

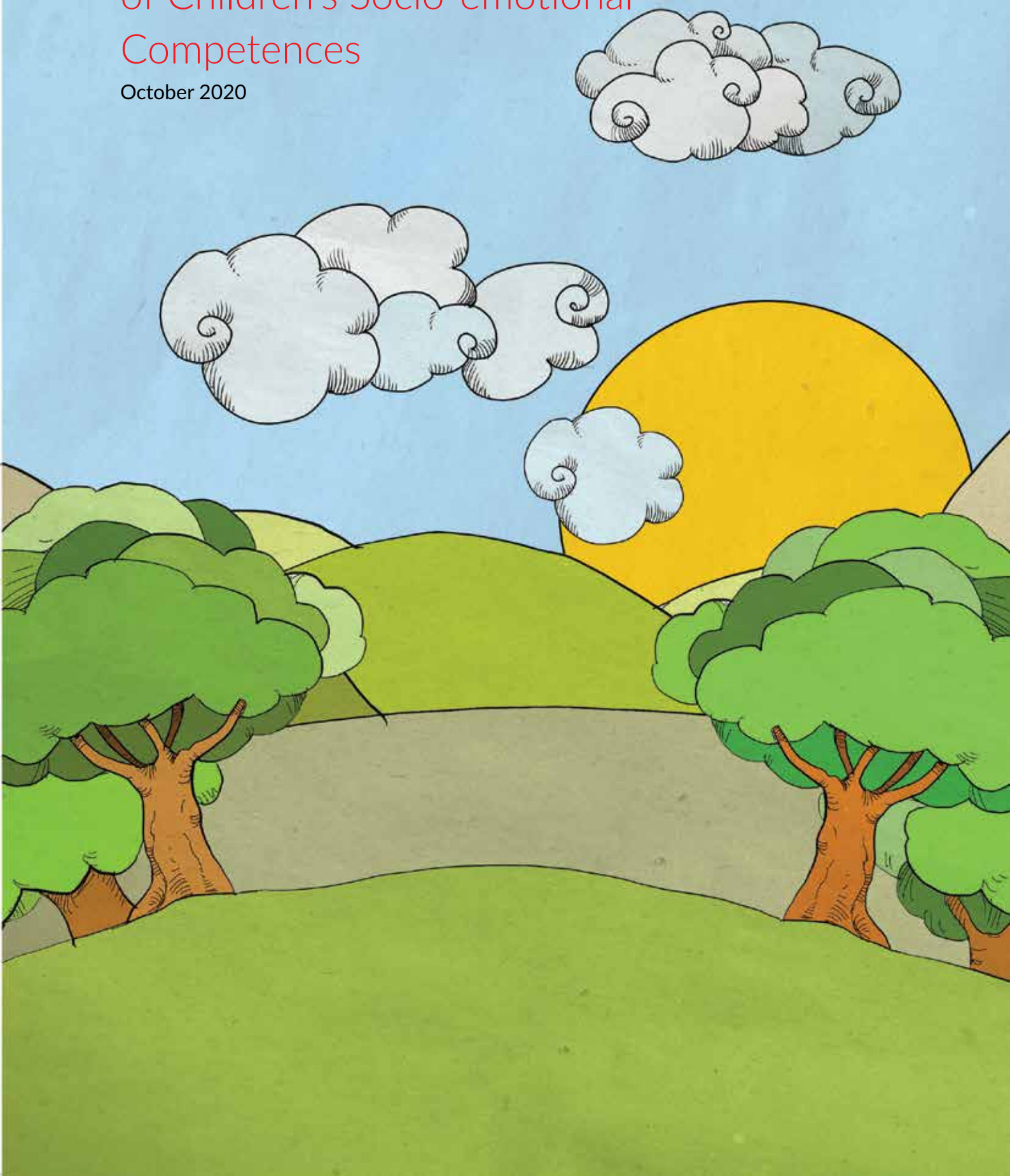
GUIDELINES FOR IMPLEMENTING THE PROGRAMME FOR DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN'S SOCIO-EMOTIONAL COMPETENCES



Save the Children

Guidelines for Implementing the Programme for Development of Children's Socio-emotional Competences

October 2020



Save the Children believes that every child deserves a future. In the countries of the Northwest Balkans, we work daily to give children a healthy start in life, the opportunity to learn, and protection from harm. When crisis strikes, and children are most vulnerable, we are always among the first to respond and the last to leave. We ensure children's unique needs are met, and their voices are heard. We deliver lasting results for millions of children, including those hardest to reach. We do whatever it takes for children – every day and in times of crisis – to transform their lives and the future we share.

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Design: Agencija za reklamu i propaganda i grafički dizajn "Komitet" Sarajevo

This publication was developed under the project ENVISION - Creating Enabling Environment for Social Inclusion of Children – Phase II.

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Introduction


These Guidelines for Implementing the Programme for Development of Children's Socio-emotional Competences were created as part of support activities implemented by Save the Children as part of the ENVISION – Creating ENabling enVironment for Social InclusiON of children – project, phase II, in partnership with non-governmental organisations “Nova Generacija” Banja Luka, “Otaharin” Bijeljina, “Vermont” Youth Centre Brčko, “Altruist” Association Mostar, Centre for Children's Rights Podgorica, and “Defendologija” Association Nikšić, as well as centres for social work in Banja Luka, Bihać and Nikšić.

The creation of the Programme for the Development of Children's Socio-emotional Competences and the Guidelines for Implementing the Programme, as well as the accompanying Training Programme and working materials contributes to improving children's protection, position and rights in the countries of the region, especially for groups of children growing up in adverse and discouraging conditions due to their socio-economic and family status. The Guidelines for Implementing the Programme for Development of Children's Socio-emotional Competences are intended for a wide range of practitioners working with pre-school and school-aged children, including providers of childcare services in the community, pre-school institutions, schools and other institutions interested in implementing programmes to improve and develop children's competences.

The Guidelines and the accompanying Training Programme and working materials aim to support practitioners in:

- developing and strengthening competences for encouraging socio-emotional learning in children and building positive peer relations while respecting and promoting diversity;
- understanding and respecting the importance of the developmental context and its impact on children's learning and development;
- understanding how important it is to ensure and enable the full participation of children as they grow up;
- developing and strengthening competences for partnerships with parents and other stakeholders in the community for joint strengthening of children's socio-emotional learning, development of social competences for the promotion of positive values, respect and cooperation.

The Guidelines focus on key areas of importance for effectively implementing the Programme for Development of Children's Socio-emotional Competences. Since children can learn and develop all their potentials only in an environment where they feel **secure and safe**, the **first area** refers to the importance of an **enabling environment** and provides guidance about how to ensure that each child is given support while understanding and respecting differences. Given the importance of children's participation and its potential for developing competences, special attention is devoted to this issue, more precisely to how to enable and encourage children's participation. Furthermore, taking into account the family and its role and importance in the life of every child, the Guidelines refer to how to cooperate with families/parents and how



to include them in children's socio-emotional learning. This section ends with pointing out the importance of community participation in the Programme for Development of Children's Socio-emotional Competences, as well as the role of peers in the development of children's socio-emotional competences. **Section Two** of the Guidelines is dedicated to the **methods for developing children's socio-emotional competences**. It points out the importance of play for children's learning and development, and presents group work and interactive methods of socio-emotional learning.

Special attention is given to socio-educational workshops and planning and programming skills for workshops with children aimed at socio-emotional learning, as well as educational work with parents. **Section Three** of the Guidelines covers **socio-emotional learning outcomes** and refers to the benefit for every child and how we can know it has been achieved, i.e. how we evaluate the outcomes of implementing the Programme and how we can improve the evaluation of socio-emotional learning outcomes.

The Guidelines are meant as a starting point for practitioners, to help their understanding and re-examination of their own practice in building the Programme. Making beneficial use of the Guidelines means not just reading them once, but starting a cyclic process of reading, i.e. re-examining and reviewing practices. This means periodically re-reading the Guidelines and re-examining our beliefs and practices. This approach is meant to inspire us to reflect individually and in conversation with colleagues, parents and children in order to re-examine our starting points and beliefs, analyse and improve our practices. In this way, we will be at once deepening our understanding of the concepts and values at the heart of the Programme and adapting it to reflect the specificities of the socio-cultural context in which we are implementing it.

Working materials (workbook) were developed to accompany the Guidelines and facilitate the implementation of the Programme primarily for practitioners at the start of their professional careers.




I Secure, Safe and Enabling Environment for Children's Development

The quality of upbringing and care in the environment, as well as the relationships children develop with their parents/guardians, family members, peers and the community are among the most important and lasting influences on their development. As pointed out before, all children develop similar abilities, but at different rates, depending not only on their genetic background, but also the conditions in their environment. The social environment where children grow up has a strong impact on whether they will develop curiosity, motivation for learning, enthusiasm, self-confidence and other important competences. It is important to bear in mind that children and young people are not a homogenous group. They grow up, develop and learn in very different social and family circumstances and face numerous challenges. Many children do not receive protection from their family and are deprived of various rights and needs. Some have experienced trauma, discrimination, neglect and abuse. Despite this, most children respond well to socio-emotional learning and can develop their potentials. We can apply programmes that will help children develop the abilities that failed to develop earlier. However, in order for children to develop their competences unimpeded, **the learning process needs to take place in an environment where they feel safe and secure.** Only in a child-friendly environment is it possible to:

- provide support to each child with understanding and respect for differences
- enable and encourage children's participation
- work with families/parents and involve them in children's socio-emotional learning
- integrate the Programme for Development of Socio-emotional Competences into the community and ensure its participation
- encourage an adequate role of peers in the development of children's socio-emotional competences

1.1. How to provide support to each child with understanding and respect for differences

When children are included in the Programme for Development of Socio-emotional Competences, they are not coming as someone only starting out with learning. They already have certain insights about themselves, people, events and the world around them. They arrive with unique prior experiences, their own understanding of the phenomena that surround them, their own abilities, attitudes and potentials. Children's learning experiences differ because of their diverse family, social and cultural backgrounds, and they have different social, cultural and linguistic identities. Very early on, children become aware that they are surrounded by diversity. Already by age three they have an awareness, based on distinct features they ob-



serve, about other people belonging to different groups.¹ The period from three to five years of age is characterised by a rapid increase of awareness about differences among people. At this age, children form attitudes about those who are different from them. From five to six, children become focused on group belonging and begin to understand what it means to be a member of a group. The period from seven to nine is marked by rapid development of empathy, when children can easily put themselves in the position of another person and understand her feelings and needs. At this age, grown-ups have a particularly important role because children re-examine their beliefs and values. This means that grown-ups' attitudes are key factors shaping the attitudes of the child. Attitudes about certain groups need not be explicitly stated for the child to form a positive or negative attitude about those groups. It is sufficient for a grown-up to send a message via non-verbal signals and the child will infer what attitude to take in relation to certain groups of people. At age ten, the system of values and beliefs about one's self and others stabilises and becomes more difficult to change.

Childhoods differ depending on the social and cultural circumstances in which the child grows up, so that society and culture have a decisive influence on how the child will develop and learn. Knowing these facts and understanding their importance makes up the **experiential basis** that serves as a starting point for grown-ups/educators supporting children's learning and development of competences.


Understanding and respecting differences is the basis for establishing and building the learning process and the development of children's socio-emotional competences.

Fairness means not just adapting the support to the needs of each child, but also removing barriers in the environment so that the child can be fully included and have the possibility to develop her potentials. Respecting differences means that particularities and different aspects of each child's identity are respected and promoted, and that diversity is viewed as an opportunity for learning and development. In an environment that respects differences, children develop a sense that:

- they are welcome
- they belong to the group
- each child is unique and one of a kind
- apart from differences, they share many similarities with others
- their personality is appreciated and respected
- they can and should learn from each other

Respecting differences is a necessary step leading to understanding the idea of equality, reflected in all children having the same opportunities, whatever their differences, and the idea of fairness, meaning that all children should be provided with what they need in order to develop their potentials.

¹ When introducing themselves, children from minority/marginalised groups tend to state their ethnic or national belonging more often than children from majority social groups who rarely have to define themselves through majority/dominant categories.



In order for children to understand equality and fairness, grown-ups/educators need to provide them with a secure and supportive context that will encourage talking about differences, about socially conditioned advantages that some children have and others do not, about the position of children who are deprived of some of their rights for whatever reason. Grown-ups should focus their efforts on developing competences that will enable children to resist various stereotypes and prejudices and develop prosocial behaviour, critical thinking, sensitivity to others and solidarity.


It is important for grown-ups to express (show) respect for differences: ²

- because all children are different
- because every child has the right to be accepted with all her differences
- because differences are an opportunity for learning and developing competences
- because a child who is accepted and respected will accept and respect other children and people in general
- because children can only learn in an environment where they feel good and where they are appreciated and accepted
- because respecting differences is the first step to achieving equality and fairness
- because every child has the right to an environment that will enable the development of all her potentials

Equality means that all children should have equal rights and opportunities in terms of access to resources that will contribute to the development of their abilities and talents to the fullest. Furthermore, this requires that the environment where children spend their time and learn should respect and foster the cultural identity of each child and a feeling of belonging, so that every child has equal access to all material resources on offer, as well as all activities that enable children's holistic development. Supporting equality does not mean uniformity, but understanding and appreciation of each child's individuality, the child's and family's right to choose and suitable support for all children, especially those from sensitive groups. However, children from sensitive groups should not be viewed merely as deprived compared to others, so the emphasis should not be only on equalising them with others, but on understanding and respecting their individuality. It would be just as wrong to think about children from sensitive groups as a homogenous category. That is not what they are. On the contrary, such children also have different experiences, knowledge and skills that they bring to the learning process. As members of different communities (family, peers, neighbourhood, etc.), children develop different perspectives from which they view life's situations and events. Through their interactions and by connecting these perspectives, children build their identities of belonging to different social and cultural groups.

There are many aspects or layers to identity: some are related to sex or gender, others to ethnic and/or national origin, race, social status, religious belief, socio-economic position, ability, etc. Research has shown that already at a young age, children begin defining who they are,

² Adapted from: Vranješević J. et al. (2019) Vrtić kao sigurno i podsticajno okruženje za učenje i razvoj dece



forming their identity, adopting values and attitudes that reflect differences based on gender, ethnic background, race, class, religion and developmental challenges or disabilities.³ Some aspects of identity can be used as a basis for discrimination and exclusion of children.⁴ That is why it is very important for grown-ups working with children to understand the multi-layered nature of identity, on the one hand, as well as their interconnectedness, i.e. the way that the various layers/aspects of identity influence each other and shape children's experiences in social relations, institutions, communities and society as a whole. Many children face difficulties, social exclusion and discrimination based on various aspects of their identity (gender, socio-economic status, ethnicity, etc.). Thus, for example, a Roma child involved in living and/or working in the street who is also from a refugee family is often or could be exposed to discrimination due to her ethnicity, refugee status and status of child without adequate parental care. That child's experience of inequality is unique and cannot be understood only on the basis of a single aspect, that of being of a different national and/or religious background, without an understanding how the various identity aspects/layers gain on and overlap each other in the life of that child, shaping the experience that she brings to a children's collective (daily centre, school, etc.). That is why it is important for grown-ups who work with children to understand how different identity layers fit together and how this impacts the child's self-image, interaction with others, how others treat them, as well as how children's experiences are shaped in pre-school and school, the community and society as a whole.⁵ Grown-ups/educators can broach the subject of different aspects of identity through everyday activities with children, in conversation, through the stories they tell or read to them, through visual arts, music and drama. Children need to be given an opportunity to discuss different types of families and family structures. Some children live in single-parent households or with relatives and an extended family, or they are adopted and live with their (non-biological) parents.

Recommendations for grown-ups/educators:⁶

- Ensure that the environment/space for children reflects the lives of all children so as to support and give significance to their daily experiences.
- Seek out opportunities to reinforce the individual skills, talents and abilities of each child in order to encourage a feeling of pride about their personal and cultural identity.
- Organise situations, activities and games that encourage children to play together, including children they don't usually play with. These

It is important to:

- support each child's personal and group identity and feeling of belonging
- genuinely get to know each child as a unique person
- build trust with children and parents/guardians
- plan support tailored to each child

³ Connolly, P., Smith, A., Kelly, B. (2002). Too Young to Notice? The Cultural and Political Awareness of 3-6 Year Olds in Northern Ireland.

⁴ E.g. children with difficulties or children from minority groups, etc.

⁵ Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion Charter and Guidelines for Early Childhood Care and Education, 2016.

⁶ Adapted from: Vranješević J. et al. (2019) Vrtić kao sigurno i podsticajno okruženje za učenje i razvoj dece




activities affirm the formation of their identity.

- Provide a wide range of positive role models to help build self-confidence in children and a feeling of growing possibilities. If the child is exposed to negative images or is not exposed to images of people sharing the concrete context or ability of the child, this can send negative messages and the child may reject her identity.
- Develop trust in the potentials and abilities of every child, communicate expectations of children and support them in fully developing their potentials.
- Carefully observe each child in order to better understand their multiple social identities, observe how the child learns, plays, interacts with peers. Ask yourself: How does s/he approach tasks and activities? What are his/her strengths in socio-emotional learning? What is more difficult?
- Use guided observation to understand the needs of children for support and carefully record what you see.
- Be flexible in your routines. Remember that a single method of teaching does not correspond to the needs of every child. You can observe when some children lose interest or attention, when they are making an effort to do or understand something. Be prepared to adapt or abandon your well set-out plan for the group and instead do individual instruction. If you are uneasy about interrupting a child engaged in an activity in order to provide support, recognise that feeling and don't let it control your decisions.
- Create an atmosphere where children feel safe to fail. Teach children that failing or being unable to do something does not make us bad. In a group that promotes fairness, there is no need for hiding, because difficulties and failure are normal; what matters is even small progress in effort, even if success is not fully reached. Once a week, have the children sit together in a group and share about something they are finding difficult and what they have learned in the process.
- Use every opportunity to work on eliminating stereotypes/prejudice about certain social groups. Provide children with access to new information that brings into question any misguided attitudes they may have.

1.2. How to enable and encourage children's participation

Participation means actively taking part in common activities, events and life situations and deciding together on things that concern us and affect our life and the community we belong to. To participate means to be actively included, to have agency, to learn through taking part and influencing the world around you, and not to be a bystander in activities and events organised for the child by others. The child has the need for active participation in everything going on around her, with her specific past experiences, needs and interests. Children need others to see them as competent persons whose interests, needs and wishes are taken into account. There is no bottom limit for the right to participation – children can participate at any age. The “Theory of One Hundred Languages of Children”⁷ is a metaphor about the

⁷ Loris Malaguzzi believed that children not only have the right to education, but also the right over their education, rights they share with parents and teachers focused on developing their skills, interests and talents.



multitude of different ways that children can express their opinions and ideas (painting, drawing, sculpting, modelling, writing, play, etc.).⁸ Children's participation includes, among other things, a culture of listening to children, where grown-ups show genuine interest for the child's perspective, as well as symmetry in relations in the sense of respecting and appreciating the child's opinion.

Save the Children has developed **The Nine Basic Requirements for Meaningful and Ethical Children's Participation**⁹ in order to ensure quality participation of children in all processes where the child or children should be consulted, heard or should participate. The document can help practitioners apply the requirements when implementing the Programme for Development of Socio-emotional Competences so as to ensure that children's voices are heard, that they have full participation and that children and their learning and development are treated with respect.

It is worth pointing out once again that the child's participation is important not just from the point of view of children's rights, but also because it drives children's development. Children develop their competences best through activities and that is why it is important to provide them with opportunities to be active creators of activities through which they develop. That way, a cyclic process is established where the development of competences enables more complex forms of participation that in turn lead to developing new, more complex competences. Participation thus becomes a way to develop autonomy, independence and a host of new social competences.

Below are brief descriptions of each of the nine requirements related to children's participation and recommendations about how to implement them in practice.

1. Transparent and Informative

Brief description

The first requirement means that children clearly understand their right to express their views and that they will be heard and valued. Children know why they are involved in a given project/programme/activity, what their participation will help to achieve and the types of decisions and plans that their participation will influence. Children have access to useful information and resources to help them understand the project, programme, organisation(s), key terminology and the processes/activities with which they will be involved. Specifically, children understand what they are being asked to do, what will happen with the information they share and who will have access to the information. Children understand they can freely ask questions, seek clarification, raise concerns and/or express ideas and recommendations.

⁸ HEART ("Healing and Education Through the Arts") is an approach based on art and aimed at helping children process and express their emotions about what they are going through.

⁹ In 2005, Save the Children developed seven practical standards for children's participation. In 2009, based on these seven standards, General Comment on Article 12 of UNCRC (CRC/C/GC/12) included the nine 'basic requirements for the implementation of the right of the child to be heard'.



In practice this means:

- Child-friendly information is provided in appropriate and accessible languages/formats
- Child-friendly information is provided in a timely manner
- Children's roles and responsibilities are clearly defined
- Opportunities and limitations are clearly defined with children
- Children clearly understand the relevant policies and procedures to ensure their meaningful participation
- Children understand how they/their community/their projects/their peers might benefit from the activity
- Children's views will influence, shape and inform decisions/plans in a timely manner
- Facilitators are honest and open with children
- Facilitators do not steer or manipulate children
- Children are free to ask questions and know how to get more information, if they wish.

2. Voluntary

Brief description

Children have received sufficient information to understand the choices available to them, what they mean and how to engage – or not, as the case may be – with the process. Children clearly understand the implications of their choices and are free to make decisions to participate or not to participate accordingly. Staff have the competencies necessary to encourage children, particularly those who are marginalised, to participate and to ensure that children are never forced to participate. Children are aware that they can opt out of the participatory process at any time and know how to go about doing so. A culture that respects children's choice must be fostered throughout the participatory process.

In practice this means:

- Children have provided informed consent and are aware of what they are accepting
- Children understand the principles of participation
- Children know that they can withdraw at any time
- Children know how to withdraw from a process
- Children are provided with sufficient and appropriate information and time to make informed choices
- Children participate in ways suitable to their age, abilities and interests
- Children understand what their choices mean
- Children have an adequate amount of knowledge about the purpose and nature of the project/programme/activity and their role in it to help them make choices on a continuous basis

- Facilitators have a clear policy on participation, including consent and confidentiality
- Facilitators have addressed adult/child power imbalances to ensure a truly voluntary process
- Facilitators are aware that permission given under pressure is not consent
- Facilitators have explained to the children in detail the organisation's responsibilities towards them.

3. Respectful

Brief description

Children's views are treated with respect by adults and by other children. Staff have created an organisational culture that enables children to initiate ideas themselves and express their views without feeling they must first seek permission from an adult. Children's views are heard and valued. Children are able to express their views without fear of discrimination; respect ensures a culture that does not undermine children or their views and is considerate of their backgrounds, experiences, concerns, vulnerabilities and existing commitments. Likewise, respect ensures that children will not be humiliated or exposed to harm. Respect creates a welcoming environment and fosters a caring and considerate attitude towards children.


In practice this means:

- Children are able to freely express their views
- Children can confidently share their opinions, ideas and insights
- Effective facilitation ensures children are not humiliated, frightened to speak out or discriminated against
- Effective facilitation ensures that the ways of working are culture- and gender-sensitive
- Children's other commitments/rights (e.g., school/work/play) are taken into account
- Facilitators are polite and considerate
- Facilitators have effective listening skills
- Facilitators do not dominate the dialogue
- Key adults (e.g., parents, teachers) are supportive
- Facilitators have a solid understanding of the socio-economic, environmental and cultural context of the children they are working with
- Documents, data and products developed by the children are appropriately stored
- Children are never used or manipulated by adults to advance the latter's agenda.

4. Relevant

Brief description

Children are able to contribute their expertise and draw upon their experiences, knowledge and capabilities to express their views on issues of relevance and importance to their lives. Relevant information is provided and accessible to children. Children understand why the



issue is of relevance to them and why their views and expertise are being sought. Children fully appreciate how their contribution to the discussion/research/consultation/meeting will inform plans to deal with the particular issues. Children's expectations are managed effectively and they understand both the relevance and the limitations of their participation. Children are given the opportunity to identify issues that they themselves believe to be relevant and important.

In practice this means:

- Topics/opportunities are of real relevance to the children involved
- Children clearly understand why they are participating in a given discussion / research / consultation / process
- Children understand how their input will add value to the process
- Children are encouraged to identify/highlight the issues that they themselves regard as relevant
- Methods are such that they help children understand issues of relevance and encourage them to express their opinions, observations and recommendations in ways that suit their age, circumstances and degree of maturity
- Effective facilitation enables all children to engage with the process and activities
- Cultural factors are carefully considered during the planning process
- Language considerations are taken into account and actions to resolve communication barriers are adopted
- Children are clear on what they can and cannot influence; their expectations are effectively managed
- Children are not forced to participate.

5. Child-friendly

Brief description

Children feel welcomed. Staff are approachable and responsive to the children. Working methods do not discriminate against children but take into account their evolving capacities, age, diversity and capabilities. Children are free to ask questions and raise concerns. The methods used promote children's confidence in speaking out, sharing and expressing their views. Sufficient time, information and materials are provided and communicated effectively to the children to help facilitate their meaningful participation. Children feel that their contributions will be valued and used for the intended purpose(s).

In practice this means:

- The methods/approaches are child-friendly
- Meeting places and times for meeting are child-friendly and accessible by children

- Relevant and child-friendly information is provided to children and their parent/caregiver in advance
- Consent is received prior to the event, meeting or activity taking place
- Children develop or co-develop child-friendly information and communication materials and methods
- Facilitators have the competencies to make children feel relaxed and build their self-esteem and confidence
- Facilitators are effective and familiar with a diverse range of child-friendly and inclusive methods
- Facilitators are adaptive and flexible in their approach
- Sufficient time is allotted for the proposed activities.

6. Inclusive

Brief description

Recognising that children do not all belong to one homogenous group, participation promotes inclusiveness and treats each child as an individual. No child is discriminated against during the participation process. The participation process takes into consideration existing patterns of discrimination, power imbalances and cultural sensitivities. The process ensures that the methods, approaches, languages and arrangements do not exclude the most marginalised children. The process does not discriminate against children based on their capabilities; it does not humiliate children on any grounds. The participation process makes sure each child knows they are valued, respected and important.

In practice this means:

- Children are not discriminated against by reason of age, gender, race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status
- Children of all genders, ages, backgrounds and abilities are engaged
- A safe space is provided for different groups of children to explore issues relevant to them (e.g. girls working separately from boys, if needed)
- The process ensures that children most impacted by discrimination and inequality have equal access and that their voices are heard and valued
- Participation is flexible enough to respond to the needs, expectations and situations of individual children
- Participation challenges and responds to existing patterns of discrimination
- Methods and facilitation techniques do not discriminate against children, are accessible and promote equal access
- Direct efforts are made to meet in environments and times accessible to children, especially the most marginalised, taking into account specific requirements (e.g., disability-friendly transportation and venues).

7. Supported by Training

Brief description

All facilitators working with children have been trained and equipped to work effectively with children. Specifically, facilitators working with children possess excellent communication skills, facilitation skills and analytical skills. Children have access to training on child rights, advocating, communicating with the media, holding decision makers to account, engaging in meetings, facilitation and designing and delivering training.


In practice this means:

- All facilitators interacting with children possess the confidence, skills and support to facilitate meaningful children's participation processes
- All facilitators interacting with children understand these nine basic requirements and understand why participation is important
- Learning and development plans are in place to support the continuous improvement of quality child participation
- A diverse range of formal and informal opportunities exist to facilitate learning, knowledge and technical skills development
- Facilitators have dedicated time and access to key documents and relevant resources
- Children have access to appropriate and relevant training
- Children co-facilitate training (when appropriate/possible)
- Children have access to relevant information, resources and personnel to advance their knowledge and expertise
- Facilitators know what manipulation of children looks like and are taking preventive measures to guard against it
- Relations between facilitators/support persons are positive and they treat each other with respect and honesty.

8. Safe and Sensitive to Risk

Brief description

Children know that all considerations in relation to their safety and protection from harm have been taken into account. Staff have a responsibility towards the children with whom they work. Staff must take every precaution to minimise the risk to children of abuse and exploitation or any other negative consequence of children's participation. It is necessary to ensure that potential risks have been identified in advance. Clear 'risk management' plans are in place to ensure the safe participation of children. Relevant organisational policies and procedures are understood by staff and implemented effectively. Participation expectations are managed and communicated effectively between staff and the communities, parents/caregivers and



children. These expectations clearly define the benefits, limits and potential risks associated with participation.

In practice this means:

- The principles of “do no harm” and “best interests of the child” have been applied
- Conflict sensitivity and risk assessments have been undertaken
- Children feel safe when participating
- Children involved in participatory processes are aware of their right to be safe from abuse and know where to go for help if needed
- Child safeguarding plans are in place to minimise risks, prevent abuse and remove barriers that some children face when obtaining help
- Referrals for psychosocial support (or other urgent support) for children have been established if required
- Children are involved in identifying risks and creating solutions
- Facilitators recognise their legal and ethical responsibilities in line with codes of conduct, child safeguarding policies and procedures
- A procedure is set up to allow children involved in participatory activities to give feedback in confidence
- Consent is obtained for the use of all information provided by children and information identified as confidential is safeguarded at all times
- No photographs, videos or digital images of a child can be taken or published without the child and parent/caregiver’s explicit consent for a specific use
- Responsibilities relating to liability, safety, travel and medical insurance are clearly delegated and effectively planned for.

9. Reliable and Accountable

Brief description

Children receive feedback on how their contribution has advised, informed or influenced developments to date. Participation is not a singular event, and accountability processes are integrated throughout our efforts to ensure children’s views and concerns are heard: challenge actions, influence recommendations and ensure continuous quality improvement. Children have access to key stakeholders and have the opportunity to ask questions and to provide feedback on their participation. Lessons learned are systematically documented and applied to ensure quality improvement. Appropriate feedback is provided to children in a timely and accessible manner. Children have adequate time, support and information to share any feedback with their peers, particularly when nominated by their peers and/or communities to represent their views.

In practice this means:

- Rigorous monitoring and evaluation processes with children have been developed
- Communication and follow-up mechanisms with children have been defined
- Children see the results of their participation
- Children are supported in order to participate in follow-up and evaluation processes
- Good governance system: transparent and clear processes
- Programming has been influenced by children and learning processes
- Children's participation is supported within accountability mechanisms
- All children have a range of opportunities and processes to deliver their feedback (not only those children who take part in consultations and events)
- Children receive appropriate, honest and transparent responses to their inquiries, concerns and questions.

1.3. How to work with families/parents and involve them in children's socio-emotional learning

Parents and families are the primary and most important factor in children's development and they play a key role in providing support to children's well-being. That is why relations established by educators and other practitioners implementing the Programme with parents must be based on the principles of partnership. Partnership connects the parents/family and staff implementing the Programme, bringing them together to work towards the child's well-being. The first step in developing efficient cooperation with parents is understanding that they, just like their children, are very different and that in addition to their parental role, they have many other roles and layers to their identity. Parents are, first of all, individuals with their own needs, problems, wishes and interests who, above all, care for the welfare of their children. Parents come from different cultures, they differ in terms of ethnic and religious belonging and in age; they have different habits, beliefs and customs; they are engaged in different occupations; they have different family roles, relationships and hobbies; they differ in terms of socio-economic and education status.

Each side should recognise, respect and value what the other side says and does. Partnership involves responsibility on both sides.

There are also advantages of a good partnership for both sides: for the parents and the staff.¹⁰

Trust is expressed through readiness to open up to others, believing they will work in our best interest...

¹⁰ Adapted from: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework – Guidelines for Good Practice, Irish National Council for Curriculum and Assessment © NCCA 2009



Parents:

- feel valued and respected
- are more involved in their children's learning and development
- can share information about their children
- feel their family's values and beliefs are taken into account
- feel accepted by practitioners and want to take part in planning together
- know more about their children's experiences outside the home
- have a better understanding of why socio-emotional learning is important and how it benefits their child
- have increased confidence in their own parenting skills

Practitioners:

- understand better the children and families and are able to tailor interventions to the needs of the child/family
- can help children develop a sense of belonging in the setting because they base their work on information received from the parents/family

Cooperation with the family is based on a number of basic postulates:¹¹

- the family, and not the expert, is the constant in the child's life
- the child is best assisted through understanding her family and the community in which the family lives
- it is necessary not only to establish cooperation with the family, but also to commit to improving that cooperation
- it is important to respect the choices and decisions of the family
- family strengths should be appreciated and reinforced
- it is necessary to gain the trust of the family.

In addition to these principles that form the basis for cooperating with families of children involved in the Programme, it is also necessary to devote special attention and time to **establishing cooperation, building partnership and mutual trust**. This is a process, not a one-off activity, and it is important that the family develops trust in the practitioners and the Programme.

If we have understanding for the specific living context of the parents/family, we will provide different possibilities of inclusion in the Programme.

¹¹ Guidelines for Implementing Family Support Programme, Save the Children 2018



The following can be useful for building trust:

- nurturing respectful relations towards the parents/family
- expressing empathy, sensitivity and respecting their perspective
- continuous open communication and dialogue
- recognising and valuing the unique contribution and strength of the family
- making decisions together and readiness to make compromises and changes.

What a Programme based on partnership with parents/family looks like:¹²

- The Programme is a welcoming place for the family, with clear spatial-organisational indicators telling them they are welcome and valued (e.g. having a parents' room, a welcome poster, visual spatial markings, etc.).
- The family is informed about the content, aims and methods of the Programme (through written information and meetings).
- There is a plan of cooperation with the family on various ways of family inclusion.
- The family should have the possibility of joining a specialised programme for improving parenting skills for responsible parenting.¹³
- Parents are asked about what is important to them and what they would like for their children and themselves.
- Children are asked how they would like their parents to become involved and participate in developing the socio-emotional competences of the child/parents.
- Parents are invited personally to participate in individual activities and are given assistance and support by the staff/educators and/or other parents.
- There are organised activities providing opportunities to socialise and develop relationships among the families themselves and between parents and practitioners, e.g. specially organised meetings, creative workshops, etc.
- Staff have daily cooperation with parents on various matters in order to build a trusting relationship and partnership with the family.
- At meetings, parents are informed about the children's activities and programme activities and discuss these with the staff.
- There are opportunities for parents to meet with staff at different times of day and on different days of the week to talk about their child.
- Parents are encouraged to include other family members, relatives and friends.
- Staff will make an additional effort to include **fathers** if they are not already included, given the importance of their involvement for the child's development. Research findings on the father-child relationship – be it positive, negative or non-existent, and irrespective of the child's phase in life and across cultural and ethnic communities – indicate that it has a profound and far-reaching impact on the child that lasts throughout life.¹⁴

¹² Adapted from: Pavlović Breneselović D., Krnjaja Ž., (2017) Kaleidoskop/Osnove diversifikovanih programa predškolskog vaspitanja i obrazovanja

¹³ For example, the Programme of Support for Families conducted by daily centres in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro.

¹⁴ State of the World's Fathers, MenCare, 2015

- The programme values the diversity of families and provides different ways for parents to be involved, i.e. it adapts to the parents' needs and capacities.
- Parents can get actively involved at different times and in different ways, and this is documented.
- Staff are familiar with the specific difficulties and obstacles to inclusion of individual families and develop strategies to overcome them.

A practitioner can encourage building trust and establishing a partnership with the family by:

- re-examining their own starting points, assumptions and expectations of cooperation with the family, as well as existing communication patterns
- actively seeking to achieve continuous, open and meaningful communication with the family to ensure information sharing and dialogue about the child, the Programme and parenting
- developing written communication which ensures mutual information and can be used to document activities
- providing space for family participation and respect of opinions, proposals, suggestions and comments from parents
- providing regular opportunities for direct communication through individual and group meetings
- identifying obstacles to family participation and developing various formats that suit and support different families and their participation.

Different forms of cooperation are developed under the Programme in response to the individual characteristics of the families of the children involved in the Programme, and cooperation/partnership is based on these principles of cooperation with the family.

The parents/family may have different roles in the Programme: guest visitor; volunteer in activities to develop and/or collect educational/workshop materials/portfolio materials; facilitator of activities; Programme promoter; participant in educational workshop for parents, etc.

Direct communication with parents and other family members can be achieved through:

- meetings to introduce them to the Programme
- home visits
- regular parents' meetings
- telephone calls
- individual meetings

Children whose fathers are more involved in caring for them have more empathy, stronger friendships with better adjusted children, fewer behavioural issues and do better at school. Later in life, they are less likely to have issues with the police or with drugs/alcohol abuse. This effect is particularly strong in vulnerable families from marginalised groups.

It is very important to provide children with opportunities to interact with their peers, younger and older children, to participate in joint activities and to build friendships.

- thematic meetings
- educational workshops for parents/family
- meetings to assess the children's progress and evaluate the Programme
- recitals and celebrations to mark suitable dates.

1.4. The role of peers in the development of children's socio-emotional competences¹⁵

As pointed out numerous times before, children are not isolated individuals: they are members of the community, and they learn through **relationships** that are crucial for their development. Children build relationships with their parents, families, and other grown-ups in the community, but also with their peers. Every setting where the Programme takes place is also a system of relationships where **peer relationships**, those among children of similar age that share a "group" identity, are of the greatest importance. Also significant are relationships with older and younger children in the group, as well as in the family, neighbourhood, school or other social settings. Peers are a source of support, but also of challenges, and the child must learn to integrate belonging to a peer group (to follow, accept and respect rules, to cooperate) with other aspects of peer relations, such as competition, taking the lead and resolving conflicts. A key component of adaptation in childhood consists of peer relationships through which self-regulation capacities and friendship relations are developed.¹⁶ Peer relations and friendships develop in the group if children have an opportunity to play, work, communicate and interact with the same group of children, i.e. when they are encouraged and supported in joint activities and rely on each other.

Children gain many benefits through joint activities and play with other children/peers:

- they learn from each other about how to share, how to participate in reciprocal interactions (e.g. giving and receiving, waiting your turn)
- they learn how to understand and take into account the needs and expectations of others and how to respect others' opinions
- they learn how to control their own impulses and resolve conflicts
- they re-examine their own identity, perceive strengths and weaknesses in themselves and others
- they take on new roles and responsibilities, acquire the experience of different roles, from leader to follower
- they gain experience in trying out and taking risks, making mistakes and dealing with them
- they investigate their theories about the world and develop an awareness of other perspectives
- they develop discussion and dialogue skills

¹⁵ Adapted from: Pavlović Breneselović D., Krnjaja Ž., (2017) Kaleidoskop/Osnove diversifikovanih programa predškolskog vaspitanja i obrazovanja

¹⁶ Shonkoff, J. P., Philips, D. A. (Eds) (2000). From Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development

- they learn to understand and respect someone else's point of view, they learn to use arguments and negotiate, they learn to set hypotheses, questions and develop joint ideas, to go beyond what is a given and generate new questions, to re-examine and articulate ideas, opinions and views, to plan and formulate meaningful communication
- they develop a sense of belonging and acceptance, feelings of empathy and morality
- they learn to give support to peers who need it, they develop friendships and learn how to receive emotional support in new situations and when they are faced with problems.

Grown-ups/staff have a key role in supporting peer interaction and should devote special attention to it, which can be done in various ways.

In organisational terms, this is done by:


- providing space, time and materials for activities with other children/peers
- planning activities in pairs and in small groups
- supporting social and symbolic play among children.

“Messages” are sent to support and promote positive interactions by:

- adequately responding to potential conflicts and supporting children to resolve them
- respecting and pointing out the value of friendship and fostering friendship among the children
- modelling desirable social behaviour, e.g. listening to others, waiting your turn, sharing, good manners such as saying please and thank you
- not using and instructing children not to use socially undesirable forms of behaviour such as labelling other children, telling on them, ignoring them
- encouraging children to help each other while playing and in practical life situations
- supporting the sharing of knowledge and skills among children through joint participation in activities
- respecting differences and supporting children to understand and respect differences
- stressing the value of joint activities and play.

Grown-ups/staff should be committed to:

- fostering partnerships with children, families and communities
- implementing programmes that achieve the best outcomes for each child, their well-being and learning
- nurturing the art of clearly expressing their practice and intentions to children, families, colleagues and the broader community
- cooperation with other institutions and professionals working with children and families, especially when it comes to children from vulnerable groups
- acting in the best interest of the child and the family
- developing a culture of learning through their own reflexive practice.



The development of group identity is supported by:

- fostering group rituals
- shaping the group's identity together with the children through its name, sign, vocabulary and other symbols of group identity
- formulating the rules of the group together with the children
- initiating topics about the life of the group, diversity, gender and other stereotypes and prejudice, about feelings in the group, about children's fears and problems, about negative behaviours.


1.5. Why community participation is important and how to integrate the Programme into the community

As pointed out before, the Programme for Developing Children's Socio-emotional Competences relies on the model of positive children's development and on positive, healthy functioning that can be achieved by strengthening and empowering the child, but also by strengthening the family and local community. **Establishing and nurturing partnerships** and seeking to achieve changes at all levels relevant to the life and development of the child (individual, family, group, local community)¹⁷ is a key strength of this Programme.

The community is the child's broader environment, both physical and social, as well as the social and cultural milieu where the child is growing up. The community comprises a multitude of different institutions and organisations, various branches of activity and services, and different social groups such as the neighbourhood, relatives, friends and peers. The community directly shapes socio-economic conditions and the way each child grows up, and through culture, it essentially determines lifestyles and world views. In the broadest sense, culture influences children's development through a set system of values and beliefs that affect family functioning, which in turn models the framework of expectations from children and their modes of socialisation. Learning and socialisation entail adopting a system of values that is culturally constructed and reflected in styles of communication, beliefs, family values, customs, rituals, taboos, etc. Socialisation is a developmental process that depends on the quality and direction of influences and interactions with the community. These influences can be protective or pose a risk factor. Their balance will determine the success of the child's development, both in terms of personality and social skills. Stronger "social cohesion" with society and a stronger focus on achieving positive human values reduce the likelihood of problematic behaviours. Hirschi calls this social cohesion "social capital". The use of a community's social capital is facilitated through a system of social support.¹⁸ The community, with its general social and above all economic characteristics, as well as the policy and practice of social care for children, can have a decisive influence on the health and well-being of the child. An underdeveloped community, where there is high unemployment, inadequate housing conditions, tacit acceptance of violence and intolerance, can amplify conditions that are potentially dangerous for the

¹⁷ "Program podrške porodici (PPP)" [Family Support Programme], Save the Children 2018.

¹⁸ Guidelines for Implementing Family Support Programme, Save the Children 2018



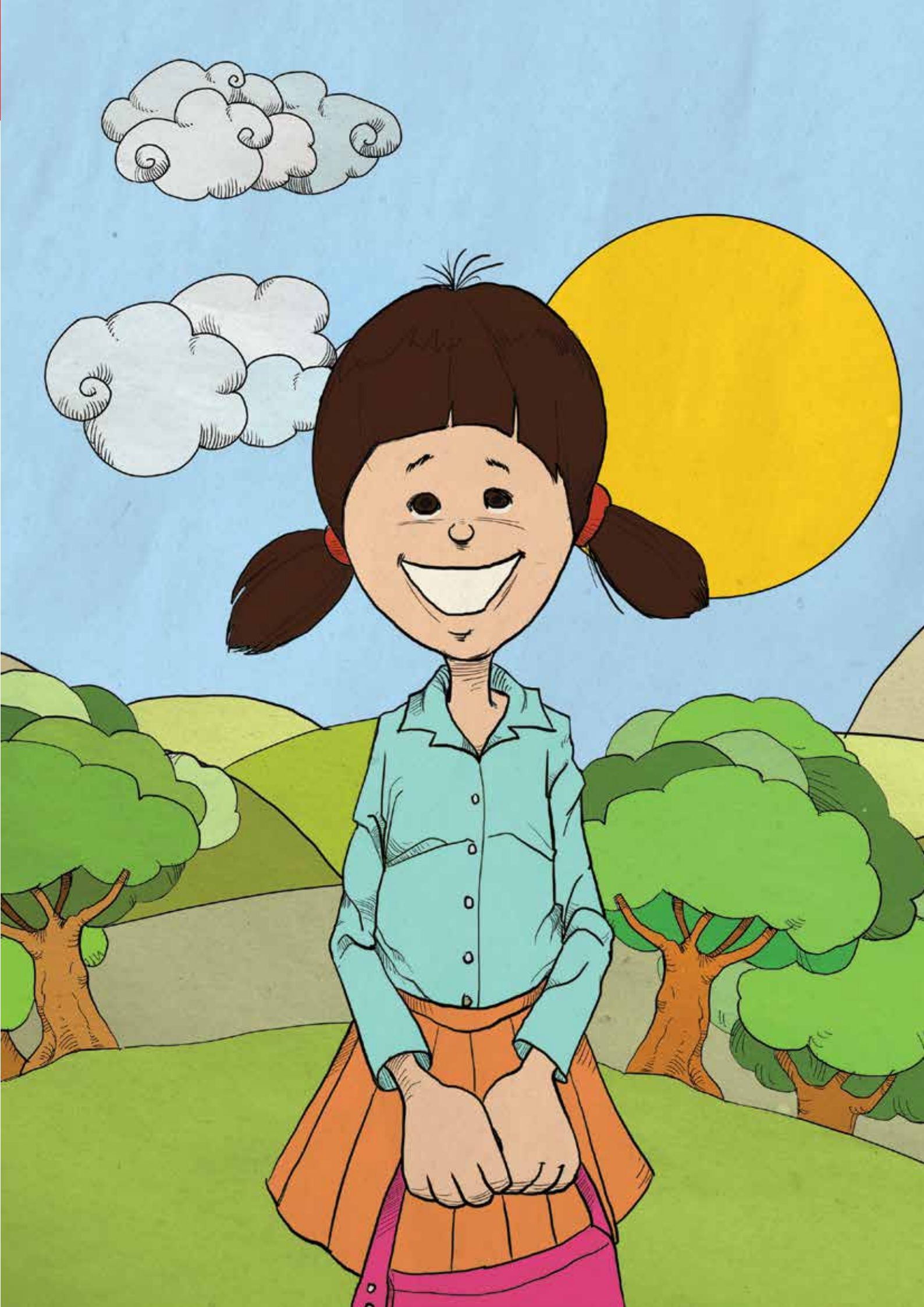
health and well-being of the child. An uncaring community can tolerate unequal opportunities for children's development through insufficient investment of resources into care for the most vulnerable children and their communities or through social exclusion or discrimination based on ethnicity, class or other status.

Through community inclusion and interaction, the child develops new knowledge, a sense of belonging and common identity. That is why it is important for grown-ups/practitioners involved in implementing the Programme to actively work on promoting it and introducing various community stakeholders to its characteristics and aims, as well as the need to continuously improve it and upgrade it with new contents or activities and innovative modes of implementation.

What does a community-linked Programme look like?¹⁹

- The Programme uses various resources in the community to implement activities (e.g. open spaces, educational, cultural and sports institutions, etc.).
- The Programme participates in various local community events (celebrations, festivals, actions).
- The Programme organises events to include the local community (e.g. recitals, exhibitions, performances, promotions, etc.).
- Local businesses (factories, workshops, banks, etc.) are places where Programme activities are implemented, or they participate in Programme activities.
- Local businesses participate in financing individual activities and actions, providing equipment and consumables for Programme activities.
- Information about the Programme is available in the local community (e.g. in the library, at the post office, local clinic, community centre, school).
- The Programme links with other educational and/or developmental programmes and organisations involved in children's education/health/upbringing/well-being and working with families, including organisations of the system and civil society organisations.
- The Programme enables families to connect with other services and programmes in the local community that they need.

¹⁹ Adapted from: Pavlović Breneselović D., Krnjaja Ž., (2017) Kaleidoskop/Osnove diversifikovanih programa predškolskog vaspitanja i obrazovanja







II How to develop children's socio-emotional competence/ socio-emotional learning methods

In an increasing number of countries, socio-emotional learning is included in the strategic plans, policies and practices of preschools and schools.²⁰ Socio-emotional learning activities are often introduced through pilot projects and require developing the competences of practitioners to encourage the social and emotional development of children. It is believed that it takes two to three years for educators and other practitioners to gain full competences in activities and contents for encouraging socio-emotional learning. However, once they are applied and show positive effects, these activities become a regular part of daily educational practice.

Developing a strategy to promote the importance of social and emotional competence as a basic competence for children's successful functioning, development and learning requires daily practice of learning situations, i.e. teaching children social and emotional skills within five main clusters of competences. In addition to workshopping – interactive learning as the most efficient method for developing knowledge, attitudes and skills – children's play is also invaluable for developing socio-emotional competences.

2.1. The importance of play for children's socio-emotional learning


Play is one of the most important aspects of childhood because it is crucial for the child's development. The time a child spends playing with other children provides opportunities to learn in different ways and in many different settings.

Play enables children to:

- develop self-confidence
- feel loved, happy and secure
- practice and adopt new skills
- learn how to care for others and their environment
- develop physical agility and strength
- overcome problems and difficult experiences
- and to have fun and relax!

Play is much more than fun for children. Through play, children learn best, discover who they are, how the world works and what their place in it is.

²⁰ Social and Emotional Learning (2018). National Conference of State Legislatures. Retrieved on 26 April 2018 from: <http://www.ncsl.org/research/education/social-emotional-learning.aspx>



There are different kinds of play, but we mostly refer to *unstructured* and *structured* play. Unstructured, free play happens spontaneously and depends on the interests of the child at a given moment. Free play is unplanned and enables children to use play and imagination at any point and at a tempo that suits them best.

Examples of unstructured play are:

- creative individual or joint play (drawing, playing music, dancing...)
- imaginative games (making a tent from chairs and blankets, dress-up or role-play, playing with household objects, water, flour, play-dough)
- investigating new or favourite places for playing, such as wardrobes, yards, parks, playgrounds, etc.

Structured play is different: it is organised, takes place at a certain time, in a certain place, and is usually led by grown-ups. Examples of structured play are:

- board games that a group of children play
- sports
- painting, dance, acting, singing, band/music.

Particularly valuable for children's socio-emotional learning is what is known as **cooperative play**. The benefits of cooperative play are that the children play together, share toys and decide what to play. Children cooperate, develop the game, take turns and discuss various ideas for play. Learning through play is pleasant and rewarding when they can set challenges themselves and are able to use and build on their knowledge, understanding and skills. Children enjoy learning through self-initiated play.

The task of grown-ups in such situations is to:

- encourage children to plan games
- involve children in making decisions on their learning through play and offer them choices
- help children and encourage them to evaluate how well they did
- set up an atmosphere that encourages dialogue and discussion
- carefully listen in order to understand what children think and feel
- expand on children's ideas, suggestions and interests so as to encourage dialogue
- help children use their full potential and develop skills/thoughts
- ask suitable challenging questions
- help children recognise their own progress and achievements and build on them
- provide positive feedback
- maintain a positive and safe environment for learning through play
- listen carefully and not interrupt children
- support children in order to empower them to deal with unpleasant feelings

- use conflicts and unpleasant moments to discuss feelings
- work with children to resolve problems or conflicts
- mediate decisively and fairly if needed in order to support a child who feels hurt.

We know that many communities organise various forms of children's competitions. However, pedagogical researchers claim that there is no such thing as "healthy" competition, and this has been confirmed by studies showing how introducing a competitive dimension into educational institutions reduces the quality of children's work because the aim becomes winning and not learning. There is no evidence that competition helps develop positive character traits. It is known that small children have a tendency to possessiveness and egocentrism, but that between the ages of two and three, they begin exhibiting abilities leading to cooperation and are ready to help and share with others. Many research studies have shown that some of the most important characteristics influencing social acceptance of children are unselfish and cooperative behaviour. Cooperative games teach children who are afraid of failure that it is important to persevere (Shapiro, 2015).

Through cooperative play, children learn:


- how to make good choices
- how to negotiate and reach agreement
- how to explore
- how to develop close and reciprocal relationships based on acceptance and friendship.

Preschool-aged children have a better attention span than small children and benefit most from cooperative games in terms of developing socio-emotional competences. At that age, children usually speak a lot and ask many questions. They like experimenting with objects and their own physical skills. They like to play with friends.

Good toys for preschool-aged children:²¹

- problem solving items (puzzles with 12 to over 20 pieces, construction blocks, smaller objects that are sorted by length, width, height, shape, colour, smell, quantity and other characteristics, collections – plastic bottles and caps, plastic animal figurines, keys, shells, etc.).
- role-play and construction games (blocks for constructing complex structures, transport toys, construction sets, children's furniture, dress-up costumes, dolls with accessories, puppet theatres, sand, water toys)
- items for creativity (large and small crayons and markers, watercolours, paints, paintbrushes, finger paints, large and small drawing and colouring paper, coloured construction paper, scissors, blackboard and chalk, modelling clay and play dough, patchwork supplies, and musical instruments such as keyboards, xylophones, tambourines, etc.).

21 Prvih 1000 dana za ceo život [The First 1000 Days for a Whole Life], Unicef, Serbia

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- items that require the use of gross and fine motor skills (large and small balls for throwing, catching and batting, mobility equipment, including tricycles, tunnels, climbing frame with padding, wagons and carts, plastic balls, plastic ball and pins / bottles for bowling, targets and things to throw at them)
 - books with more text and detail than for small children

Experts do not recommend having different games and toys for boys and girls, especially if they contribute to stereotypes about the roles of boys and girls. Sometimes, a child will not want to play because she is sleepy, tired or has been engaged in the same activity for a prolonged period. This is common and should not be of concern. Still, absence of play, or lack of interest for play, or a specific way of engaging in play where content or gestures are repeated may indicate developmental discrepancies or difficulties and require further steps to determine the nature of the problem.

2.2. Group work and interactive methods of socio-emotional learning

It is well-known that interactive, empirical learning methods are the most efficient way to develop knowledge, attitudes and skills, i.e. socio-emotional competences. There are many advantages to this type of learning for children, most prominently:

- increased awareness of the child about herself and others
- promoting cooperation and togetherness
- providing opportunities to group members and their educators to recognise and value individual skills and allowing children to learn by modelling
- providing opportunities for children to get to know each other and develop friendships
- promoting communication skills, most importantly active listening
- facilitating work on “sensitive” issues (understanding that “sensitive issues” are common to all children)
- promoting tolerance and understanding of individuals and their needs
- encouraging innovation and creativity.

An efficient programme will establish a balance, use a range of different activities and combine interactive methods with the necessary information related to context, i.e. will combine the educational and exercise block.

2.3. Socio-educational workshops and socio-emotional learning

Experience has shown that socio-educational workshops are the best way to achieve interactive and dynamic group learning. Workshopping means that the entire group is involved and all participants are equally actively engaged. Through play, in a relaxed atmosphere, with jokes and direct responses, children easily discuss and carry out tasks, without having the sense that the work is hard or tiring. The main principle of workshopping is that all participants take an active part, that all opinions are valued and respected equally. When working with groups of older children, the rules of the workshop will need to be voted on and adopted by the group. With younger children, educators should initiate the adoption of group work rules, to ensure a supportive atmosphere where children will not make fun of each other's comments and responses. Building tolerant communication is crucial for all children to feel comfortable and actively and openly participate in joint activities. With that in mind, other rules of workshopping are also introduced, such as, e.g., that all opinions matter, that offensive comments are not allowed, and neither is ignoring someone during discussions, etc.

It is important that grown-ups make sure that the children take turns to speak and that everyone listens to everyone else. Developing active listening skills is an aim in itself, but it is also a "means" of development and adoption of other skills. The confidentiality rules should also be pointed out, but since workshops featuring personal experiences of a sensitive nature are not recommended for children, caution is advised and realistic expectations should be kept of "keeping everything inside the group". Perhaps the most characteristic rule of workshopping is that the participants are arranged in a circle, making sure that everyone can see and hear each other and at the same time symbolising equality and openness. In order for a workshop to yield expected outcomes, i.e. in order to develop socio-emotional competences, children should be enabled to:

- actively participate
- be included in making decisions and choices (choice of topic/content, manner of

Children can learn and develop only in an environment where they feel entirely safe and protected. It is up to grown-ups to provide the setting for development and learning where every child will feel safe.

Tolerant communication at the "workshop" develops through a mutual relationship of understanding and respect. A grown-up who understands the needs and wishes of the child develops that understanding by observing and listening to children, through readiness to learn from and establish relationships with children. In order to develop this atmosphere, it is important to have every child actively engaged. That is why rules of workshopping are determined through a participative process where everyone has a say and all opinions are respected.



implementation of workshop, workshop materials, etc.)

- share information and participate in dialogue with other children and grown-ups based on mutual respect and exchange
- be genuinely consulted and feel their emotions and opinions matter
- see their ideas, expectations and feelings leading to change
- contribute through their participation to what other children and grown-ups do and consider important and meaningful and contribute to what is happening in the environment

2.4. Workshop planning and programming skills

Group work in the form of a workshop is the most common way to implement socio-educational programmes intended for different target groups, not just of children, but also of adults, e.g. a group of parents. This way of working is very conducive to developing children's socio-emotional competences and is most commonly implemented with adolescents. However, it is important to note that different modalities of workshoping are suitable for children of all ages, and it is important that workshop planning and programming include appropriate adaptations of workshop content and methods to suit the given age group.

For this form of work to yield the desired outcomes, the design and implementation of workshops must be approached consistently, i.e. sufficient levels of knowledge and skills must be ensured to enable benefits both for each group member and for the group as a whole. Different authors have offered different definitions of the workshop. However, most agree that there are some basic characteristics that can also be used to define a workshop: personal engagement, work in small groups, active participation of all, diversity of communication patterns, supportive environment, right to difference and respect for needs, emotions and ways of functioning of each participants, working on a common topic, relying on personal experience. The term “workshop” evokes a place where something is being made. Work is a process, an act of creation, not just a finished product. We view the **educational workshop in these terms: as a special method of work focusing on the process** (as per Vladilo, 2006).

The workshop is a form of active, experiential learning that takes place thanks to exchanges at the level of the group with planned introduction of educational content and facilitation by a professional team (Medić, Matejić Đuričić, Vlaović Vasiljević, 1997).

Although the workshop format allows for complete flexibility, the authors point out that the workshop scheme is unified and consists of the following components:

- reference
- objective
- joining circle
- educational block
- exercise

- discussion block
- integrative summary
- general integrative summary
- message for the family
- working materials
- literature.

This highly structured form of workshop has proven very efficient and effective in implementing various socio-educational programmes, but using it requires detailed preparation and training ability.

Given that this workshop format is quite complex, the present Programme should simplify its structure, but take care not to leave out its essential features.

Before we present a model workshop suited to developing children's socio-emotional competences at different ages, we would like to point out that this model can also be used for working with parents in situations when socio-educational programmes are being implemented to improve parenting competences.


1. Planning the workshop

Planning a workshop is a creative process where it is important to determine what should be done in order to achieve the expected learning outcomes and have workshop participants develop certain competences. The purpose of planning and preparation is to ensure its successful implementation to achieve the expected outcomes. The workshop facilitator prepares topics that should correspond to the needs of the participants. The main steps in planning a workshop include:

a) Needs assessment and motivating participants

The first step in planning any socio-educational activity, including a workshop, concerns assessing the needs and interests of the potential participants. If we do not motivate participants in advance to participate in socio-educational workshops and if we don't develop their interest in a certain topic, we cannot expect a good turnout or that the workshop will yield the desired result. Also, one of the reasons for assessing the needs of participants is to determine whether they have any prior knowledge or experience related to the given topic, so that these can be taken into account when planning the workshop.

The Programme for Development of Children's Socio-emotional Competences is implemented through planning, programming, carrying out and evaluating socio-educational workshops adapted to the age and needs of the children.



When it comes to developing children's socio-emotional competences, the starting point for planning and programming workshops is a structured programme for socio-emotional learning whose implementation includes planning, programming, carrying out and evaluating socio-educational workshops with children.

b) Setting the objectives

It is very important at the start to clearly define the workshop objectives, i.e. what we want to achieve by organising the workshop. Thus, for example, the learning objective could be: children can recognise, express and differentiate emotions; they understand that children and grown-ups show emotion in different ways; children can recognise and connect feelings with events, etc. Objectives should be defined in terms of adopted and visible changes in children's behaviour. The selection of activities, methods and techniques to be applied will depend on what we set as the objective.

c) Selection of activities, contents and materials

The next step in preparing the workshop entails selecting the activities, contents and materials with a view to achieving the workshop objectives. Activities should be selected to suit the age of the workshop participants, enable understanding of the topic, reception of information and skills, as well as their applicability in daily life.

From the point of view of the workshop, working materials can be divided into two groups. The first group of materials includes those intended for the participants (children, parents) that are used to enable the carrying out of tasks assigned by the workshop facilitator. The second group consists of materials used by the facilitator to conduct the workshop: detailed plan and programme of work, attendance sheet, exercises and problems, evaluation questionnaire, PP presentations or posters, notes or other supplies used to form groups, etc.

d) Programming the workshop

Programming means determining when, how and by whom the workshop objectives foreseen in the plan will be implemented. **Answering the question of how entails drafting a workshop scenario (synopsis).** This means structuring the workshop, planning time for its realisation and selecting suitable methods and techniques.

The workshop has a very clear and predefined structure that includes:

Introduction – if it is the first, introductory workshop, the participants should introduce themselves and their personal experience with the topic should be investigated. If it is one of a series of workshops, a warm-up game to raise the energy level can be played at the beginning.

Educational block – brief overview of the topic in a clear and illustrative way

Exercise – development of contents through various forms of active group work



Discussion block – analysis of contents and exchange of opinions

Concluding thoughts – summing up the results of the workshop and defining the key outcomes/messages

A scenario should be developed for each stage of the workshop, taking into account the following:

- previous knowledge and experience of the participants
- choice of suitable working method
- various communication patterns
- the time needed to implement activities.

The workshop synopsis should precisely define the planned methods and techniques for group work. An exchange in the form of a plenary discussion is the main method that usually begins and ends almost every workshop. Other methods are selected depending on the objective that is being pursued. If one of the objectives is conveying information or new knowledge, a PP presentation, poster presentation or mini lecture can be employed. In cases where we expect participants to produce new ideas or find ways to overcome a problem, we can plan for a brainstorming session, working on a case study in pairs or small groups, etc. If our objective is to have the participants adopt a new skill, then the best methods are demonstration, simulation or role play. There are no good or bad methods, only their adequate or inadequate use. **When choosing methods, it is important to keep the desired objective in mind and take care that the method will lead to that objective, and that it is suited to the age of the children or other workshop participants.** Below is a brief overview of techniques that are most often used for group work.

The final step in developing the scenario is **timing**, i.e. determining the duration of individual activities. When timing the parts of the workshop, care should be taken that it does not exceed 90 minutes if the participants are grown-ups or adolescents over 14. For younger children, the workshop should be shorter, around 45 minutes. It is useful to have a “plan B” in the scenario to enable additional or alternative activities for the participants and ensure the facilitator has control over the entire course of the workshop.

The following things should be determined in the workshop scenario:

- title of workshop
- target group and number of participants
- general objective of the workshop
- competences being developed
- learning outcomes to be achieved
- methodology – applied methods and techniques
- duration of each activity
- materials needed to implement each activity

- person responsible for carrying out each activity (if there are more workshop facilitators)
- additional or alternative activities – “Plan B”
- evaluation method.

Techniques for (workshop) group work


Depending on the group, i.e. the age of the participants, the type of workshop and its objective(s), the best and most appropriate technique should be developed, and this usually entails a combination of various techniques:

Simultaneous individual activity – each child is equally engaged on a set task, focused on themselves and their experience, looking for their own solution. Suitable for working with older children (over 14) and grown-ups.

Simultaneous work in small groups – groups or pairs work on a task at the same time. In order to ensure everyone can work undisturbed, the groups should be sufficiently far apart. Once the task is completed within the small groups, each group chooses a representative to present their work to the large group. This way of working also contributes to the children getting to know each other better and to team building, which is why there should always be different participants in the groups. One of the ways to split the children into groups is with the help of various games. This technique is suitable for working with children of all ages and for work with grown-ups.

Group discussion, as pointed out before, is an indispensable part of almost all workshops and it enables summarising and systematising everything that was said as well as drawing conclusions and emphasising the main lessons and messages of the workshop. Discussion in the large group enables people to think aloud about a topic and express personal opinions. Listening to others can broaden or change someone’s views, help clarify ideas, views, values and behaviours. Discussion can start with impressions of the workshop. The workshop facilitators should encourage discussion with open-ended questions. They can also paraphrase the participants’ responses and give positive feedback. At the end of the discussion, there should be a summary of everything that was said and a conclusion. It is best if the conclusion does not contain new formulations or definitions, but instead uses the words and comments the children used during the workshop. This technique is suitable for working with children of all ages and for work with grown-ups.

Focus group – focus group discussion is structured and has clearly defined objectives. It is used to obtain the children’s opinions on a given subject that is placed in “focus”. The discussion is led by one person – the moderator – and guided towards a given topic. The children’s responses should be recorded as precisely as possible to be used later for analysing the results and quality of the workshop, as well as for guiding and improving it. The moderator can make notes. Basic information about the group should also be recorded: the number of participants, sex, age, place where the discussion is held and how long it lasts. To organise a focus group,



the participants should be carefully chosen. After explaining the objective of the discussion, the participants should answer predefined questions. All the participants should take part in the discussion and express their opinions. Everyone should speak directly and exclusively to the topic of the discussion. All the participants should be encouraged to take part, but no one should be forced to speak. It is important to make sure that no one dominates the group or imposes their opinions.

During the focus group discussion, the moderator should remain completely neutral and not express their personal opinion or knowledge that could influence the group. If issues that are not directly related to the topic crop up during the discussion, they should be left for the end. The focus group is intended primarily for working with older children (over 14) and grown-ups.


Circle conversation – the participants sit in a circle and take turns speaking in the order of seating. They can give their comments on a topic, related personal experiences or answer questions, depending on the objective of the activity. Before starting work on this technique, children should be reminded of their right not to speak about a topic if they don't want to by saying "pass". This technique is often used for evaluation games where every participant should express their feelings after the workshop or working day with one word or gesture. This technique is suitable for working with children of all ages and for work with grown-ups.

Brainstorming – spontaneous group discussion that should result in a multitude of ideas about a given topic. It is started with one word or sentence. All the participants should say what comes to their mind when they hear the given word or sentence. The workshop facilitator should take notes, without commenting, until there are no more ideas. Then all the ideas are read out, commented on and systematised. Brainstorming is a good way to get the whole group engaged and thinking freely about a topic. It is most often used as an introduction, i.e. a starting activity in workshops. If for whatever reason it is more suitable, brainstorming can also be done in writing by having the participants write their ideas on a common piece of paper. This technique is suitable for working with children of all ages and for work with grown-ups.

Fishbowl technique – entails work in a pair or small group carrying out an activity in the centre of the circle while the other participants are active observers. Afterwards, the observers give their impressions and observations and these are discussed. This technique is suitable for working with children of all ages and for work with grown-ups.

Story telling – traditional technique for giving information. Useful for initiating discussion on a given topic. Stories can be designed to contain messages about the topic being dealt with, and this is then followed by a discussion. The story can be tailored to the characteristics of a given culture. Using characters and creatures from local myths can contribute to the effectiveness of the story. There are various ways to tell a story:

Story with a mistake – reading a story that contains "mistakes" – misperceptions, myths, prejudice and missteps of main characters enables the participants to expend their knowledge or



clarify their views through analysis. This way of working has been shown to be especially good for working with preschool (age 4 to 6) and early school-age children (age 7 to 10).

Open-ended story – a short story that is cut off at the point of a decision. The story should portray a real-life situation and should deal with human emotions, beliefs and attitudes. Participants should come up with the end of the story themselves. The aim is to start a discussion about an observed problem and encourage the group to first identify the problem and then come up with possible solutions. This technique is suitable for working with children of all ages.

A story with a gap uses two images to start a discussion about possible causes of a problem. One image portrays the problem and the other depicts the situation after the problem disappears/is resolved. The group is asked to describe what they see in the first image, then the second image is shown and the group is asked to guess what could have happened in the meantime. In other words, the group “fills the gap” with their version of the story. This technique is suitable for working with children of all ages.


Telling fables – fables are stories that convey how people can put themselves in danger by doing something. Given that the main characters in fables are animals, children are able to draw on their lessons without the impression that they are being personally implicated. This technique is especially good for working with pre-schoolers (age 4 to 6), but it can also be applied when working with early school-age children (age 7 to 10).

Tests – various tests are habitually used to check participants’ knowledge and/or attitudes and for evaluation. However, tests filled out by participants before an educational workshop enable them to review their own knowledge and/or attitudes and have some interesting questions intrigue them and raise their attention level before the start of the workshop. When used in this way, the tests can be completed individual or in pairs. Tests are recommended for working with older children (over 14) and grown-ups.

Educational “theatre” includes a number of techniques:

Drama is acting out situations that can happen in real life. A drama technique is selected depending on the experience and composition of the group. The idea for the situation to be acted out can come from the workshop facilitator or from the participants, which is the better option. The situation should be chosen with care to avoid have “drama happen on stage”, i.e. a situation that really did happen to one of the participants and was hurtful, traumatic or difficult. A group of up to 10 participants can participate in the “drama” activity and the technique is suitable for working with children of all ages, but care should be taken to choose a simple scenario for younger children.

Pantomime – one child steps into the centre of the circle and mimes what happened and how they felt about it, while others offer guesses. The child in the centre has an opportunity to




show what happened and how they felt about it. If used with pre-schoolers, it is best if the child tells the workshop facilitator what they plan to mime beforehand, so as not to forget during the game. The game is repeated until ideas run out... Afterwards, the game is discussed: how did you guess the feeling. This technique is suitable for working with children of all ages.

Role play – participants are selected to play roles (usually two or three), with constant reminders that they are playing a role, not expressing their own opinions but what the character they are playing would say. Participants are encouraged to identify with their roles as much as possible. After defining the characters, situation and problem, the “actors” play their roles spontaneously, improvising dialogue. The scene should last up to five minutes. This technique is suitable for working with children of all ages.

Rapid role play – the participants are arranged in two rows behind two chairs where the first actors sit. Participants take turns acting quite rapidly so that everyone has a chance to say just a few sentences. By tapping the actor on the shoulder, the next participants “steps into the scene” and continues the story where the previous participant left off. If that seems like too much of a difficult task for the group, in the first round, the participants don’t have to continue the story, they can just say a few sentences about the topic in general. Instead of sitting in chairs, participants can walk around a certain space while acting. This leaves them the possibility to decide for themselves how long they will be speaking, they can walk faster or slower and “step out of the scene” sooner or later. By play-acting, we take on someone else’s character and it is easier to express emotions and ideas. This technique is suitable for working with children of all ages.

Discussion following the role play is an important part of the workshop. The discussion is used to analyse what was said. By role playing, participants go through and experience situations that can potentially be risky for them before they actually happen. This gives them the skill and strength to respond with confidence and positivity when they face a similar situation in real life.

Using additional materials – additional materials are used to focus attention on a topic, initiate discussion and encourage group participation. Pictures and photographs can be used, as well as newspaper articles, videos, etc. Pictures and photographs are used to illustrate what is being discussed and make it easier for participants to remember the presented content. Some pictures, photographs, illustrations and drawings that depict a certain problem can be used very successfully to introduce an activity or prompt discussion. When choosing the images, they should elicit emotions from participants and encourage them to talk about their observations. Still, care should be taken to make sure the images do not frighten or cause negative emotions. Videos can also be useful for initiating discussion. Videos of various life stories can help the participants become familiar with a topic and get them thinking. Videos can also be used to convey information. In that case, shorter sequences should be played and the video should be paused to check whether the group has understood what they just saw.



“Six thinking hats” – a technique that enables viewing and analysing a problem from various angles. The participants are divided into six small groups (or 3 to 4 groups) and each group gets a different coloured hat. The hat colours are white, red, black, green, yellow and blue. The group thinking under the white hat focuses on facts, information and data about a given topic. The red hat group observe their feelings and emotions while they think about the given topic. Thinking under the black hat is reserved for critically considering facts, ideas and possibilities for their realisation. In contrast, the yellow hat emphasises everything positive about the topic, all the advantages. The green hat requires creative thinking, coming up with new ideas and proposals. This technique is used for analysing a problem of relevance to the participants. It can be used if there is a problem that we especially want to bring to the children’s attention and make more prominent. Emphasising the importance of considering a problem from different angles also enables the development of critical thinking, one of the most important life skills. This technique is suitable for working with school-aged children.

Games – various types of games are used at the beginning, in the course or at the end of the workshop to get the participants to relax, get to know each other (if they don’t already know each other) and prepare for work. These games need not be related to the workshop in terms of content. However, if needed, they can be played during the workshop. The games are used for:

- shaking things up (or breaking the ice)
- getting to know each other
- raising concentration and/or energy levels
- team building
- establishing trust
- relaxing, recreation
- evaluation.

e) Implementation of the workshop²²

Before directly implementing the workshop, adequate space and equipment need to be secured and prepared materials should be checked over once more.

At the start of the workshop, basic rules should be defined and it should be made clear that all participants, as well as the facilitators must stick to the rules:

- circle rule – everyone sits in a circle because this allows for equal possibility of expression without anyone’s dominance
- “pass” rule – exchange goes around in a circle, but if someone does not want to participate in an activity, they have the right to say “pass”
- listening rule – carefully listening to each other is expected
- discretion rule – what is said in the circle should stay in the circle
- participation rule – there are no bystanders at the workshop, everyone participates

²² Adapted from: Guidelines for Implementing Family Support Programme, Save the Children 2018

- keeping to the agreed time rule
- “don’t sit on your needs” rule – if someone needs to leave the workshop, they should not refrain from doing so
- special rules – rules agreed for a specific workshop

The facilitator is responsible for carrying out the objectives and contents of the workshop in line with the needs of the participants, their skills and level of experience. The facilitator actively includes the participants in developing the planned learning outcomes. The following is recommended as an optimal distribution of time allotted to individual activities:

1/4 – introduction, making contact, introducing the objectives, activating the participants
 2/4 – development, transfer of information through suitable methods and techniques
 1/4 – conclusion, incorporating information into a broader thematic area and summing up the results

Even though the knowledge and skills needed for implementing a workshop can be the subject of a separate training, for the purposes of this Programme, we will list here some of the basic recommendations related to workshop facilitators:

- Prepare for every workshop!
- Be punctual – respect the agreed time
- Express yourself clearly and accurately, speak so everyone can hear you and do not rush
- Maintain eye contact with all the workshop participants
- Present the content in a way that will be understandable and interesting to the participants
- Illustrate the topic you are presenting with examples from everyday life
- Use visual aids – illustrations, posters, videos, photographs, etc.
- When presenting, emphasise and repeat the most important information several times
- Observe the reactions of the participants and give them feedback
- Always leave enough time for questions from participants and additional explanations.

f) Evaluation of the workshop

An integral part of every workshop that is implemented at the end is the evaluation. It can be geared at assessing various aspects of the workshop: organisational conditions, comprehensibility of contents and possibility of their practical application (usefulness), preparedness and skill of the workshop facilitator and their attitude towards the participants, adequate duration of the workshop, etc. **The purpose of the evaluation is to get feedback, compare what was delivered against expectations, obtain measures and assessments, but also to plan interventions during the process to improve and monitor new designs.** Evaluation can be carried out using a questionnaire, an assessment scale, a plenary discussion, etc. In addition to the evaluation by participants at the end of the workshop, facilitators can conduct process evaluation by using an observation chart. In it, they can record all information of relevance to the implementation of the workshop. The evaluation results serve as a starting point for improving the quality of subsequent workshops.



III Socio-emotional learning outcomes

3.1. Why Introduce the Programme for Development of Children's Socio-Emotional Competences

The following are some of the most important objectives of introducing and applying the Programme for Development of Children's Socio-emotional Competences:


- for all children, and especially children from sensitive groups and children growing up in less stimulating environments (who are not enrolled in preschool and/or were not included in the education process on time), to have the opportunity to join programmes intended to encourage development and achieve their well-being.
- so that by taking part in the programmes, children are given opportunities to get a sense of satisfaction, achievement and belonging, to build relationships of trust and respect, closeness and friendship.
- for children to develop openness, curiosity, resilience, reflection, perseverance, self-confidence and a positive personal and social identity.
- for families to have opportunities to choose, to actively take part in their children's upbringing, and to develop parenting competences.
- for educators and various other professionals and practitioners to have an opportunity to express their creativity and expertise, and to work in the interest of the well-being of children and families.
- for settings in the local community (cultural, sports and recreation centres, open spaces, local institutions) to become places of joint participation of children and grown-ups in learning and constructing meaning, through dialogue and mutual support.

3.2. What is well-being for children²³

We have pointed out that the purpose of applying the Programme for Development of Socio-Emotional Competences is achieving well-being for children. Well-being is a multidimensional concept that has a personal and an interpersonal dimension, where the two dimensions are mutually conditioned and overlapping. The personal dimension includes both a subjective feeling of satisfaction, enjoyment, pleasantness and successful psychological functioning, and it is connected with the interpersonal dimension of social functioning.

Subjective well-being – according to this dimension, well-being is defined in terms of “being happy and healthy”, “feeling good”. This is a holistic, subjective state with mutually combined and balanced feelings of vitality and energy, satisfaction and enjoyment (to have fun, to enjoy interacting with others and taking part in activities), openness (being open to the world around

23 Adapted from: Pavlović Breneselović D., Krnjaja Ž., (2017) Kaleidoskop/Osnove diversifikovanih programa predškolskog vaspitanja i obrazovanja



yourself, to new experiences, accepting attention), calm (not feeling threatened, tense, uneasy or worried).

Psychological well-being – capacity for successful functioning, development and expression of human potential. Psychological well-being includes the following elements: self-regulation, self-acceptance, independence, activeness.


- Self-regulation is the ability to control one's own impulses, the ability to stop something we want to continue and start something even though we do not like it. These two sides of self-regulation are interrelated. A child with developed self-regulation is able to delay gratification and needs and overcome her impulses long enough to review the possible consequences of her actions or to consider alternative paths to gratification.
- Self-acceptance – encompasses development of identity (personal and social) and self-respect (self-confidence, feeling empowered, self-worth).
- Independence – entails developing instrumental independence (such as the ability to independently execute an action or activity) and psychological independence (such as the ability to make decisions independently which is derived from autonomy, self-awareness and self-confidence). In the first case, independence is a means to an end, while in the second, the aim is self-affirmation.
- Activeness – consists of a combination of cognitive and emotional capacities and traits such as curiosity, openness to new experiences, enterprise, tolerance of frustration, creativity, creative potential.

Social well-being – capacity for successful interpersonal (social) functioning that includes the following elements. acceptance, viability, compatibility, belonging, contribution/participation.

- Acceptance – understanding, respecting and accepting others and their differences
- Viability – acting in a context that offers different possibilities and enables actualisation, functioning in a positive setting with potential
- Compatibility – understandability and predictability of the setting, compatibility with patterns, rules, norms and requirements of the social group / community
- Belonging – being part of a community/environment, being accepted and belonging, being supported, sharing common characteristics
- Contribution/participation – to be a member of the community and have the opportunity and ability to contribute to the community, seeing one's own activities as something the environment considers important and valuable

Long-term outcomes – usually defined as socialisation tasks; they derive from interrelated sub-dimensions of well-being and develop through support to these sub-dimensions. They include:

Resilience – resilient individuals manage to be successful despite serious setbacks, problems and constant changes. Resilience is the capacity to face up to life's challenges in a positive



and productive way; it is the basis for successful learning and development, and has a central role in relieving stress and recovering from trauma. A resilient child remains competent and successful at functioning, despite being exposed to stressful events, negative circumstances or bad luck, and continues to approach problems constructively.


Social and emotional competence – the ability to understand and express the social and emotional aspect of living, i.e. to manage them in such a way as to enable dealing with life's tasks such as learning, establishing relationships, resolving everyday problems and adapting to the complex requirements of growth and development.

Emotional competence is the capacity to be strategically aware of one's own and other people's emotions and to act in accordance with them with a view to negotiating interpersonal exchange and regulating emotional experience. Emotional competence is made up of the ability to experience and express a wide range of emotions, regulate and control the experiencing and expressing of emotions, and understanding one's own and other people's emotions.

Social competence is the development and use of abilities to integrate thoughts, feelings and behaviours in achieving social tasks that are valued in a given context and culture. It includes capacities for emotional bonding (loving and caring for others and believing they love and care for us), empathy, effective communication (being able to convey one's feelings and thoughts clearly and openly while respecting the feelings, understanding and interest of the other side), and for establishing and maintaining relationships (the ability to establish relationships with others, thereby promoting one's own well-being and that of the other side).

Morality – developing morality and acting ethically. Morality is not derived only from moral judgements and reasoning, but also from caring for others that is established within a relationship. Within that framework, morality is viewed through attachments to others. The child discovers patterns of human relationships and observes the ways people care for others or hurt others. Morality does not come from impartial rules of behaviour, but is an expression of emotional bonds that make up the foundation of all human relationships through which the child develops an awareness of being able to affect others. Emotions are the channel through which the child expresses her understanding of the difference between good and evil, and her competence as a moral agent. This is the basis upon which development of moral choice and logical capacities of moral reasoning are built.

Altruism – developing the ability to cooperate and a host of humane traits such as responsiveness, empathy, understanding another's point of view, tolerance, decency, solidarity, etc.



For children, well-being is:²⁴

Being psychologically and socially strong:

- Having strong bonds with close grown-ups and developing close and supportive relationships with peers, grown-ups in the programme and in the community
- Being aware of your feelings and being able to express them
- Understanding the feelings of others
- Being content with yourself
- Respecting yourself, others and your environment
- Making decisions and choosing your own activities
- Feeling accepted
- Being adjusted and enjoying changes, surprises and challenges;

Having a positive self-image and feeling accepted:

- Feeling safe
- Having a feeling of power and influence over what is happening in the environment
- Being accepted in your uniqueness and individuality;

Feeling healthy:

- Developing control and coordination of movement
- Being aware of your body and being physically active
- Meeting your needs and taking care of your body
- Assessing risk well in activities
- Making healthy choices and having a positive relationship to food, rest, exercise and routines;

Having the possibility of active and creative expression:

- Having the possibility for expression in various ways, through various activities, different games and media
- Having opportunities to explore, re-examine, be in awe and wonder
- Having support for flexibility and reflexivity
- Having understanding for differences in opinions and beliefs;

Having a positive relationship towards life and learning:

- Having the possibility and support for growing independence, making choices and decisions
- Believing in your own abilities and having learning dispositions such as perseverance, curiosity, openness

²⁴ Based on: NCCA, 2009, 2009d; Centre for Early Childhood Development & Education, 2006.

- Building meaning and a purpose in life
- Having support for developing a positive attitude towards life, resilience to difficulties and coping with difficulties;

Being successful and competent in learning:

- Expressing your interests
- Having learning experiences based on previous experience and life situations
- Having opportunities to express your abilities and interests
- Being aware of your potential and your way of learning, having opportunities to help others in activities and learning;

Feeling part of a group and community:

- Children feeling they have a place in the group and their rights
- Children feeling their family is respected and welcome in the programme/community
- Understanding rules, limitations and requirements
- Having friends
- Having possibilities to share personal experiences and impressions
- Participating in activities in the community and seeing your contribution.

3.3. How we evaluate the outcomes of the Programme

Evaluation means assessing the effectiveness of a process, in this case the Programme for Developing Children's Socio-emotional Competences, in order to understand whether the activities we planned and implemented had the desired effect in relation to the pre-set objectives and expected outcomes.

Evaluating the implementation of the Programme for Developing Children's Socio-emotional Competences is primarily geared at **assessing the outcomes of the Programme** – this is related to the effects of applying the Programme in working with specific children and their parents/families on **adopted skills** (reflected through changes in behaviour of children/parents) and on the **degree of satisfaction** with the overall implementation of the Programme. Monitoring and evaluating progress is based on **outcome indicators** that are planned together with the children/families before starting the Programme.

Both components (skills development, degree of satisfaction with learning process) are evaluated from at least three perspectives:

- the perspective of the Programme user – child
- the perspective of the parents/family
- the perspective of (educational) staff implementing the Programme

In addition to these three levels, the Programme can also be evaluated from the perspective of other local community stakeholders who also provide services to children and/or their families and can view the effects of the Programme from that angle. These can include the school, centre for social work, development counselling centre and other similar institutions. Involving multiple actors in the evaluation process is in line with the approach that stresses the function of evaluation for the purpose of empowerment. This participatory and collaborative approach entails:

- that the evaluation is conducted by professionals applying the Programme (internal as opposed to external evaluation), thereby raising awareness about the importance of the evaluation within the organisation itself;
- the participation of as many community stakeholders, which increases the visibility of the Programme and includes stakeholders that may be of importance for the Programme but were not informed about it or did not show interest (for example, representatives of local authorities/local self-government, etc.) (Campbell et al., 2004; Fetterman and Wandersman, 2005; Secret, Jordan, Ford, 1999).


Adopting new skills and developing children's socio-emotional competences, which should be manifested in their behaviour, are the expected outcomes of the Programme and the basis for evaluation, because they show us the desired state we aim to achieve and against which we assess the quality of Programme implementation. Outcomes are mostly defined as desired states and **changes in behaviour** of children (and families) that are manifested based on certain **outcome indicators**.

Key competences and possible outcome indicators²⁵

Competence	Behaviour – Indicators
SELF-AWARENESS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● names and recognises own and other's feelings ● recognises feelings that may be caused by certain situations/events/behaviours ● analyses own feelings and their influence on own behaviour and the behaviour of others ● analyses the feelings of other children and grown-ups and how they influence behaviour ● develops a realistic picture of own strengths/qualities/abilities, as well as limitations ● recognises own interests, needs and wishes ● develops a positive attitude towards herself (self-respect) ● develops faith in herself and in her strengths, abilities and knowledge (self-confidence)

²⁵ Adapted from: Vranješević J. et al. (2019) Vrtić kao sigurno i podsticajno okruženje za učenje i razvoj dece

Competence	Behaviour – Indicators
SELF-REGULATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • adapts own behaviour to own thoughts and feelings • adapts own thoughts, feelings and their expression to different situations • adapts the expression of thoughts and feelings to own expectations, expectations of others, and to the social context • copes in different situations and achieves positive results without putting herself or others in danger • rises to meet own expectations and the expectations of others in various ways • considers the relationship between the wish to succeed and the risks or possible consequences and can give up when she estimates that the consequences could be unsafe for herself or others • takes initiative and perseveres when she estimates that the risks do not pose a danger to her own safety or the safety of others • in a risky or challenging situation, is able to provide self-support and persevere (with a clear “can do” attitude) or give up (with a clear attitude of “I cannot, must not, don’t know how to do this, I won’t do it because it is not safe, not useful, not good...”) • act as support to others when needed, when she assesses that this is expected or that others are in need
Competence	Behaviour – Indicators
AWARENESS OF OTHERS/SOCIAL AWARENESS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understands that everyone has similar needs and feelings • carefully listens and is able to accept a difference in opinion • recognises and names how another person is feeling in a given situation • thinks about how an event seems from the perspective of another person • assumes what another person is experiencing and feeling • connects how someone responds and behaves with how they are feeling • is friendly and polite, expresses compassion, dedication, humanity • shows caring towards others, respects other people’s property and things



Competence	Behaviour – Indicators
BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● builds relationships with others by respecting differences ● makes friends and socialises with peers ● asks others for help when needed, including grown-ups ● recognises when others need help and shows readiness to help ● uses non-violent ways to resolve conflicts ● cooperates with others and agrees on common goals ● participates in joint tasks or actions (preparing a show, tidying up, various socialising activities, competitions)
Competence	Behaviour – Indicators
RESPONSIBLE DECISION MAKING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● before reacting, analyses the situation and recognises which behaviours may cause problems ● thinks about how current choices (behaviour in a concrete or similar situation) influence future relationships with others in the environment – peers and grown-ups, and her position in the community (family, peer group, wider community) ● applies different strategies to stand up to peer pressure ● thinks about how her behaviour is seen and experienced by others ● thinks about her behaviour in terms of what is good and useful for herself and for others ● independently resolves problems in relationships with peers ● negotiates with peers in order to reach a joint solution that is acceptable to all makes decisions based on what is considered good, valuable, acceptable and positive in her environment (family, peer group)

It is possible and useful to also set outcome indicators for individual skills. When determining indicators, it is important to keep in mind the developmental dimension of the child and the fact that skills/competences can be a matter of degree; a child may possess them to a greater or lesser extent and they develop gradually, are perfected and become more complex, but the decisive role in their development is played by social interaction and stimuli from the child's environment. **Competence must always be assessed in relation to a given context, specific situation, i.e. environment, the child's age (the child's developmental perspective).** This should be taken into account also when setting outcome indicators, i.e. when assessing progress in adopting and developing socio-emotional competences.


Examples of indicators for assessing the development of individual skills:

Skill	Behaviour – Indicators
EMPATHY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● recognises the feelings of others in different life situations ● understands the life circumstances of another person and their feelings in given situations ● listens carefully and actively to what others are saying ● analyses characteristics and behaviours of persons who understand others' feelings well ● assesses how own words and behaviour will affect the feelings of others ● thinks about what it is like to be in the position of another person who is different – how they feel and what they think ● shows happiness when someone else succeeds at something they had been wanting for a long time
Skill	Behaviour – Indicators
SELF-CONTROL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● recognises why self-control is important in situations when emotions run high ● understands that by delaying gratification, a more valuable goal can be achieved ● recognises characteristics and behaviours that help resist temptation / delay gratification ● recognises feelings and behaviours in situations when she has/doesn't have self-control ● assesses own level of self-control in a given situation ● understands how self-control prevents uncontrolled and harmful behaviour ● recognises and uses techniques/strategies to strengthen self-control

3.4. How we can improve the evaluation of socio-emotional learning outcomes

When planning to evaluate socio-emotional learning outcomes for children, it is important to bear in mind the following:


- Some outcomes are difficult to measure, but that should not be discouraging; it is important to define such outcomes well and then prepare good arguments about whether they were achieved.
- If the objectives and tasks of the Programme are difficult to measure (e.g. “improved self-image”), every effort should be made to translate them into or formulate them as visible behaviour patterns, i.e. to set indicators based on which it can be concluded whether they were met.
- Information about the process is equally as important as information about the outcome. This means that it is equally important to “measure” and document Programme outcomes as it is the process, how the learning was conducted, what the interaction was like, what relationships were established, whether the children were satisfied, happy, excited, whether the parents showed interest, etc.
- Evaluation of the Programme outcomes and process helps develop professional awareness and accountability and opens possibilities for continuous learning and improvement. Good results raise the reputation of the Programme (and the implementing institution), which leads to a higher level of professional (and social) standing.
- It is beneficial to use all appropriate methods and means for recognising and documenting progress in developing socio-emotional competences in children, which should be accompanied by **validation and feedback to the children and their parents**. The process should be monitored continuously throughout the Programme and outcomes should be evaluated periodically, at least at the start and at the end of the Programme implementation.
- Procedures for monitoring and evaluation (course and outcome) of progress in developing competences of children should be set up as an integral part of a broader regular procedure for assessing achieved results of the work. Thus, if the Programme has a daily centre, for example, this makes the work of the centre transparent, its staff directly responsible and creditable for the achieved results, and the quality of services is constantly expanded and improved.
- Evaluation must take into account different perspectives and values, and at least the perspective of the child/family/parents and the perspective of the educational staff that implemented the Programme and was responsible for its outcomes.
- Self-assessment and feedback from peers and educational staff is important because it encourages the child to reflect on her own learning, which leads to higher levels of learning.
- Socio-emotional learning is more meaningful and effective when children and educational staff talk and examine ways the child adopts and represents knowledge, skills and attitudes, i.e. the ways the child participates in the learning process.

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- By helping the child set goals, monitor her own learning and think about what she has achieved, we empower the child to see herself as competent and to have faith in herself.
 - If children take part in defining the criteria for monitoring socio-emotional learning and achieved outcomes, they will know when they have succeeded and will have control over their own learning.
 - Skill “feeds” skill! Numerous contemporary research studies have confirmed that socio-emotional competences are intertwined, interdependent, mutually supportive, making fertile ground to each other for development, and that none of them function in isolation or independently of each other. This should be taken into account for evaluation, i.e. it should be taken into account that some outcomes are of a long-term nature, they are reached by the cumulative effect of different but interrelated and mutually conditioned skills.



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