	2	-
Psychologists	2	2
Totally	35	19
<b>Totally</b>		<b>54</b>

# Results

## Some data on what kind of competences ECI professionals develop at university

**Table 2 Dominating content of ECI professionals in different key areas**

<b>Professionals</b>	<b>Most relevant competences</b>
<b>Speech therapists, special pedagogues</b>	<b>Disability, education process, evaluation of ECI quality and collaboration with family</b>
<b>Nurses</b>	<b>Child development in paramedical attitude</b>
<b>Physiotherapists', their assistants</b>	<b>Variety of disabilities and child stimulation techniques</b>
<b>Social workers, psychologists</b>	<b>Psychotherapy aspects and family counselling</b>
<b>Pediatricians</b>	<b>Assessment tools of child development</b>

## Results

### Some data on what kind of competences ECI professionals develop at university

- Professional training of social workers, pediatricians and psychologists is focused on *psycho-socio-emotional factors of the child development* and issues, related with *management and coordination*.
- Nurses, physiotherapists, their assistants and pediatricians have more *theoretical knowledge of work in ECI centres* rather other professionals in ECI field.

# Results

## Some data on what kind of competences ECI professionals develop at university

**Table 3** Focuses in professional training/key areas

<b>Speech therapists, special pedagogues</b>	<b>Recognition/detection, specific functional and personal competences</b>
<b>Social workers and pediatricians</b>	<b>Teamwork and specific functional competences</b>
<b>Pediatricians</b>	<b>Teamwork and individual intervention methods</b>
<b>Nurses, physiotherapists, their assistants</b>	<b>Poor knowledge in almost all key areas</b>
<b>Social workers and speech therapists</b>	<b>Most relevant competences in all ECI curriculum key areas</b>

## Some data on what kind of competences ECI professionals develop at university

- **The common content which mostly consists of knowledge in:**  
**biological, psychological development; general and specific content of disability; education, psychology, medicine, rehabilitation; theoretical input of assessment; relations between professionals and family; functions in team; documentation; work with target groups (learning disabilities; children with ADHD); activation one's own resources; practical transfer - is appropriate for all ECI professionals in Lithuania.**

### Some data on what kind of competences ECI professionals develop at university

- **The specific content which includes knowledge in: social-emotional development; child health, psycho-socio-emotional area of disability; practical input of assessment; impact of environment; family needs; coping with disadvantage; ethics of ECI, the quality of teamwork; fundamentals of ECI; family-centred empowerment; ECI process and result evaluation; functions due the institutional requirements; reflections on one's own emotional reactions, professional competences; master thesis - is appropriate for individual range of professionals.**

## Results

### Some data on what kind of competences ECI professionals develop at university

- **The integrated/missed content ( the subjects, which were not indicated in a documents; mostly they are integrated into the other contents or missed) composed of some parts of these clusters in curriculum:  
biological, socio-emotional development; psycho-socio-emotional area of disability; impact of environment; family needs, coping with disadvantage; functions in team, ethics of ECI; the quality of teamwork; functions due management.**

## Results

### Some data on what kind of competences ECI professionals develop at university

ECI professional training in Lithuania consists of:

- Initial (bachelor studies) training, determines *fundamentals* of professionals' forwardness to work;
- Further education determines deepening of knowledge:
  - 1) in-service training (*profound knowledge*);
  - 2) master studies (*systematic knowledge*).

# Results

## Some data on what kind of competences ECI professionals develop at university

**Table 4      Systematic knowledge**

<b>Speech therapists, special pedagogues</b>	<b>Biological, socio-emotional development; management issues</b>
<b>Physiotherapists</b>	<b>General and specific content of disability, theoretical input of assessment and management issues</b>
<b>Pediatricians</b>	<b>Recognition/detection area, family, environment-centred intervention methods</b>
<b>Psychologists</b>	<b>Practical application of assessment and meeting of family needs</b>
<b>Nurses and social workers</b>	<b>Don't show systematic knowledge in the field of ECI</b>

## Results

### Some data on what kind of competences ECI professionals develop at university

#### Other peculiarities of professional training:

- **Profound knowledge in recognition / detection area dominates among all professionals, but in many other clusters have been indicated just fundamentals of this kind of knowledge.**
- **Almost all professionals have lack of knowledge in the key areas: individual intervention methods, specific functional competences and personal competences.**
- **The bachelor and master studies mostly are related with recognition/detection area, other areas dominate during in-service training.**

## Results

### Some data on what kind of competences ECI professionals develop at university

**Table 5 Comparison of Lithuanian and other European countries professional training focuses: Relevance**

<b>LT</b>	<b>Other European countries</b>
Related domains (97, %)	The impact of environment (93%)
Assessment tools (87%)	Development and learning (90%)
Various disabilities (86%)	
Challenges of professionals (57%)	Challenges of families (83%)
Making teams to work (83%)	Making teams to work (67%)
Intervention methods (66%)	Key concepts in ECI (80%)
Work with target groups(59%)	Functions due institutional requirements (65%)
Activation of one's own resources (59%)	Practical transfer (80%)
Practical transfer (80%)	

## Results

### Some data on what kind of competences ECI professionals develop at university

**Table 6 Comparison of Lithuanian and other European countries professionals' training assessment: Insufficiency**

<b>LT</b>	<b>Other European countries</b>
<b>Impact of environment (11%)</b>	
<b>Families coping with disadvantage (51%)</b>	<b>Families coping with disadvantage(31%)</b>
<b>The quality of teamwork (57%)</b>	<b>The quality of teamwork (31%)</b>
<b>The quality of intervention process and results (29%)</b>	<b>Functions in ECI team (60%)</b>
<b>Functions due to institutional requirements (69%)</b>	
<b>Functions due legal frameworks (73%)</b>	<b>Functions due the legal frameworks (48%)</b>
<b>Reflections on one's own emotional reactions (21%)</b>	<b>Reflections on one's own emotional reactions (27%).</b>
<b>Master thesis (66%)</b>	

## Competences ECI professionals develop at university

- 1) In most clusters the content of professional training is related with the professional working area, but the *holistic knowledge is missing*
- 2) The training content of speech therapists, special pedagogues and social workers is the widest and the most relevant to curriculum of early childhood intervention professional training, conversely, nurses', physiotherapists' and their assistants' training portfolio is quite constricted.
- 3) Recognition/detection key area mostly included into Bachelor and Master studies, other contents dominate during in-service training.

# Conclusions

## “What does it mean to be a professional in Early Childhood Intervention?” *Professionals’ opinion*

*How we can define Who is professional working in Early Childhood Intervention?*

Professional, which is able:

- to assess the development of the child
- to educate a child
- to support a child and a family
- to involve child and family into community life
- to support a child cooperating with a family
- to collaborate in a team

# Conclusions

## “What does it mean to be a professional in Early Childhood Intervention?” *Professionals’ opinion*

*What kind of personal characteristics are most important for ECI professional?*

- Communication
- Cooperation
- Ability to find “common language with a child”
- Love to a child
- Flexibility and Reflectivity
- Tolerance
- Ability to plan
- Positive attitudes towards a child with developmental problems
- Sharing with experience
- Patience
- Optimism
- Empathy
- Ability to listen
- Ability to understand people

# Conclusions

## “What does it mean to be a professional in Early Childhood Intervention?” *Professionals’ opinion*

*What difficulties professional can experience working in ECI?*

- Lack of cooperation in a team
- Too many documentation
- Lack of professionals
- Difficulties experienced involving parents into educational process of a child
- Difficulties in cooperation with families
- Families expect for quick positive changes
- Lack of experience in the field
- Lack of information for families
- Negative attitudes of parents towards professionals
- Lack of methods how to solve behavioral problems of the child
- Lack of networking
- Lack of methods how to support vulnerable families
- Lack of indirect competences

## Conclusions

### “What does it mean to be a professional in Early Childhood Intervention?” *Professionals’ opinion*

*What are the factors determinant quality of ECI teamwork?*

- High qualification/competences of professionals
- Respect to team members and families
- Cooperation, good relations in a team
- Permanent learning, in-service training, development of the team
- Sharing of experience
- Support to each other
- Professionalism
- Adequate environment and work conditions, motivation of professionals

## **Wishes, fears, temptations of professionals, related to work with families in ECI** *Professionals' opinion*

### ***Wishes:***

- To be positive with families
- To accept the individualities of families
- To involve parents into support process
- Common problem solving/decision making
- Empower families
- To keep stable relationship in a team
- To share with information
- To accept parents as members of a team

## Wishes, fears, temptations of professionals, related to work with families in ECI *Professionals' opinion*

### *Fears because of:*

- The gap between the needs of parents and professionals
- Interception of negative reactions of families
- Helpless in a situation of social risk
- Punishment
- Negative influence to a family and to a child
- Failure
- Public critics
- Own (negative) attitudes towards ...

## Wishes, fears, temptations of professionals, related to work with families in ECI *Professionals' opinion*

### *Temptations*

- The avoidance of “complicated” families
- To to dance attendance on families /to be over positive
- To be angry on imperative parents

## Time for reflections

### “What does it mean to be a professional in Early Childhood Intervention?”

- How we can define Who is professional working in Early Childhood Intervention?
- What kind of knowledge and skills besides your specific professional knowledge and skills you need working in ECI?
- What kind of personal characteristics are most important for ECI professional?
- What kind of ECI professional experience is most valuable for you as professional?
- What difficulties professional can experience working in ECI?
- What are the factors determinant quality of ECI teamwork?

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION!**

**[s.alisauskiene@cr.su.lt](mailto:s.alisauskiene@cr.su.lt)**