

Press Release

December 2019

Berlin Cosmopolitan Kindergarten is the first to coordinate a European-wide Erasmus+ consortium project

The Erasmus+ team within the Berlin Cosmopolitan School (BCS) has been leading a European-wide research project on diversity-sensitive, intercultural acclimation process of children since 2017.

The BCS Kindergarten in Berlin Mitte with 75 educators, 320 learners and families from over 45 nations is one of the largest international kindergartens in Germany. Every year, the Kindergarten welcomes approximately 100 new children, which has provided a good basis for modern diversity-sensitive methods for 15 years. "All families are very welcomed at our kindergarten. A cosmopolitan institution like ours likes to respond to the different needs of children and their families in an individualized way. We win and learn through these opportunities for mutual exchange. As a learning institution, we can thus renew and develop cosmopolitically from within," says Yvonne Wende, Chief Executive Officer of the EBS European Education Foundation, describing the successful concept to the BCS Kindergarten.

Eight pedagogues from Berlin, four professors from Madrid, six early childhood caregivers from the Pikler Orphanage (now a kindergarten) in Budapest, and six educators from a large Finnish-English kindergarten are working together on pedagogical interventions for European early education institutions. The team consists of 24 people from nine different cultures of origin within and outside Europe and is multi-professional.

The aim of this research project is to enable European educators to become familiar with modern interventions for children acclimating to a multicultural, multilingual environment, to consciously guide and respectfully accompany multilingual language development. The focus is on the question of how children can be immersed into an unfamiliar environment and language(s) and how they and their families can be best supported in this phase. An important part of the project is to carry out home visits to the families at home before the first day in kindergarten. This means that educators and parents welcome each other warmly on the first day in kindergarten and know the special preferences of the child and the family before the acclimation period begins. "I have intentionally unpacked our cars," said one of the kindergarten teachers in their reflection, "it was already clear from the home visit that I could inspire the child with cars from day one." The first important day of a child who does not understand or speak any of the kindergarten languages can thus become a strengthening situation for the future. The educator can build a bridge of confidence that she would not know without a prior home visit. The child feels the trust of the parents begins in the educators with the initial visit within the home.

If an institutional appreciation of diversity in childhood education and training institutions is unified throughout Europe, all children can freely tackle developmental tasks. "This is our incentive as Europe's first institution of early childhood education to coordinate an Erasmus+ research grant," Katharina Ehrenfried, Head of Kindergarten & Preschool, summarizes the motivation of the team.

The transnational team has met five times since 2017, visited each country at least once and will meet for the conference and the final meeting in May, 2020. In Berlin, the project was planned, in Madrid, theory about literature and second language acquisition was learned, in Budapest, the team spent some time in a Pikler orphanage and listened to a lecture by Anna Tardos, and in Helsinki, they studied in an open-air classroom with living snakes and foxes.

The results of the project include:

- Two handbooks for childhood educators with case studies, theory, strategies, reflection & solutions
- Two handbooks for parents with case studies, offers & strategies for reflection and solution finding
- Ten materials for children and adults aged 1-7 years in English, German, Finnish, Spanish and Hungarian languages.

All research results will be presented on May 25th, 2020 in Berlin, Mitte.

Please contact us at iccc@cosmopolitanschool.de for further questions and/or interview requests. More information including conference registration can be found at: www.iccc.group.