

## Content of the training course “Sustainable Food in Kindergartens”



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## Module 1 – The role of kindergarten staff in helping to change food habits

This module provides kindergarten staff with the tools to enable them to raise awareness of healthy, socially and ecologically sustainable eating cultures in early years settings.



### What are the goals of this module?

**Unit 1:** Understand the role of kindergarten staff in developing food culture and eating habits

**Unit 2:** Investigate the opportunities and challenges for kindergarten staff

**Unit 3:** What actions can early years settings take?

### After finishing this module I will have learnt:

1. to reflect upon eating habits, values and attitudes to food, eating behaviours or table manners and to determine the lasting effect of the kindergarten staff on the development of children's food habits.
2. to identify the role that kindergarten staff play in creating an awareness of a healthy, socially and ecologically sustainable eating cultures in the kindergarten.
3. what can be done to change food habits and to make meals healthier and more sustainable.

## Unit 1 – The role of kindergarten staff in developing food culture

### In this unit I will learn how to:

1. reflect upon the current food culture and eating habits in our early years setting.
2. challenge existing preconceptions relating to food culture.
3. affect children's eating habits in a positive manner.

### Introduction into the topic:

A balanced nutritional diet is an important component of a healthy lifestyle. By offering guidance on food culture within early years settings, this can help to pave the way for developing healthy eating habits later in life.



The number of hours a child stays in kindergarten and school is increasing. Increased time in these settings, leads to an increase of meals taken there. Thus, there are calls for developing healthy and sustainable eating habits in kindergartens. Teachers and wider kindergarten staff play a vital role in this process.

## Chapter 1 – Food culture and eating habits – where do they come from?

The eating habits children practice early in life affects their health and nutrition and also shapes their attitudes towards food as they progress into adulthood. At kindergarten level, generating an interest in food can help to path the way towards developing healthier eating habits.



concerning atmosphere in mealtime.



[Checklist: Reflecting food culture/eating habits in the kindergarten \(docx - 72kB\)](#)

## Chapter 2 – Being a role model and challenging obsolete rules and regulations

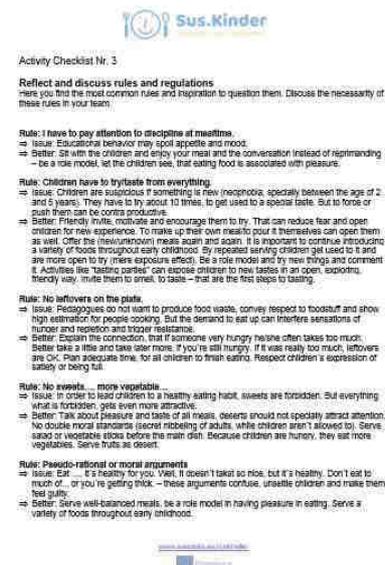
There are many possibilities in learning and experiencing around eating and drinking. What is good for me, what is good for the environment, the climate? In Module 2 you find a lot of valuable knowhow and advice to raise food quality in kindergartens. But: increasing requirements can lead to more pressure, what's not our objective. If children feel misunderstood, not respected, controlled or even humiliated by rules and how they are communicated, it's very bad for their relation and development. Kindergarten staff has to be cautious but also clear in defining, what is really important about food, eating and drinking and pass this along to the children.

Research has shown that the eating behavior of parents but also of kindergarten staff has a major impact in children's behavior. So, it is a matter of being authentic and emphatic in working with children – always and therefor also at the dining table.

Here you find some points that might help to question previously stated rules:

- What is the intention behind the rule?
- Could this object also be achieved without this rule?
- What's better in having this rule than having it not?

To scrap outdated rules can be very relieving.



In the following checklist “rules and regulations” you’ll find the most common rules and inspiration to question them:

[Checklist: Rules and regulations \(docx - 73kB\)](#)

## Chapter 3 – Developing a beneficial framework in the kindergarten

At the time that children reach the schooling age, their eating habits, taste preferences, values and ideas of food and nutrition are quite firmly set. Kindergarten staff is responsible for establishing supportive conditions and framework for a healthy, sustainable food culture and good atmosphere in kindergartens. They also have to decide or co-determine, what will be served – regarding to a healthy, well-balanced and sustainable food choice. Within this framework, children can develop beneficial eating habits and appetite, without pressure.

Factors that influence the eating atmosphere are especially:

- room and table design (e.g. friendly, colorful furniture and dishes, nice decoration of room and table, bright and adequately light, easy to clean, table big enough for everyone, low noise level...)
- seating arrangements (e.g. table fellowship)
- rituals and timetable (fixed dining times or dining periods with enough time to enjoy food, rituals for the beginning of meals like toast at the beginning, round table discussions...)
- participation (e.g. setting the table, the design of the table decoration or the taking of the table service.)
- the food quality (more in Modul 2)
- possibility of independent replenishment of food (assessment of one's own feeling of hunger, to strengthen self-competence)
- accompaniment of the meals by loving kindergarten staff/kitchen staff (staff eats together with children, staff don't assign unreflected their own preferences and dislikes to children)



## Unit 2 – Opportunities and challenges for kindergarten staff

### In this unit I will learn how to:

1. set food standards in boarding as well as in pedagogical work
2. build a nutrition team and set common objectives
3. create an action plan and conducive framework conditions

### Introduction into the topic:

Food and nutrition are one of the most vital parts of human culture. Until recently, food related knowledge and skills were transferred informally in intact family situations from one generation to another, and nutrition was confined to seasons and to regional products. In the past decades, technological progress, globalization and working environment have interrupted this traditional transfer of nutrition competence.

Children spend increasing hours per day in kindergarten/school. Their knowledge about food preparation, products,

nutrition is generated there. Eating habits, taste education, culinary practice and awareness of cultural heritage are built and anchored in their daily living environment kindergarten/school. Handling of food and nutrition in kindergartens has an impact on health, sustainability, regional development and culinary tradition. There are chances and challenges for kindergarten staff to cope with this growing responsibility.



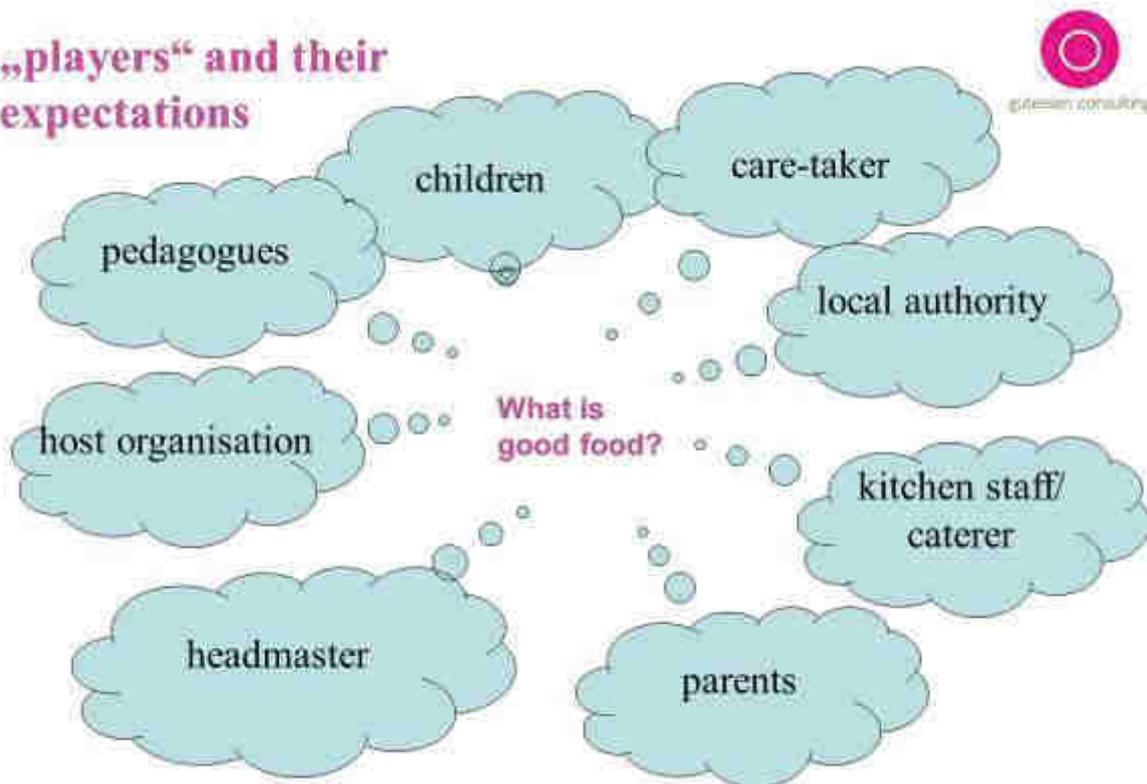
## **Chapter 1 – Food quality in kindergartens is teamwork**

Boarding for children in kindergartens include breakfast, lunch, snacks and drinking. But not only the nutritional and sustainable quality of served meals are important for the development of appropriate children's eating behavior, but also atmosphere in kindergarten, intercultural communication, pedagogical work etc.

What is considered to be good and high quality depends on the focus. There are many players for providing and handling with food and drinks in kindergartens, which all have different roles, expectations, wishes and possibilities.

In the following illustration typical players around kindergarten-food are shown. They all have different expectations about what means "good food" in the kindergarten. A mutual understanding of these expectations is the first step to optimize food quality and food culture in the kindergarten.

## „players“ and their expectations



Kindergarten staff can be the driving force to create a nutrition team with all relevant players. Ideal account of members is five to eight. In the first meeting of this team, it is helpful to collect and discuss the expectations and objectives of all members.

Helpful questions for getting a better understanding (could be discussed in the team meeting)

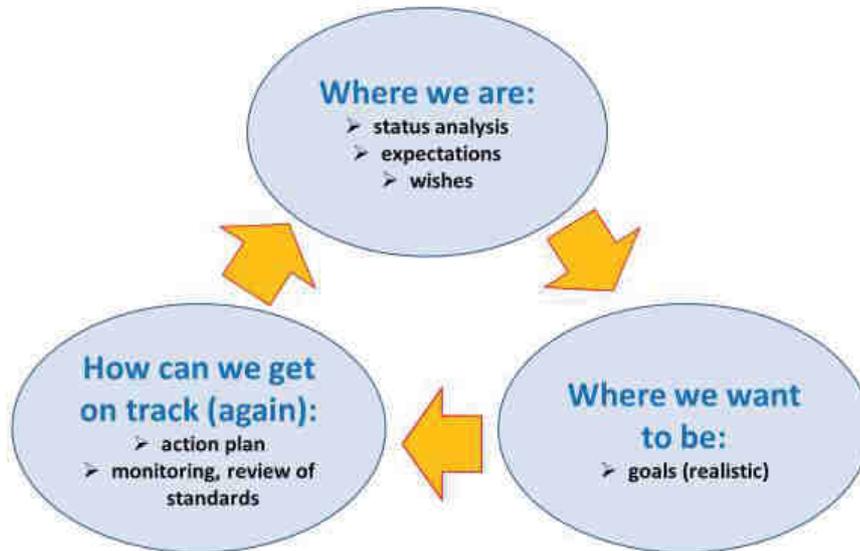
- Which image has the food offer/boarding with the respective actors and target groups?
- Have all players the possibility to express their wishes?
- Are they treated?
- Are meals/food and drink offers integrated into the pedagogical concept?

## Chapter 2 – Set and pursue realistic objectives

The kindergarten has an excellent opportunity for a sustainable health promotion, because all children of the respective age groups are reached. Kindergartens staff plays a key role in improving food quality and development of eating habits, because of the characteristic close relationship between kindergarten staff and children and because of their connecting position between carrier organization, parents and of course the kids. They are the driving force and have the possibility to set food-standards in teaching work as well as in establishing a healthy and sustainable boarding.

### 4 Steps to improve kindergarten food

1. Initiate and build a nutrition team/board, with regular meetings (e.g. 3 times a year)
2. Collect expectations, accept variety, set common objectives (expertise – please refer to Modul 2)
3. Create an action plan and conducive framework conditions
4. Regular review of standards, updates in team meetings



*“Motivation is what gets you started. Habit is what keeps you going.” Jim Ryun*

An **action plan** is a detailed **plan** outlining the actions that are needed to reach your **goals**. When creating action plans there are guided steps that need to be followed to ensure success.

First collect all ideas, how to reach your specific objective. Then choose together the most success-promising ideas/actions. A tabular action plan facilitates planning and gives an overview of your action steps. Action steps should be clear and actionable and not vague ideas or thoughts. Each action step needs to have one/more person/s of your nutrition team responsible. In the following checklists you’ll find an example of an action plan and a template that can be used in your kindergarten.

 Activity Checklist N. 4  
Action plan (examples)

1. Goal  
in children drink enough water (increase water drinking quantity)  
Implementation:

DATE	WHO	MEASUREMENT	STATUS	NOTE
10.10.2018	Staff	100%	100%	100% of children are drinking water
11.10.2018	Staff	100%	100%	100% of children are drinking water
12.10.2018	Staff	100%	100%	100% of children are drinking water
13.10.2018	Staff	100%	100%	100% of children are drinking water
14.10.2018	Staff	100%	100%	100% of children are drinking water
15.10.2018	Staff	100%	100%	100% of children are drinking water
16.10.2018	Staff	100%	100%	100% of children are drinking water
17.10.2018	Staff	100%	100%	100% of children are drinking water
18.10.2018	Staff	100%	100%	100% of children are drinking water
19.10.2018	Staff	100%	100%	100% of children are drinking water
20.10.2018	Staff	100%	100%	100% of children are drinking water

**Checklist: Example of an action plan (docx - 75kB)**

**Checklist: Template action plan (docx - 73kB)**

**Tip:** Structural changes which are fix integrated into the daily routine are maintained longer than a single project.

## Chapter 3 – Opportunities for inclusion and cooperation with all players

To take and accept the responsibility for boarding in kindergartens, opens kindergartens for new themes and new surroundings. Use of the possibilities and cooperate with all players to improve knowhow and quality of food. Examples for such cooperations can be:

- Invitations – invite the chef/kitchen staff to discuss/cook/taste with children
- Excursions to farms/food maker/kitchen

- Tasting sessions with producers and parents
- Gardening with parents
- Harvesting on farms of producers
- Children's conference with mayor/headmaster...

Visit on Bio-Farm Schörkhofer, Youtube-link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E2IB9nulsEE>

Visit in Bakery Mattighofen, Youtube-link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G2Q2DtLogAg>

Apple jus-production, Youtube-link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Q-Gfgkb4g8>

## Unit 3 – What can be done?

### In this unit I will learn how to:

1. learn from the best practices in the area of food in preschools and schools
2. understand the interdependencies between healthy children, food or caterer choice and procurement, environment and climate
3. develop guidelines for healthy sustainable food program in kindergartens

### Introduction into the topic:

Early childhood is a critical time for the development of food preferences and eating patterns. Many factors influence dietary intakes and nutritional status of young children and the most important are food availability, parental modeling, praise or reward for food consumption and peer behaviors. Early childhood education is significant for a young child and adds value to his future education and life.



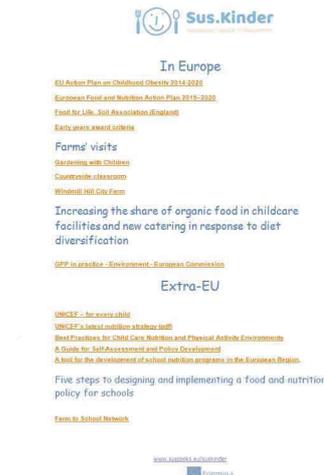
Kindergartens play key roles in the development of healthy eating patterns among children. They are some of the most functional environments for nutrition education because children spend most of the day in these settings. The kitchen and the mealtime is a learning and integration place - before and after the joint, and interdependencies between healthy children, food or caterer choice and procurement, environment and climate need to be explored more in details.

## Chapter 1 – Best practice in the area of food in kindergartens

Early childhood is the stage at which education can most effectively influence children's development. Reliable information on [ECEC systems in Europe](#) is essential in order to understand what challenges are facing European countries, what we can learn from each other, and what new solutions might be developed to meet the needs of the youngest members of society especially when it comes to food. There are many surveys that prove the role of nutrition in the holistic development of children.

The level of childhood obesity as well as other diet-related and foodborne diseases is increasing in Europe. Nowadays the food culture of children is influenced by many factors as increasing consumption of refined and highly processed food, fast-food industry, and also a special attention is also paid to the advertising of food with target audience children. That's why it is important to build a sustainable food culture for the start. Sustainable food, in the view of the [Sustainable Development Commission](#) is food and drinks that:

- is safe, healthy and nutritious, for consumers in shops, restaurants, schools, hospitals etc.;
- can meet the needs of less well-off people;
- provides a viable livelihood for farmers, processors and retailers, whose employees enjoy a safe and hygienic working environment, whether in the UK or overseas;
- respects biophysical and environmental limits in its production and processing, while reducing energy consumption and improving the wider environment, and also respects the highest standards of animal health and welfare, compatible with the production of affordable food for all sectors of society;
- supports rural economies and the diversity of rural culture through an emphasis on local products that keep food miles to a minimum.



A list of good practices in Europe and beyond can be found in [Module 1 Resources, Further reading](#) that show the interest of modern society to work towards more sustainable food consumption in early childhood.

### Interdependencies choices

Interdependencies between healthy children, food or caterer choice and procurement, environment and climate are essential for strong local food systems. Nutrition education curriculum must make the connection between local food systems, garden-based learning and kindergarten food services and contribute to developing sustainable food culture and healthy eating habits in early childhood.

The link between the environmental and education perspectives can be achieved through networking among different actors. By raising children 's knowledge about the environmental impact of food produce and involve them in the food process, from product to plate, we help them to understand what and how we eat and the impact it has on our personal health and the environment (E.g. food waste; vegetarian food which has a much lower CO2 emissions and so on). Children and parents can be involved also in the preparation and presentation of the food. Kindergartens can contribute to create a better local distribution network for local producers. There are many examples and more can be found in [Module 5](#).

## Chapter 2 – Take action: Healthy eating patterns

Due to a scientifically established relationship between diet and a number of chronic diseases WHO urges a focus on prevention, starting from before birth, by improving nutritional status during all life-course stages. Healthy eating directly has an influence upon a healthy growth and development and it contributes to quality of life. Establishing healthy eating patterns at an early age provides a critical foundation for good eating habits in elderly people with health, social and financial benefits to people, families and society.

More than 90% of children in Europe attend kindergartens and therefore these settings are a critical part of the social environment that shapes eating behaviour and can play a large role in ensuring that health-enhancing eating behaviour is learned, practised and supported.

Different cultural and social factors influence the food choice and consumption. Changing established eating habits is difficult: it is essential to start teaching children about healthy eating patterns and related food selection, preparation and

cooking skills in order to sustain healthy eating.

Preschools and schools should be responsible for children's learning regarding food and nutrition. The Learning programs should provide opportunities for developing practical food skills related to growing, selection, storage, preparation, cooking and serving food.

Europe is a multicultural society in which there is a wide variety of foods and eating patterns that reflect diverse cultural, ethnic and spiritual groups. Healthy eating programs should reflect cultural and spiritual perspectives within their communities and provide opportunities for children to develop and enhance their appreciation of this diversity.

The learning environment includes establishment of regular eating times (breakfast, morning fruit break, lunch, afternoon snack, evening meal) and a safe and comfortable place where food can be consumed. The opportunity for enjoyable social and cultural interactions while eating in a pleasant relaxing environment encourages children to develop sound eating habits and reduces the likelihood of skipping meals.

More can be found in [Module 2](#) and [Module 4](#)

## Challenges to Healthy Eating at Child Care:

- Menu variety
- Mealtime environment
- Role modeling
- Fundraisers/ Special events
- Unsupportive posters, books, displays

## Solutions for Healthy Eating at Child Care:

- Develop or encourage a healthy eating policy
- Supportive posters, books and visual displays
- Include healthy nutrition messages as part of program planning and activities
- Follow the division of responsibility (feeding relationship- you decide what and when, the child decides how much)



# Chapter 3 – Guidelines for kindergarten's healthy and sustainable food program

## What does it mean?

- **Sustainable food** is the one which is produced, processed, bought, sold and eaten in ways that provide social benefits, contribute to thriving local economies that create good jobs and secure livelihoods, and enhance the health and variety of both plants and animals (and the welfare of farmed and wild creatures), protect natural resources such as water and soil, and help to tackle climate change.
- **A healthy diet** is one that helps to maintain or improve overall health. It provides the body with essential nutrition: fluid, adequate essential amino acids from protein, essential fatty acids, vitamins, minerals, and adequate calories. The requirements for a healthy diet can be met from a variety of plant-based and animal-based foods. A healthy diet supports energy needs and provides for human nutrition without exposure to toxicity or excessive

weight gain from consuming excessive amounts.

*Please, check for nutrition guides and nutrition facts labels, published by medical and governmental institutions at your country.*

- **Healthy eating habits** refer to a regular and healthy intake of foods derived from plants: vegetables, fruits, whole grains and legumes (beans, peas, lentils) and limit highly processed foods. Healthy eating means eating a variety of foods that give you the nutrients you need to maintain your health feel good and have energy.
- **A healthy eating environment** is one that environment provides pupils with nutritious and appealing foods and beverages, consistent and accurate messages about good nutrition, and ways to learn about and practice healthy eating. Kindergarten's staff and parents role modeling has a great emphasis on this environment. By demonstrating healthy eating, they support pupils to realize why is important to consume healthier foods and beverages.

### **Sample guidelines towards healthy and sustainable food program in kindergartens:**

- Adopt a coordinated nutrition policy that promotes healthy eating through classroom lessons, a supportive eating environment and rich outdoor learning experience ([Module 1](#)).
- Develop an educational program related to food that lays the foundations of healthy eating patterns, recommends healthy eating and prioritizes the increased daily consumption of fruit and vegetables and healthy weight. Support frequent drinking of fresh, clean tap water (Module 2 link).
- Food safety incorporates the proper food handling from farm to plate, including transport, preparation and storage phases in order to minimise the risk of food-related illness. Most of the process is a subject to the legislation, but not the whole one i.e. preschool social event, preparing and consuming food as a teaching and learning activity etc. Food-related health support for children who have food allergies, food intolerance or special dietary requirements ([Module 2](#)).
- Pay special attention to the learning environment ([Module 3](#) and [Module 4](#)).
- Foster positive communication and relationships with families to support healthy eating outcomes for children ([Module 4](#) and [Module 5](#)).

*"We cannot predict children's futures; but their early education is a powerful tool for building hope."- Tricia Herbert, United Kingdom, Eco-intelligent education for a sustainable future life, The contribution of early childhood education to a sustainable society, Paris, UNESCO, 2008*

## **Key Actions**

1. **Build a "nutrition team" in your kindergarten**
2. **Reflect the existing eating habits, the rules and regulations with the kindergarten staff**
3. **Set common objectives for food standards in boarding as well as in pedagogical work**
4. **Create an action plan and conducive framework conditions**

# Module 2 – How to raise quality and make food more sustainable

## What is the goal of this module?

**Unit 1:** Understand the Basics of child nutrition

**Unit 2:** Understand how the meals should be composed in the nursery and how they can be prepared

**Unit 3:** Understand what sustainable cooking means and how it can be implemented

## After finishing this module I will have learnt:

1. what the needs for babies, elementary children, children in primary school are and what health problems are connected with unhealthy eating habits.
2. how lunch, breakfast and afternoon snacks are prepared in the kindergarten kitchen or at the caterer.
3. what sustainable and healthy food means and how to work out plans with kitchen staff or how to negotiate with a caterer to develop step by step changes in the food procurement and meal plans in the direction of sustainability?



## Unit 1 – Basics of child nutrition

### In this unit I will learn how to:

1. differentiate the dietary requirements of the children according to their age
2. differentiate the basics of a healthy and sustainable food choice
3. understand how the energy curve changes over the day

### Introduction into the topic

When children experience the fun of eating at the family and in the daycare center, they develop a balanced nutritional behavior quite naturally. The most important rule is that the adults determine what is served and the child decides what it eats from this. Free according to the motto: stimulate the taste - accept rejection. This means all rules and tables are indications how the offer should be designed, here is the responsibility with the adults or the day care center. But keep in mind: Children "tick" not according to tables: deviations from the suggested amounts and values are therefore no drama, they are only the guard rails in which each child develops individually.

Based on scientific knowledge, basic rules were developed as to how the meals should be arranged in the day care center. They serve as a basis for creating a meaningful diet plan when a day care center cooks or to assess the offer of a caterer.



## Chapter 1 – Nutrient supply of the individual reference values and within the age grades

The World Health Organization (WHO) has published general nutritional rules ([http://www.who.int/nutrition/topics/5keys\\_healthydiet/en/](http://www.who.int/nutrition/topics/5keys_healthydiet/en/)).

The WHO recommends:

- babies and young children to breastfeed
- eat a variety of different foods
- eat plenty of vegetables and fruit
- eat moderate amounts of fats and oils
- eat little salt and sugars

In addition, the WHO has developed a „Food and nutrition Policy for schools“ ([http://www.euro.who.int/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0019/152218/E89501.pdf?ua=1](http://www.euro.who.int/data/assets/pdf_file/0019/152218/E89501.pdf?ua=1))

These general recommendations have been further developed and concretized in almost all EU countries on a national basis. For example, the German Society for Nutrition (DGE) has taken on this task in Germany.

The DGE has issued recommendations for child day care centers ([www.fitkid-aktion.de](http://www.fitkid-aktion.de)) and schools (<http://www.schuleplussessen.de/>), which are summarized in a brochure quality standard for eating in child day care centers ([http://www.fitkid-aktion.de/service/medien.html?eID=dam\\_frontend\\_push&docID=1901](http://www.fitkid-aktion.de/service/medien.html?eID=dam_frontend_push&docID=1901)).

### Reference values as a scientific basis

The children are divided into the following age groups in the literature on child nutrition and when drawing up the reference values:

- 0-0.5 years (breast-fed children or babies who are fed with the bottle)
- from 0.5 to 1 year (introduction of the complementary food, this means mixture of breastfeeding and solid food in the form of porridge)
- 1 to 4 years old toddlers receive family food
- 4 to 7 years old kindergarten children receive family food

Basically, the diet of small children (0-3 years) does not differ significantly from the diet of children. The same recommendations apply to food quality as for older children. However, small children need less energy than older children.

**Additional Information Nr. 1 D-A-C-H reference values for nutrient intake (docx - 74kB)**

For more information about the diet of children between the ages of 1 and 3, see this link:

**Additional Information Nr 2: Specialties for the nutrition of small children (0-3 years) (docx - 74kB)**

**Additional Information Nr 3: Other issues of healthy food (docx - 75kB)**

**How to implement the topic to everyday life:**

Daily plan for age groups:

[https://www.gesund-ins-leben.de/fileadmin/SITE\\_MASTER/content/Dokumente/Downloads/Medien/0361\\_2015\\_was\\_kleinkinder\\_brauchen.pdf](https://www.gesund-ins-leben.de/fileadmin/SITE_MASTER/content/Dokumente/Downloads/Medien/0361_2015_was_kleinkinder_brauchen.pdf)

Brochure Bio in the crib:

[www.biofuerkinder.de/agrar/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Bio-in-der-Krippe.pdf](http://www.biofuerkinder.de/agrar/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Bio-in-der-Krippe.pdf)

**Photographs showing examples of implementing the issue into real life:**

<https://www.kindergesundheit-info.de/themen/ernaehrung/1-6-jahre/gesunde-kinderernaehrung/>

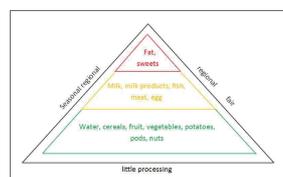
<http://www.fitkid-aktion.de/wissenswertes/kinderernaehrung.html>

## Chapter 2 – Food selection for adolescent

The rules of thumb for the consumption of food are:

- plenty of water or other unsweetened drinks
- every day vegetables, fruit, cereals and cereal products and/or potatoes
- animal products such as meat, sausage, fish, eggs, but also milk and milk products such as cheese, curd, yoghurt only in moderation
- sparingly with: salt, sugar, sweets, snack products and fatty foods. This is especially true for fat-rich products with a high content of saturated fatty acids, such as, for example, chocolate, chips, flips and the like

The following nutritional pyramid is complemented by aspects of sustainability. It provides food from the region or from fair trade, organic & seasonal food as well as a low processing (as fresh raw materials as possible). Taking these aspects into consideration, it is also possible to incorporate other decision-making criteria in the selection of food in addition to the nutritional values. More detailed information can be found in **Unit 3.**



Source: [www.biofuerkinder.de/agrar/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Bio-in-der-Krippe.pdf](http://www.biofuerkinder.de/agrar/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Bio-in-der-Krippe.pdf)

### Balanced food and drink - so it goes! The nutritional circle in Detail

In order to provide us with all essential nutrients, a great variety is required. The diet should therefore be as diverse as possible. However, it is not just the choice of food, but the quantity also plays an important role.

The DGE nutritional circle subdivides the rich food supply into seven groups represented by a segment in the circle. The different sizes of the segments illustrate the extent to which the different food groups should be represented in a full-fledged diet. The larger a segment of the circle, the larger amounts should be consumed from this food group. Food out of the small segments should be used sparingly.



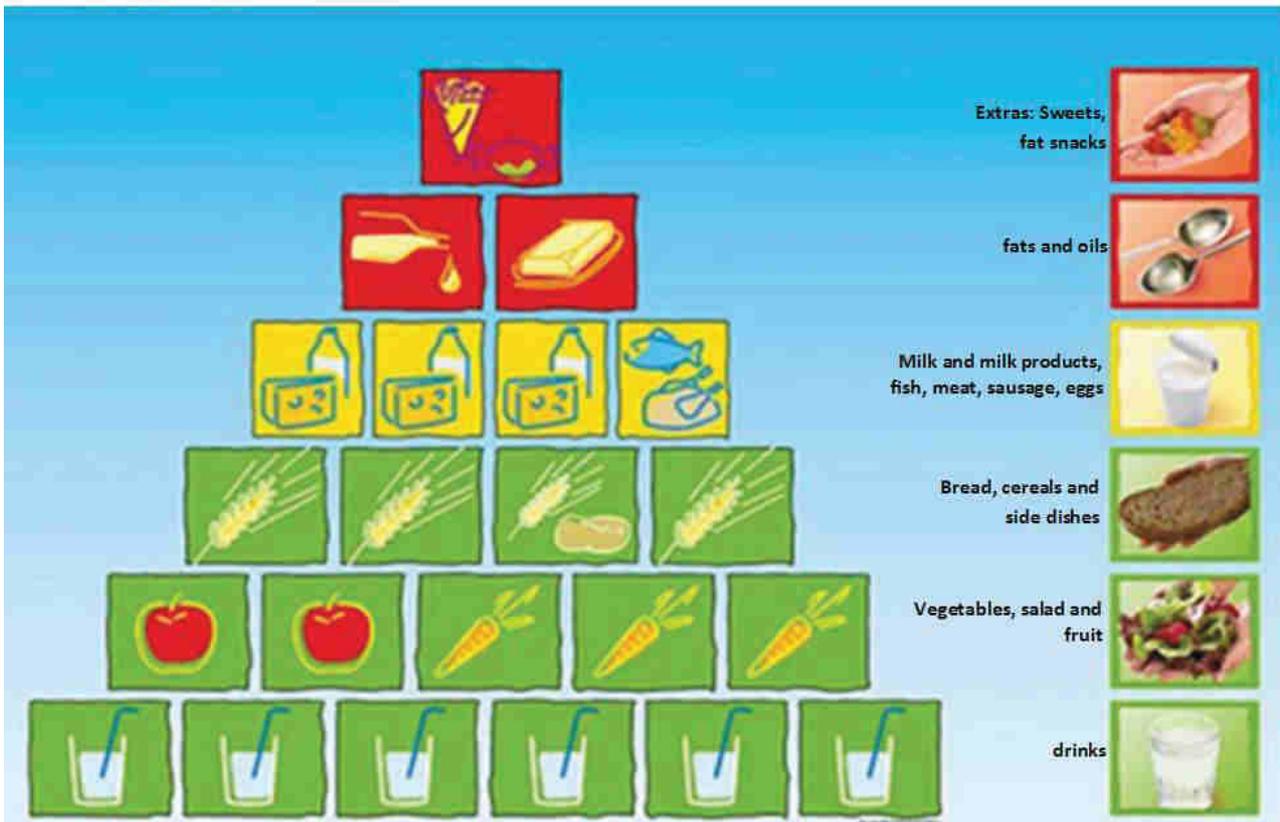
Source: <http://www.dge.de/ernaehrungspraxis/vollwertige-ernaehrung/ernaehrungskreis>

Drinks are the largest food group with a daily drinking volume of around 1.5 liters. Then follow the plant foods grain, cereal products, potatoes, vegetables as well as fruit. They form the basis of a full-fledged diet and supply carbohydrates, abundant vitamins, minerals, dietary fiber as well as secondary plant products. Animal products supplement the daily food plan in small portions and should be as low in fat as possible. They provide the body with high-quality protein (protein), vitamins and minerals. Fat and fat-rich foods should be consumed rather rarely. The quality plays a decisive role here, because vegetable oils mainly supply the essential fatty acids.

Whoever selects from all seven food groups, takes account of the quantity ratio shown and uses the food diversity of the individual food groups, creates the best conditions for a full-fledged diet.

## Educational work with the food pyramid

For the pedagogical work with children, it has proved to be a good idea to change the nutritional pyramid into the food pyramid. The AID information service from Germany has developed many games around the nutritional pyramid and educational material, which are currently provided by the Federal Center for Nutrition (<http://shop.aid.de/bundeszentrum-fuer-ernaehrung>). The amounts of food are shown in the pyramid as individual fields. Each field is a portion of each food. As an orientation, one assumes that a handful of the respective food should be consumed. Since a child's hand is smaller than the hand of an adult, the amounts match the calorie requirement. So, you should eat 2 hands full of fruit and 3 hands full of vegetables daily.



Source: <http://shop.aid.de/3923/die-aid-ernaehrungspyramide-din-a5-karten-im-10er-pack>

Amounts	Food Group
6 servings	Drinks, at least one serving to each meal and in between
5 servings	Whole meal bread, side dishes such as oven potatoes, whole grain noodles or natural rice, cereals (also as muesli)
5 servings	Fruit, vegetables, legumes, lettuce and raw food (5 a day)
3 servings	milk and milk products
1 serving	2-3 times per week Meat and sausage (lean versions) 1-2 times per week Fish, 2-3 times egg (also in processed form)
2 servings	Vegetable oils and spreadable fat
1 serving	10% of the daily requirement Sweets, biscuits, salty snacks, sugar sweetened drinks, fat food (fries, croissants) - this is a recommendation and not a must!

## Chapter 3 – Eat throughout the day - the performance curve

5 meals should be consumed during the day, so warm and two cold main meals (breakfast, lunch and dinner) as well as two intermediate meals, in the morning and afternoon. One of the main meals should be eaten warm, but it is completely no matter whether at noon or in the evening. In addition, plenty of liquid should be drunk during the day. Depending on the age, 800 ml to 1.5 liters are recommended. Regular food consumption throughout the day does not increase the blood glucose level so much, and the children have better performance and concentration. The meals complement each

other and give the little one the optimal strength for the day.

Source: XC

## 5 meals a day - in day care and at home

Due to the increasingly prolonged periods of treatment, more and more children are eating breakfast, lunch and afternoon snack at the daycare center. Some day-care centers even have dinner. In the following, recommendations for the composition of the individual meals are compiled from a nutritional physiological perspective. In proportion, for an optimal performance curve, the energy intake of children should be divided roughly as follows:

- 25 % first breakfast
- 10 % second breakfast in the day care center or morning snack
- 30 % lunch
- 10 % afternoon snack
- 25 % dinner

Source: [www.forum-ernaehrung.at](http://www.forum-ernaehrung.at)

For more information on meal scheduling, see Unit 2.

## Unit 2 – Meals in kindergarten

### In this unit I will learn how to:

1. differentiate the catering systems
2. create a healthy food plan
3. negotiate with the caterer for more sustainable products

### Introduction into the topic:

The kitchen facilities in the kindergartens vary a lot. Larger kindergartens with good equipped kitchens and kitchen staff can cook with fresh ingredients. For them it is easier to integrate seasonal, regional and organic food that for those who work with a lot of frozen or convenience food. But no matter if self-cooking or catering all systems can develop in the direction of health and sustainability. From the nutrition point of view a child should eat 5 meals per day, usually 3 are served in kindergarten. Chapter 2 describes how a healthy food choice over the day can be organized.



## Chapter 1 – Different systems at a glance

In addition to the quality of the food used, the type of food preparation is also important. The best taste and the highest amount of ingredients are obtained with systems that are cooked on the spot with fresh products (fresh or mixed kitchen). There are hardly any waiting times between preparation and consumption. If the food is not cooked on the spot, the food must be heated or kept warm. Important nutrients and a good consistency are often lost (warm food).

Ask where the supplier comes from, what system he uses, and how the kindergarten can provide raw food and fruit to compensate for possible vitamin losses. The regeneration systems (freezing system, cook & chill) protect the ingredients and should be preferred for nutritional physiological reasons. Disadvantages of mostly industrially manufactured products are the high energy consumption through the cold chain, as well as the possible imprinting of the taste by "finished food", which can affect into the adult age. Finally, finished products are more expensive than the fresh kitchen.

**Fresh kitchen** – everything is freshly prepared on the spot.

**Mixed kitchen** – Some of the products are freshly cooked and some are prefabricated (Convenience).

**Regeneration systems** – Pre-cooked food is cooled or refrigerated and heated in the day-care center (Cook & Chill).

**Warm food** – Pre-cooked food is delivered by a food provider warmly and distributed in the day care center.

## Chapter 2 – food planning

### A balanced day and week food planning and a variety of the foods used

The adults set the times for the meals a day. They also provide the food, so that the child already selects in the toddler age, what it would like to eat from the components offered and how much. Only in this way it can develop a natural

hunger and saturation feeling. Priority health-promoting foods should be given to. In addition to the decision-making capacity, the self-responsibility of the toddler is also encouraged.



## Breakfast (and dinner)

The first meal in the day care center is usually the breakfast. Either the daycare offers a balanced breakfast or the children bring their filled breadboxes with them. If the daycare prepares breakfast, it should be complete and healthy. If the breakfast is brought, it is recommended that the day care center distributes a positive list with the desired contents / food to the parents. A positive list is always more motivating and inspiring than a ban list. The evening bread should be designed according to the same rules, if the lunch was a warm meal.

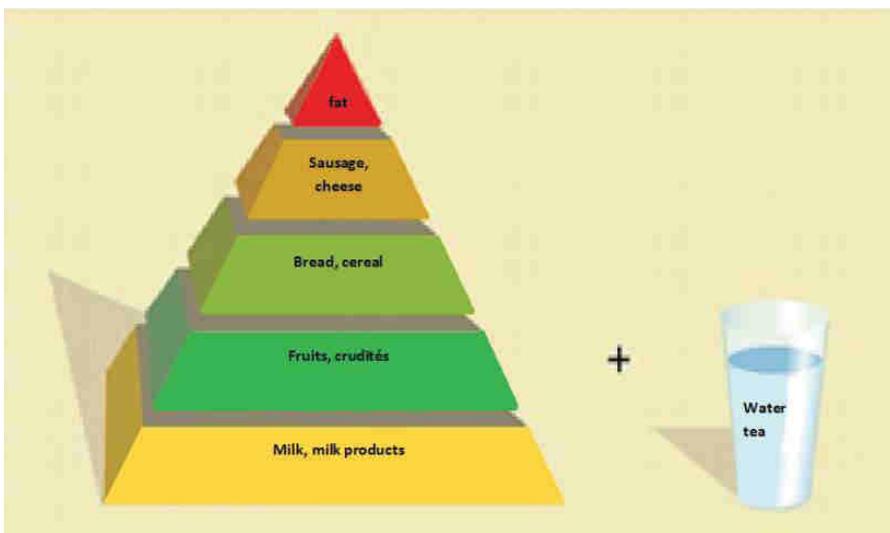
Breakfast is the main important meal for a good start to the day:

- energy reserves are filled
- it brings performance and concentration
- without or with an unhealthy breakfast, children can be tired, not concentrated and sluggish



**This is how the breakfast (dinner) looks, the 4 building blocks for a healthy and balanced breakfast:**

- drinks e.g. water or herbal tea
- cereal products e.g. whole meal bread or muesli
- fruit and raw food e.g. apple, banana, tomato, carrot, cucumber
- Milk and dairy products like yoghurt, cheese or curd cheese should be eaten more sparingly



Source: OptimiX ([www.fke-do.de](http://www.fke-do.de))

### Ideas for breakfast:

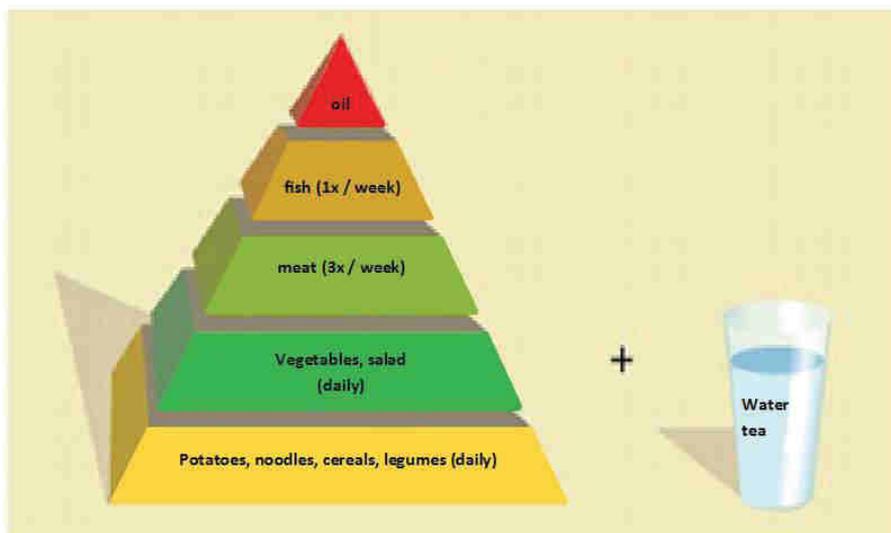
- muesli with milk and fruit
- Whole meal bread with cheese and vegetable strips, fruit and 1 glass of milk
- Whole meal toast with fresh cheese and fruit slices, 1 glass of juice
- Cereals with yoghurt and dried fruits, 1 glass of juice

Whole meal bread with spicy spread and cucumber slices, fruit, 1 glass of

### Lunch

In order to balance the nutrition plan for the children, the day-care center can follow the recommendations of the Bremen Institute for Prevention Research (<https://www.bips-institut.de/home.html>) and the quality standards of the day care center of the DGE (<http://www.fitkid-aktion.de/qualitaetsstandard.html>). In the case of kindergartens in which self-cooking is carried out, the food for the older children should be planned in such a way that the pap for the toddler can also be prepared from it.

When a kindergarten cooks itself the kindergarten can shape the menu along a week's structure (see [Requirements for a balanced diet](#)). If the day care center has a caterer, it is possible to compare the weekly schedule with these recommendations. If a caterer has several meals a day, the management or a responsible educator must ensure that the food is ordered according to the checklist of these specifications.



Source: OptimiX ([www.fke-do.de](http://www.fke-do.de))

The Optimix concept describes the lunch pyramid for the weekly food scheduling as shown above. It brings the diet plan for the week to the short form: Daily cooked vegetables + natural rice, whole grain noodles or potatoes, 2-3 times a week meat (70 g) and 1-2 times a week fish (70 g).

### Afternoon Snack

Offer the children a drink. A good thirst quencher is mineral water and spritzer with a portion of juice and three parts of water.

The afternoon snack should be served between 3 pm and 4 pm to allow sufficient distance to the other meals. Sweets or salty snacks are not necessary for nutritional physiological reasons. They are often part of the family day or everyday life. Therefore, candy should be offered in the afternoon only in moderation.

### The snacks between the main meal times can consist of:

- Fruit: divided apples, pears, bananas, etc.

- Vegetables: Vegetable sticks of peppers, cucumbers, carrots etc.
- Cereal: whole meal bread or bread with sausage or cheese or oatmeal with milk or yoghurt
- Milk and milk products: yoghurt or curd cheese with fruit pieces
- or colorful bread sticks

Source: OptimiX ([www.fke-do.de](http://www.fke-do.de))

## Other learning tools:

Concept Optimix

<https://www.gesund-ins-leben.de/fuer-familien/kleinkinder/essen-und-trinken/>

Ideas for the breakfast box:

<http://www.familienkost.de/kindergartenfruehstueck.php>

Brochure of the Research Institute for Child Nutrition: recommendations for the diet of children and adolescents to be ordered under:

[www.fke-do.de/index.php?module=shop\\_articles&index\[shop\\_articles\]\[action\]=details&index\[shop\\_articles\]\[data\]\[shop\\_articles\\_id\]=11&ion=6](http://www.fke-do.de/index.php?module=shop_articles&index[shop_articles][action]=details&index[shop_articles][data][shop_articles_id]=11&ion=6)

## Chapter 3 – Kindergartens without kitchen staff

Whether the food is freshly cooked or brought by a caterer - the quality of the food, which ultimately comes to the table for children, is crucial. Thus, when selecting a caterer - in addition to the use of organic - it is important to negotiate the quality of the delivered food. The question whether cooked in the day care center or catering is often not a question of personal attitudes, but primarily depends on the personnel key or the existing budget of the institution. All the catering systems - whether on-site cooking, frozen or hot food - have their advantages and disadvantages. Check with the vendors and ask for organic food. As demand increases, the caterers usually adapt to customer requirements.

Warming times, the absence of additives, the absence of genetically modified food, the involvement of parents and children in the preparation of meals, and flexibility in reordering are only a few more points which should be clarified. Consider the caterer as a partner with whom you develop the catering concept of your facility in dialogue.

### Possibilities for a fresh preparation despite caterer (breakfast, snacks, side dishes)

Anyone who is supplied with a meal by a warm-food or cold-food producer can prepare and offer fresh food and raw food, around the hot food itself, with the help of simple means. Suitable for this are, for example, the following side dishes: fresh potatoes, whole grain cereals, whole grain noodles, millet or grain. In addition, vegetables can be steamed to a small extent. A salad and raw food offer brings freshness to the food. Salads, vegetable sticks, fruit spits or fruit salads are a great way to offer the children vitamins and minerals.



## Unit 3 – Sustainable cooking

### In this unit you will learn:

1. what sustainable food means
2. more detailed information about: Organic, regional and seasonal, fair trade food and sustainable fish
3. strategies to keep the costs in its limits

## Introduction into the topic:

There is no universally accepted definition of sustainable food but it is generally recognized that it should - in the ways that it is produced, processed, transported, prepared and disposed of - minimize negative and maximize positive health, social, economic and environmental impacts. Fundamentally, sustainable food should reflect the basic tenets of sustainable development, namely to meet the needs of the current generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Since the food system is so complex, sustainable food necessarily incorporates a lot of different issues. Fresh, seasonal, local, organic and fair trade are certainly parts of what could be seen to constitute sustainable food, but there are many other issues that also need to be considered such as healthy diets, animal welfare, water and energy efficiency and waste reduction. In fact, the list of sustainable food issues is also limitless and ultimately the definition of sustainable food must be left up to the individual interpretation. In this module, we look at some issues more in detail and give hints on how to cope with the question how extra costs from sustainable consumption can be minimized by smart procurement strategies.



## Chapter 1 – Organic, local, seasonal and why is it smart to reduce meat consumption

In this chapter, you will learn more about organic, regional and seasonal food and why a meat reduced diet has benefits for the environment.

### Background information on organic agriculture

Farmers do distinguish between “organic agriculture methods” and the so called “conventional farm methods”.

Organic farming methods use virtually no artificial pesticides or fertilizers and are therefore better for wildlife and habitats than conventional farming. By rotating crops and using compost, leys and manure as natural fertilizers, organic farming helps to conserve soil and water and requires a lower input of fossil fuel energy, which creates a more efficient production system. Organic farming also prohibits the use of genetically modified organisms (GMOs). The production methods and criteria for qualifying as organic are legally defined in the EU, so that all products labelled as organic meet a minimum standard.

Organic products can be identified by an EU-wide logo that is defined by EU regulations and certified in each country by government licensed bodies, which ensure that all organic products meet the standard ([Principles of organic farming](#)). The latest figures for each EU country you can find at the infographic of the Eu-ifoam group:

<http://www.ifoam-eu.org/sites/default/files/ifoamvis-package/index.html>

### Regional and seasonal

In very general terms, food produced near to where it is bought and consumed is likely to have a lower environmental impact - particularly in terms of its carbon footprint - than food produced further away. A product's carbon footprint reflects the amount of greenhouse gases that are emitted during its life-cycle, which includes its production, processing, storage, distribution, consumption and disposal. Products with a lower footprint make a smaller contribution to climate change and are therefore more sustainable. But while locally produced food is likely to be more sustainable, it is not

always the case. For example, vegetables produced in a heated greenhouse locally out of season may in fact have a higher carbon footprint than those produced naturally in hotter parts of the world and then transported, so it is worth thinking about the balance of different factors affecting a product's carbon footprint before deciding what to buy.

With the help of a seasonal calendar you can see what fruit or vegetable is in season. Buying in season out of the region – from an economic point of view - helps the farmers in your region to generate their income but at the same time it helps as well to keep costs down.

### Saisonal calender

(Source: aid)

## The benefits of a reduced meat diet

Meat production and cereal production are in competition for the world's limited agricultural land and cereal production for livestock feed is in competition with cereal for human consumption. With 7kg of cereals needed to produce 1kg of beef and 4kg of cereals needed to produce 1kg of pork, our increasingly meat-based diets are not only negatively affecting our health but putting huge pressure on fragile ecosystems.

With the rapid rise in meat consumption set to continue, farmers have only two responses: farm their existing land even more intensively - by adding ever increasing amounts of fertilizer and pesticide - or replace forests and savannahs with more farmland. As well as being the primary cause of biodiversity loss, as has been so clearly illustrated by the experiences of Brazil and Indonesia in recent years, both these responses are leading to irreversible depletion and degradation of soils and fresh/groundwater resources, which further limits future generations' ability to produce sufficient food.

While customers have become used to eating more and more meat, there are lots of ways to reduce the amount of meat in menus while maintaining quality and flavor. As well as using meat substitutes, many kindergarten kitchens are also introducing meat free options. With the high cost of meat ingredients and the huge health and environmental benefits of lower meat consumption, reducing the amount of meat in their menus is possibly the most cost-effective way for a kindergarten kitchen to improve the health of the children and the planet. Since in early years eating habits are developed it makes sense to teach the children and the families that meat reduced and vegetarian dishes are tasty and trendy at the same time.

## Chapter 2 – Background information on: Fair trade food and fish from sustainable production (MSC fish)

This Chapter covers other aspects of sustainable food: Fair trade products like rice, nuts or bananas and fish that is produced in a sustainable way are two product groups kindergarten kitchen staff can integrate in the menu- cycle to convert to a more sustainable kitchen.

### Fair trade

By buying products that carry the Fairtrade Mark, consumers can be assured that farmers and farm workers in poorer countries are getting a better deal: receiving a fair and stable price for their products that covers their costs of production; benefiting from longer-term trading relationships; and receiving the Fairtrade premium to invest in local schools and health clinics, for example.

The most important objectives are:

- market access for marginalized producers
- sustainable and equitable trading relationships
- capacity building and empowerment
- consumer awareness raising and advocacy

The Fairtrade system also includes some environmental standards as part of producer certification. The standard requires producers to protect the natural environment as part of farm management. Producers are also encouraged to

minimize the use of energy, especially energy from non-renewable sources.

In distinction to the EU wide organic standard an EU wide fair trade standard is not established yet. The fair-trade associations have launched private standards that are well recognized and controlled by private certification bodies.

More information you get on in this Video (German language):

[https://www.brot-fuer-die-welt.de/themen/fairer-handel/?gclid=EAlaQobChMIrrC2rWa1gIVIhobCh34oAB1EAAAYASAAEgKPvFD\\_BwE](https://www.brot-fuer-die-welt.de/themen/fairer-handel/?gclid=EAlaQobChMIrrC2rWa1gIVIhobCh34oAB1EAAAYASAAEgKPvFD_BwE)

More information about some of the German private fair-trade labels you find here:

GEPA: <http://www.gepa.de/home.html>

Fair Trade Deutschland: <https://www.fairtrade-deutschland.de/>

Naturland fair: <https://www.naturland.de/de/naturland/was-wir-tun/naturland-fair.html>

Links with more information:

<https://wfto-europe.org/>

in German language

<https://www.fairtrade.net/>

<https://www.fairtrade-deutschland.de/>

## Sustainable Fish

Humans have been fishing the oceans for thousands of years, but over the past five decades technology has allowed us to fish farther, deeper and more efficiently than ever before. Scientists estimate that we have removed as much as 90 percent of the large predatory fish such as shark, swordfish and cod from the world's oceans. In 2003, the Pew Oceans Commission warned that the world's oceans are in a state of "silent collapse," threatening our food supply, marine economies, recreation and the natural legacy we leave our children".



There are two labels for sustainable fish.

The Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) label guarantees sustainable fishing methods for wild fish. While the label of the Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC) is a guarantee for fish out of aquaculture systems. This means this label is for fish or marine products that are produced in fish or shrimp farms.

### MSC principles

**Principle 1:** A fishery must be conducted in a manner that does not lead to over-fishing or depletion of the exploited populations and, for those populations that are depleted, the fishery must be conducted in a manner that demonstrably leads to their recovery.

**Principle 2:** Fishing operations should allow for the maintenance of the structure, productivity, function and diversity of the ecosystem (including habitat and associated dependent and ecologically related species) on which the fishery depends.

**Principle 3:** The fishery is subject to an effective management system that respects local, national and international laws and standards and incorporates institutional and operational frameworks that require use of the resource to be responsible and sustainable.

### The ASC standards

- Comprehensive legal compliance
- Conservation of natural habitat and biodiversity
- Conservation of water resources
- Conservation of species diversity and wild populations through prevention of escapes
- Use of feed and other inputs that are sourced responsibly
- Good animal health (no unnecessary use of antibiotics and chemicals)
- Social responsibility for workers and communities impacted by farming, (e.g. no child labor, health and safety of workers, freedom of association, community relations)

Link:

<https://www.asc-aqua.org/>

<http://www.wwf.de/themen-projekte/meere-kuesten/fischerei/fischereipolitik-in-europa/>

## Chapter 3 – Strategies to keep the costs in its limits

Kindergarten kitchen staff in most countries has a fixed budget to buy food for the weekly meals.

In this chapter, you can learn some strategies that are developed and realized in cooperation with kindergarten kitchens that show how sustainable food can be introduced without the risk of a cost-explosion.

### Strategies

The strategies to keep the costs in its limits have been developed over several years of practical work with kindergarten kitchens. If you combine the strategies with each other it is possible to integrate at least 10-20% more sustainable food (organic, regional, fair trade...) into your meal plan without lifting the costs out of its limits.

### Where to buy sustainable food?

#### Tips for the way of proceeding:

- Ask as a first step your conventional supplier if he delivers biologic, fair trade products, too?
- Contact different supplier and compare the prices based on the range of goods.
- Are there advices of regional products or of the country of the origin of the products in the order lists?
- Order a delivery to test if you are satisfied with the quality and the delivering methods.
- There are providers (e.g. Box delivery service) who offer smaller amounts than wholesaler.
- We recommend you to strive for long-term conditions of delivery, personal contact and mutual trust.
- Start your change step by step.
- Keep in mind that the idea of "fair trade" is the leading idea along the value chain. Here in Europe and in the so called third world countries.

## Key Actions

1. **Match existing daycare recommendations with national dietary recommendations (nutritional value, variety, suitable for children)**
2. **Consider special nutritional requirements in the new dietary planning (intolerances, allergies, religious restrictions)**
3. **The cooking process determines the sensory quality; therefore check you can produce more fresh products in the kindergarten**

**4. Develop a step-by-step plan towards a more sustainable catering based on realizable priorities**

## Module 3 – Outdoor learning

This module will investigate some of the outdoor learning opportunities that are available to kindergarten staff in order to teach young children about where their food comes from. The module will look at gardening in the kindergarten and how this can be used to develop a child's interest in the outdoor world. It will also examine the practical steps that are involved in visiting a farm and the ways in which children can learn from such visits.



### What is the goal of this module?

**Unit 1 – Options for food related outdoor learning:** Identify the benefits of outdoor learning, as well as some of the different learning options.

**Unit 2 – Kindergarten gardening: Practical hints on setting up a garden:** Offer practical advice and information on how to set up an outdoor growing space for young children.

**Unit 3 – Farm visits: Practical hints on setting up a visit:** Explore the main steps involved in setting up a farm visit, including funding and health and safety.

### After finishing this module I will have learnt:

1. to understand some of the ways in which outdoor learning can benefit young children.
2. to examine some ways in which an outdoor growing space for children can be established and maintained.
3. to identify the main steps involved in setting up a farm visit, as well as how a visit can benefit young children.

## Unit 1 – Options for food related outdoor learning

### In this unit I will learn:

1. what some of the physical and mental health benefits are that a child might gain from an outdoor learning education.
2. how outdoor learning may benefit a child's personal development.
3. what outdoor learning opportunities might be available inside and outside the kindergarten setting.

## Introduction to the topic:

This unit has been designed to give you an insight into the ways in which an outdoor learning experience can enhance the well-being and learning of young children. There are many options available and this unit provides an introduction to some of the most commonly used methods of learning.



## Chapter 1 – What are the benefits of outdoor learning?

Outdoor learning can offer a range of direct and indirect benefits to a young person's personal development. Children can gain direct educational, health and psychological benefits, as well as indirect social and financial benefits. Whilst much of the learning in outdoor environments is the same as that which takes place indoors (acquiring knowledge, improving skills and changing attitudes etc.), it is the quality and nature of the experience that is often enhanced whilst outdoors.

Larisa Lupini from the Agrinido L'Orto dei pulcini organic farm in Italy, talks about some of the benefits of outdoor learning to young people.

### Improved physical and mental health

Learning outside the classroom supports the development of healthy and active lifestyles by offering children opportunities for physical activity, freedom and movement, and promoting a sense of well-being. Outdoor learning often results in increased levels of physical activity, with a visit very often involving a walk around the site or participation in a practical activity. Links between human contact with the natural world and improved mental health have also been well-established. Many studies have shown that exposure to the natural environment lowers the effects of those mental health issues that may make it difficult for children to pay attention in the classroom. It has also been noted that symptoms of disorders such as ADHD are reduced when children have access to outdoor environments. Outdoor experiences may aid recovery from stress and anxiety, while also protecting from future conditions.

### Personal development

Children need an outdoor environment that can provide them with space, both upwards and outwards, and places to explore, experiment and discover. Outdoor play also supports children's problem-solving skills and nurtures their creativity, as well as providing rich opportunities for their developing imagination, inventiveness and resourcefulness. For many children, playing outdoors at their early years setting may be the only opportunity they have to play safely and freely while they learn to assess risk and develop the skills to manage new situations.

Early years learning through growing and food is also a great way of assisting refugee children with integrating in their new communities. The support, facilities and care provided in an early years setting can help refugee children to feel safe and secure, whilst they develop their confidence and language and communication skills. Social contact with other

children and adults who speak the language of the host country will promote their early language learning, whilst outdoor play can help children to make sense of new environments in a safe and secure social setting. Specific activities such as gardening are a useful way to help children understand the food habits of the country that they have moved to. These activities may also encourage parental involvement and provide opportunities for them to share their knowledge of food and growing with other parents.



## Chapter 1 – What are the benefits of outdoor learning?

### Care for the natural world

Childhood experience of nature and participation in outdoor activity can lead to children developing an understanding of and deep affinity with the natural world. Further into adult life, this can sometimes even lead directly to a future career in environmental conservation. Researchers have examined those significant influences in people's lives which had led to their increased environmental awareness. They have found that within the UK, the most significant factor that influences people's concerns about the environment was childhood experience of the natural world. The critical age of influence is very often before 12 years of age and contact with the natural world before this age can strongly influence positive future behaviours towards the environment.

Engaging early years children with the living world around them that will form a platform for later learning and development. A visit will provide a sensory experience of the sights, sounds and smells of the countryside, whilst also developing a young child's innate interest in animals and living things in a real world setting rather than just in a story book. Additionally, taking pupils out of the classroom setting will allow them to burn off energy and enable personal development at the same time.

### Educational benefits

An outdoor learning venue can be an exciting place for many fun activities for the children to get involved with. These can include many activities that meet the early years curriculum. For example:

- Story telling and poems
- Getting involved in counting activities such as collecting eggs or picking strawberries
- Matching names to farm animals and looking at body parts
- Taking part in treasure hunts to discover different materials
- Artwork such as collecting different coloured leaves and bark rubbing

![A broken image placeholder with the text: data-cke-saved-src=\](\"/user_uploads/Module3/goon.JPG\")

## Chapter 2 – What are some of the options for outdoor learning?

The term 'outdoor learning' encompasses a range of different opportunities. Outdoor learning can take place in a small back yard of a kindergarten setting, or it may be in a slightly larger garden space. If you decide to leave the confines of the kindergarten and take the group on an outing away from your everyday setting, the options get even more exciting. A day visit could encompass a visit to a farm, a nature reserve, a local park, a woodland or the seaside. All of these offer their own unique learning opportunities.

### Kindergarten garden

A kindergarten garden can be a fantastic way of engaging children with the outside world. The garden can be as small or as big as you feel is manageable or as your budget and time allows. The fact that the outdoor space is in the kindergarten grounds means that you can access it whenever you wish or whenever you feel it will benefit the children. Another benefit is the proximity to your indoor space. This means that if the weather takes a turn for the worst you can always retreat inside. It also means that you are able to take an outdoor experience from outside and follow them up inside. For example, a moment spent smelling and touching flowers can be followed up inside with a painting session.

### Farm Visit

Nearly all children love a farm visit – especially when it involves a visit to see the baby lambs, calves or chickens! Some children may never have been out of the city before, so this is a great opportunity to take the children on an exciting adventure to experience something new. These new experiences can be explored by discussing the sights, smells and sounds of the farm. For those inner-city kindergartens which may struggle to access cheap transport options, a visit to a city farm, allotment or community growing area can also provide an excellent learning experience.

### Nature reserves

Similar to a farm visit, nature reserves provide a great opportunity to engage children with the outside world. A lot of organisations that manage nature reserves have specific education programmes, so it may be worth speaking to them before to see what activities they can offer to your group.



## Unit 2 – Kindergarten gardening: Practical hints on

## setting up a garden

### In this unit I will learn:

1. about some of the considerations involved in setting up a gardening space in a kindergarten setting.
2. to identify some of the main jobs involved in the ongoing running of a garden space.

### Introduction to the topic:

People of all ages can get involved with and enjoy gardening. Children in particular will gain benefits and have lots of fun by getting out into the garden. Most children enjoy being outdoors and love digging in the soil, getting dirty, creating things and watching plants grow. As well as being educational, children can learn new skills, have fun and develop their confidence whilst out in the garden.



## Chapter 1 – What are some of the initial considerations when setting up a garden?

In order to ensure that your garden project runs smoothly, there are a few initial considerations to think about even before you even lift a spade. By thinking about these things before getting your hands dirty, you will be able to ensure that you design your space so that it benefits the children who will be using it, as well as maximizing your physical space. There are a lot of [resources](#) available to help you with setting up your garden.

- Meet with parents to explain your plans and how their children will benefit from outdoor play and learning.
- Involve parents and the children in the planning stages. Ask the question – what would they like to see in the garden space?
- Seek out and use the expertise and skills of parents.
- Put together a 'wish list' of everything you would like to have in your garden space.
- Draw a plan of your outdoor space to determine whether all of your wish list can be incorporated. If not, what are your priorities?

Above all else, there are three main things to consider when setting up your garden:

- Think about your space
- Think about your budget
- Think about your volunteers



## Chapter 1 – What are some of the initial considerations when setting up a garden?

### Think about your space

Your garden could be a big open space or you could be growing herbs in a window box. Whatever approach you take, you will need to **plan your space**. Don't be put off if you only have a small space. There are many ways to grow with little or no space, whether you use hanging/wall mounted containers or pots and grow bags, you can grow something almost anywhere. When designing vegetable beds and raised beds, consider how accessible they are. Small children may not be able to reach the middle of a large raised bed, so design your beds in a way in which all of the seedlings can be reached easily

### Think about your budget

When you consider the valuable learning and positive health outcomes associated with gardening, you may consider your gardening resources to be just as important as all other resources you buy in your setting e.g. paint and paper. Because finance can be an issue for everyone, you may need to come up with some creative ways of raising money:

- Speak to everyone you know to see if they have any unwanted items in the garden shed which they can donate to your project.
- Ask parents / carers to think about the garden space when they next go to the garden centre (or supermarket); asking them to bring in one item to keep the resources stocked e.g. carrot seeds; lettuce seeds; bag of compost etc.
- Organize fundraising activities to raise money to get you started. Once you are established you could look at selling then sell your produce once it's harvested. Any proceeds can then be reinvested into the garden,

### Think about your volunteers

Managing a garden, alongside your everyday duties, can be a demanding task. Working in a kindergarten means that you have potentially got a large bank of potential helpers in the form of parents. There may very well be some very keen gardeners within your local community. Parents, grandparents and other extended family members may be able to help on a regular or one off basis. Before you even start, let the parents know your plans and get together a list of people who may be willing to help with the set-up and ongoing management of the garden. Getting support and advice from others can be the best resource of all for your setting as well as offering children wider community experiences. Even if there is little previous experience or knowledge, anyone can be involved and you can learn together. When starting out, make sure you plan how to recruit and use your adults well. They will be an invaluable resource to your project!



## Chapter 2 – How to manage your garden

Once your garden is up and running, **ongoing care and attention is essential** to ensure that you have a fun and safe outdoor learning space. The garden may differ slightly from a normal garden in that it is important to ensure that growing areas can be accessed by the children. Before you head out into the garden for the first time, there are a few things to consider:

- Time management and holidays
- Tools and other resources
- Activities
- Health and safety

### Time management

Don't view your time in the garden as an additional task. Time spent growing and exploring the garden offers so many possible learning opportunities. Before heading outside, get organized before you start an activity with the children, or ask the children to help you with the preparation. The best sessions usually happen when you work with small groups. Also, match children's attention spans by making planned experiences short.

One key issue that often comes up is how you plan to manage your garden during holiday periods. Communication is the key to overcoming this potential problem. Speak to colleagues and parents to see if you can draw up a job schedule to ensure that important jobs such as watering are done during the holidays. You may also think about choosing plants that don't need harvesting during holiday periods. Squashes are often a good choice, as these don't require harvesting until after the summer break.

### Tools and other resources

Children's gardening resources are available from many suppliers. High quality, wooden/metal resources are a good investment, as they invariably last longer than plastic resources. Child size tools and garden equipment is important to allow children to handle them successfully and with confidence. Encourage the children to get digging and offer an appropriate range of tools for them to do so. A large spoon may be suitable for the younger children. You will find below a list of some of the items that might be useful. Don't be afraid to speak to local businesses, as you may be able to get some of these items donated by a local garden centre or farm/farm shop. Useful items include:

- flower pots and trays
- compost
- watering cans and buckets
- Garden string, garden canes and labels
- child-sized tools
- children's gardening gloves
- magnifying glasses for looking at insects, seeds or flowers



## Chapter 2 – How to manage your garden

### Health and Safety

When gardening with children, it is very important to consider the safety of everyone involved. You should not be worried about getting out into the garden with young children. It's a great opportunity for children to learn and have fun, as long as some basic health and safety measures are taken into consideration.

- Even before going out into the garden, establish some basic ground rules with the children. Also ensure that you have the correct adult to child ratio for the delivery of outdoor activities.
- Ensure children have clothing appropriate to the weather conditions, especially wellies, waterproofs and warm clothes. Think about protection from the sun too with sun cream and hats.
- Select the correct-sized tool for the child. Avoid the use of sharp and / or mechanical items.
- Provide safe storage for equipment and tools.
- Do not use chemicals. Garden organically whenever possible.
- Do not leave water storage containers unattended around very young children and toddlers.
  
- Provide hand-washing facilities, through the use of the use of liquid soap, warm water, and paper towels. There are some risks associated with soil mainly bacteria arising from animal faeces, so ensure children always wash their hands when they are finished and always before eating and drinking. You also need somewhere to wash mud from wellies, tools and equipment too.



## Chapter 2 – How to manage your garden

### Activities

When thinking about **activities**, choose tasks that suit the child's age and ability. Have some simple tasks that young children are able to help with. Filling plant pots with compost is an easy job...and fun too. In addition, when gardening with children, it's a good idea to have a separate digging area available so that they can practice with tools and techniques (for example, digging and raking.) This will ensure that the areas where plants are planted don't get damaged. Mud pies are also always a winner, so you could create a mud play area away from the planting. Other simple activities include:

- Watering the garden
- Digging
- Picking flowers and vegetables
- Planting vegetables, fruits and flowers in the correct season
- Tasting and preparing healthy food, such as making salads
- Craft activities using harvested seeds, plants and flowers
- Composting, recycling and mulching
- Weeding
- Gathering seeds and dried flowers

### Films

There are many ways in which you can **link learning** to what is happening in the garden. Here are a few ideas to get you started

## Unit 3 – Farm visits: Practical hints on setting up a visit

### In this unit I will learn how to:

1. Explore the main steps involved in setting up a farm visit
2. Investigate funding options
3. Consider the health and safety implications of a farm visit

### Introduction to the topic:

Undertaking a visit to a local farm is a wonderful experience for young people. It is a chance for them to see, hear, smell and experience new things and be inspired by the natural world. It is also an opportunity for children to start learning about food and where it comes from. You may wish to think about how you will link your farm visit to the learning experiences, as well as how to pay for the visit and the health and safety implications.



## Chapter 1 – Explore the main steps involved in setting up a farm visit

### Carry out a pre-visit to the farm

A pre-visit is the opportunity to see the farm that you have identified for your visit, as well as meeting the farmer face-to-face. It is an opportunity to discuss with the farmer your requirements for the day and to start to plan how the visit will work. By driving to the pre-visit, you can also plan your route for the day, to see if the bus can fit up potentially narrow county lanes and to see where you will park upon arrival. During the pre-visit, you should also discuss health and safety, identify hand washing facilities and toilets, as well as discussing the types of activities that will be carried out on the day. You will also want to talk through some logistical details such as arrival and departure times and make a wet weather plan. We have put together a [pre-visit checklist](#) that will help you to ensure that you cover all of the important points during your discussion with the farmer.

### Involve the children

Before going on the visit, talk to the pupils about the reasons for going to the farm and give them an accurate idea of what they will see, do and learn during the day. If the children don't know what they are looking for, they may be overwhelmed by the experience. Therefore, it is important to have a focus for the day eg: we are going to see the animals or we are going to look at plants growing. Children may see a large number of animals, but they won't be pets. Farm animals may not take kindly to stroking and as such may be overwhelming, hence the importance of discussing this before the visit. You can also prepare the children by undertaking food and farming related activities beforehand. These may include singing farm related songs (such as Old Macdonald had a farm) and reading farming story books (such as The Little Red Hen) so children can think about what they may see on the farm.



## Chapter 1 – Explore the main steps involved in setting up a farm visit

### Ratios

Decide on the ratio of adults to pupils. As a general rule, it is 1 adult to 1 or 2 young children or 1:4 for 3 to 5 year olds, but individual settings may vary. You may wish to ask parents to accompany the visit to help look after the children.

### Transport

Make sure that you organize your transport arrangements early, as busses can get booked out, especially towards the end of the school term when a lot of visits are taking place. In chapter 2 of this unit, you will find some options for transport to and from the farm.

### Clothing

When you contact parent to let them know about the visit, it is important that you emphasise the need for pupils to come prepared with appropriate clothing including wellington boots, sun lotion, rain coat, sun hat and a water bottle. Both children and adults should be prepared for the weather: This would include hats and sun protection for the summer and wellies and waterproofs for the wet. The ground may be muddy and almost certainly uneven, so suitable footwear is very important.

### Follow-up

A visit to a farm shouldn't end with a wave from the back of the bus at the end of the day. The best visits are those that are followed up back in your setting. Just like you involved the children at the start of the process, involve them afterwards as well. You can share your experience by feeding back to the rest of the early years setting about your visit – perhaps by producing a display with paintings of the day out, talking about what was discovered on the farm and following up with other activities.



## Chapter 1 – Explore the main steps involved in setting up a farm visit

### Educational activities

#### Films

There are a wide range of educational activities that can be carried out during a farm visit. It is a good idea to discuss what you want to achieve with the farmer when you carry out your farm pre-visit. The farmer may be able to help you with ideas for activities. Below are a few examples of how a farmer might go about arranging an educational activity for your group.

#### Documents

## Chapter 2 – Funding options

Funding farm visits can often be an issue. This chapter introduces a few ideas that might help **reduce the cost** of farm visits and transport. There are a number of public and private funding schemes that offer financial support to schools and farms, allowing educational visits to take place. It is worth exploring these opportunities from the perspective of your own country to see what may be available. Every country will have different funding opportunities, but they will usually fall into either funding from public sources (eg local municipalities) or private funding that the school or farm can access.

Visit costs will usually be one of the first conversations that you have with a farm when they are planning their visit. Some farms, especially those that specialize in educational visits, may choose to post their visit costs on their marketing materials. Less established and smaller visit set ups may not have marketing materials, so you will need to discuss costs on the telephone or in person as part of the farm pre-visit.

### Free visits

Some farms may not charge you to come and visit them. This may be because the farmer has decided that their overheads are not that high and they don't need to charge for a visit. Other farms like to offer visits for free because they feel it important that children understand where their food comes from. Other farms may be in receipt of government funding that means that they don't need to charge the visitors. Another approach that some farms take is to offer a free

guided farm walk, but to charge for any additional activities such a cooking or planting seeds. It may be that you are confident in leading the farm visit yourself without the input of a farm guide, in which case you may be able to negotiate a free or cheaper visit

## Flat rate

Flat rate charges will vary from place to place. Charges will usually be for a day visit. The day will usually run between 10am and 2.30pm (allowing time for travel from and to your kindergarten), with a lunch break of 30 to 45 minutes. This will vary between farms, so it's always good to ask what the charge includes. An average daily charge is usually between £100 and £150 for a group. Some farms may charge less and occasionally, visits can be as high as £300.

## Cost per child

Farms that charge for the visit can charge anywhere between £1 and £10 per child, depending on the location of the farm and content of the visit. Most farms would typically charge somewhere in the region of £3.50 per child, with a minimum amount of approximately £100.

### Checklist:

- Identify suitable farms in your area for a visit.
- Look at websites / promotional materials to see if the charges are listed.
- If there is no website, call or email the farm.
- Ask the farm if they are part of any government funded schemes that allow for free visit. If so, ask the farm if they have capacity to offer you a free visit.
- If the farm does not receive any funding, ask how much the visit will cost.
- Find out what the visit cost includes. Does it include a farm walk and / or additional educational activities?



## Chapter 2 – Funding options

### Transport costs

There are a range of **transport options** available to you. There are general considerations that will apply to all when establishing costs.

Walking to a local farm is a great solution to potentially high transport costs. If your local farm is easily accessible and routes to the farm are safe, why not try walking? You could incorporate the walk into the day's activities, for example stopping to undertake art activities.

Some kindergartens are in an excellent position to be able to use public transport to get to their link farms. If this is an option, it might be worth contacting your local transport company to see if they are able to offer discounts for travelling groups. You may have a charitable community transport organization in your area that operates a minibus service for the

local community. Typically, these organizations can provide access to transport for voluntary, community and school groups. They provide subsidized transport options for groups who couldn't otherwise afford to pay for private transport services.

You may also find that your local secondary school can help with transport by providing a minibus and driver as part of their community outreach work. Secondary schools and colleges will often own a few minibuses, so it's worth getting in touch to see how you can work together.

The other solution is to hire a bus. If the group is only small, you may be able to hire a minibus or half-sized coach. This should work out cheaper than hiring a full-sized coach. If you do need to hire a full-sized coach, you might think about how you can maximize its use. Premium rates are often attached to the times around the start and end of a school day when coaches are doing the morning pick up and afternoon drop off. Between these times can sometimes be quiet for coach companies, so you may be able to negotiate a cheaper rate. If this is possible, just ensure that you leave for the farm after school has started and return back before school finishes.

### Checklist:

- Look to see if there are farms within walking distance to save transport costs
- Investigate whether there are any farms on public transport routes to avoid hiring a bus
- Look out for any community groups or secondary schools that can offer a free mini-bus
- Try different coach companies as prices can vary a lot

## Chapter 2 – Funding options

### School Food Markets

This exciting initiative involves local food producers setting up stalls at the schools and selling their produce to parents and member of the community. Often the school will charge local producers a small fee for a stall, which can then be used to fund visits to farms. Schools will also have their own stalls selling produce grown in the school grounds or crafts produced by the children. The income generated from these stalls can also go towards funding the farm visit.

### Sell your old tech

Everyone has got an old mobile phone tucked away in a drawer somewhere. You may consider using one of the many websites on the internet to sell your old phones to raise funds for farm visits. There are loads of sites that buy a range of unwanted consumer electronics, as well as old CD's. Maybe you could ask parents for any old items and then sell them to one of the many companies out there?

### Local trusts, societies and agricultural colleges

It is a good idea to investigate opportunities in your local community for outdoor education. There are many charities, trusts and societies across the UK that may be able to offer you funding towards schools visits, provide you with in-school activities or even provide free services on their sites. Agricultural shows and colleges in your local area may also be able to offer some support for farm education so why not get in touch with them?

## Chapter 3 – Consider the health and safety implications of a farm visit

Alongside the usual health and safety measures you put into place when working with young children, there are some specific measures that you will need to be aware of when **visiting a farm**. As with many other educational or recreational activities, visits can never be considered free from all risk. However, while the hazards are real, the risk of infection in children can be readily controlled by simple everyday measures. The following practical steps will help make your visit even more safe, healthy and enjoyable.

## Risk Assessments

Firstly, your risk assessment for the visit may identify some specific hazards that may not appear on a normal assessment. Use your pre-visit as the chance to talk to the farmer about the risk assessment. They will know their farm better than anyone else. They will also be used to hosting group visits, so will be aware of any specific hazards that you might need to add onto the risk assessment.

## Before the visit

Ensure that all staff, adult helpers and children are well briefed and know the expectations of them, also that they know what to do in an emergency. Share the timetable for the session and write a 'safety policy' for staff and volunteers before the visit and ensure that everyone knows what they are supposed to be doing. Write a letter to parents to tell them about the visit and to allay any concerns. Reassure parents that risk assessments have been carried out and that a pre-visit has been undertaken. Explain your reasons for the farm visit and explain the need for children to experience this new and stimulating environment, also explain that with suitable clothing for the visit, potentially getting wet and dirty will not be a problem.

# Chapter 3 – Consider the health and safety implications of a farm visit

## Hand washing

Because of the risk of transmittable bacteria and diseases, it is important that hand washing is strictly adhered to when visiting a farm. When carrying out the pre-visit, take time to note where the hand washing facilities are, as well as how many sinks are available. Remember to allow time for everyone to wash their hands before eating food, after any contact with animal and soil and before leaving the farm at the end of the day. There is an industry code of practice that has been produced for groups who wish to visit farms. The document provides information on hand washing. You will find a link to the document as part of the resources for this unit. The code of practices advises that farms supply warm running water and liquid soap. In the past, some farms have supplied hand sterilizing gel, but this is no longer recommended.

During and after the visit, make sure that the children:

- Are reminded of the rules/precautions to take upon arrival at the site.
- Do not kiss animals.
- Always wash their hands thoroughly before and after eating, after any contact with animals and again, before leaving the site.
- Eat only food that they have brought with them or food for human consumption that they have bought on the premises, in designated areas.
- Never eat food that has fallen to the ground.
- Never taste animal foods.
- Do not suck fingers or put hands, pens, pencils or crayons etc. in mouths.
- Where practical and possible, clean or change their footwear before leaving.
- Wash their hands after changing their footwear.

Check that the children stay in their allocated groups during the visit, and that they:

- Do not use or pick up tools (e.g. spades and forks) or touch other work equipment unless permitted to do so by site staff.
- Do not climb on to walls, fences, gates or animal pens etc.
- Listen carefully and follow the instructions and information given by the site staff.
- Approach and handle animals quietly and gently.
- Do not chase, frighten or torment the animals.

## Module 3 - key actions

### GARDENING

- involve parents in your plans for the garden and communicate how their children will benefit from outdoor play and learning. Seek out and use the expertise and skills of parents.
- Even before going out into the garden, establish some basic ground rules with the children and ensure they have clothing appropriate to the weather conditions.
- Select the correct-sized tool for the child. Avoid the use of sharp and / or mechanical items.
- Provide hand-washing facilities, through the use of the use of liquid soap, warm water, and paper towels. There are some risks associated with soil mainly bacteria arising from animal faeces, so ensure children always wash their hands when they are finished and always before eating and drinking. You also need somewhere to wash

mud from wellies, tools and equipment too.

## FARM VISITS

- identify suitable farms and carry out a pre-visit to ensure the farm has suitable activities and hand washing facilities.
- work out a budget for the cost of the farm visit (free or charged for) and the cost of transport .
- emphasise the need for pupils to come prepared with appropriate clothing including wellington boots, sun lotion, rain coat, sun hat and a water .
- develop ideas to link the farm visit into activities in the kindergarten including stories, artwork, songs and nursery rhymes.

## Module 4 – Food taste and intercultural eating skills

Food is a characteristic way human beings discovered to get in touch, know each other, exchange opinions. Kindergartens are typical places where families with young children meet and where their eating habits, religious background and rituals could be shown without offending neither the children, nor the parents. To do that, kindergarten staff needs basic knowledge about how food could help them to manage relationship with families of migrants and refugees.



### What is the goal of this module?

1. how to realize that there are many factors that affect child's eating behaviour.
2. how is possible to realize a suitable and not traumatic weaning.
3. how to have resort to Season Festivals to increase kinder awareness about their relationship with them self and with their own living community.

### After finishing this module I will have learnt:

How to improve child's eating behaviour through the role of teachers, peers and ambience

## Unit 1 – Food socialisation in kindergartens: Role of teachers, peers and ambience

### In this unit I will learn how to:

1. better understand child's sense of taste
2. cooperate with children and motivate them for a new taste
3. use the role of peers and ambience to increase their capacity of trying new dishes

### Introduction into the topic:

You may be surprised, but taste is genetically determined. Some children are more prone to certain tastes (especially sweet) than others. Accepting new tastes and new foods is a learning process which takes time. On this journey are especially important roles of: parents, teachers and peers. Children eat in their own manner, very different from adults,

because we shouldn't forget: eating is for them learning.

## Chapter 1 – First thing first: How children sense the taste

The sense of taste importantly influences child's food choices. Taste is genetically determined and variation in taste genes might relate to the taste likes and dislikes of children and parents. In addition to genes, age and culture also contribute to taste preferences, at times overriding the influence of genetics. Mother and child can be from different taste planets; so if child says food tastes bitter to him, he may be right, even though his mother doesn't sense it that way. (Monell Chemical Senses Center)

Obese kids have less sensitive taste-buds than kids of normal weight, indicates research published online in the *Archives of Disease in Childhood*. (British Medical Journal, 2012)

Dr. Mennella a scientist at the Monell Chemical Senses Center in Philadelphia: *"Babies are born with the ability to detect sweetness, which is the predominant taste of human milk. The taste of sugar also is a signal that a food has calories and, therefore, nutrition. Between periods of maximal growth, children may be attracted to sugar because it's a signal to the body of energy and salt because it's a signal for minerals. Bitter is a taste signal for poisons."*

Since flavor and taste learning occurs so early in mammals, mothers who eat more fruits and vegetables during pregnancy have children who are more accepting of those foods, research has indicated. (Banotai A., Taste&Flavour Preferences in Children, 2010)



Avoid drinks with added sugar. They represent risk for obesity, caries, high blood sugar, higher blood lipids, cardiovascular diseases, diabetes type2, osteoporosis ... Sweet soft drinks stimulate sweet taste in later children's life. Children who are not accustomed to drink water, are complaining if not given soft drinks for thirst. (Prehrana.si).

## Chapter 2 – Role of teachers

Parents are children first role models, but when child comes to kindergarten, teachers become equally important. Family/parents opinion is still very important, for example: when parents are model for healthy eating, children express greater interest in healthy food.

Teachers and caregivers become role models by engaging with children at mealtime and sitting down and eating with them. This practice is often called family-style dining.

### Developing positive eating behaviour

Teachers can help children develop positive early eating behaviours with decreasing food fears (neophobia), positive

experience with engagement of teachers, and with enjoyable and fun atmosphere.

The acceptance of new foods is a slow process. Particularly through the ages 2 to 5, persistence is essential (Birch 1999; Satter 2008). It is very important that teacher praise the child when she is good and call her by the name. It can't be too much of praising. Teacher is creating warm, acceptable atmosphere which is very important for adopting a new knowledge.

## Food restriction and food pressuring

Restricting or forbidding unhealthy foods doesn't decrease children's preference for them, but the opposite is true (Satter 2008). Pressuring a child to eat one type of food (such as fruit or vegetables) leads to resistance.

Emphasis on having a "clean plate" may hinder children's recognition of the internal cues of hunger and satiety and contribute to overeating (Satter 2008). That's why respecting child's expression of food preference and fullness (particularly if the child tastes a food) is very important!



## Sometimes how to eat is more important than what to eat

Pre-schoolers have two common preferences. Firstly, they prefer routine in daily life. Most children need some structure and routine to their day. Generally, they prefer meals and snacks at regular times, as governed by the family's lifestyle.

Secondly, they prefer simplicity. Many children may like simply prepared, mild tasting foods that they can easily identify. They prefer foods they can manage, for example, cut-up vegetables they can eat with their fingers and soups they can drink from a cup (Sigman-Grant M. 1992). It is estimated that children eat more fruit or vegetable, if it is cut into pieces, because is more comfortable. Use vegetables in other forms: as a sauce, in muffins, as cream soup ... and increase the possibility of eating it. (<http://prehrana.si/moja-prehrana/predsolski-otroci>)



**Children prefer:**

- raw, coloured vegetable of bright colours better than cooked vegetable. Red colour is especially appealing to children (if possible, add a piece of red food).
- warm food better than hot food
- mild tastes
- soup without legume skin
- funny meals: little tables, sandwiches of geometric shapes with funny names, everything eaten in a company of their friends
- cooperating at composing the menus and preparing meals
- only one or two new dishes at once, which should be offered often and always when child is hungry, at the beginning of meal or after play

(based on Rady Rolfes S., Pinna K., Whitney E.)

## Chapter 3 – Role of peers

Peers have important influence on children from early years on, although: older is the child - stronger is the influence of peers, especially with teenagers.

Copying of other people's behaviour starts very early. You may be surprised, but even infants look to other people for guidance in food selection.

If children watch other people eat, they prefer food which is eaten by people with positive over negative expressions, foods being eaten by child over adults, and foods being eaten by child of the same gender as themselves. These characteristics can help us to affect children's willingness to try new foods (Frazier, Brandy N. et al., Developmental Science, 2012). So, the winning combination for child to try new foods could be to watch peer of the same gender who is eating these foods. This knowledge is very well used in commercial industry.

But the most effective situation for child to try new foods is, when he/she has rotated opportunities to eat with a peer or peers who already consume this new food.



## Chapter 4 – Role of ambience

Before the meal children must calm down, teachers can use different quiet activities, for example reading the story. In this case, they can "hear their inner voice", which is usually right about the amount of food they should eat. (Kast-Zahn, Morgenroth, 2012). While children eat, they should not listen to radio, use picture books or toys - focus should be on food. (Dolar Bahovič, Bregar Golobič, 2004)

If we force a child to eat food, table will become mine field. When he doesn't want to eat, good answer is: "Don't worry about this. Just sit here with us and let's enjoy each other's company." After the age of 4 they are old enough to understand that all children should leave the table together and wait for the ones who are still eating. (Kast-Zahn, Morgenroth, 2012)

### Eating environments

Dinning environment must encourage relaxing atmosphere, where child can focus on food, but with no pressure. Interesting and engaging mealtime conversations create greater food enjoyment (Hughes et al. 2007).

Eating environments that make food fun, offer new foods and a variety, and encourage children to taste and choose the foods they want, let children develop food attitudes and dietary practices that ultimately support good health (Campbell & Crawford 2001).

Simple, creative lunches with variety in colour, texture, and taste are appealing to children.



## Guide through dining environments

**Relaxing and acceptable atmosphere** with the focus on food is the most important part in good dining. If teachers are aware of this, they could easily distinguish between what is good and bad for dining experience.

**Effect of sound at dining:** noise is very disturbing, it is estimated that is lowering food consumption. While eating it is the best solution silence or quiet relaxing music, accompanied with nice conversation about themes children like (creating relaxing and acceptable atmosphere).

**Effect of scent:** strong scents even if they come from food, disturb appetite. Don't open pots with food and deliver it right in front of children's faces. Scents not connected with food are even more disturbing (flowers, cleaners ...)

**Effect of light:** there should be enough lightening, the best is daylight. Too little lightening reduces food consuming. Children like food they recognize and see well.

**Effect of colours:** although children like colours, there shouldn't be too much, because

children can get distracted by them. Wansink, B., Van Ittersum K., 2012, found out that bright lights, loud noises and yellow and red colours create a hectic atmosphere that may cause individuals to eat quickly.

**Where to set the tables:** if possible, set them in separate place only for eating, which is clean, with low sound levels to avoid loud voices, echo. Tables and chairs should be together but with enough space to allow teacher to walk and that are not disturbing for children. (Šintler, Domicelj, 1997)

**Decorations of eating environments** help at creating better atmosphere and children enjoy in decorating the table, but unfortunately in kindergartens this is not possible every day.

Teacher can do this at special occasions: birthdays of children, meetings of parents ... Use seasonal themes (flowers, plants).

**Organise your meals well,** this is important. In the case of bad organisation teacher will have to leave the table to get extra amount of food, cutlery and so on. This is disturbing and children will imitate you. So, prepare everything you need in a hand cart. (Dolar Bahovič, Bregar Golobič, 2004)

### 10 steps to positive eating behaviour (on basis of Erik K. Eliassen)

1. Provide a variety of foods at meals and snacks, especially whole grains, vegetables, and fruits.
2. Offer repeated opportunities to taste new foods - a least 15 - 20 repetitions are needed to become familiar with certain food.
3. Share with families' nutrition resources, such as lists of foods (by category) to guide their food selections and offer new ideas for meals sent from home.
4. Apply the same guidelines to food selections in teachers' lunches brought from home.
5. Sit with children at meals, and enjoy conversation. Talk about the taste, texture, appearance, and healthful aspects of foods. But: don't talk just about food, it may become annoying. Include topics that all children like: family, family trips and activities, animals.
6. Plan adequate time for all children to finish eating.
7. Respect a child's expression of satiety or sense of being full.

8. Develop a routine for serving snacks, applying the same rules whether offering carrots, crackers, or cookies.
9. Wash hands before snack and mealtime; encourage touching and smelling a food as a step toward tasting.
10. Find alternatives to using food as a reward or serving foods high in fat, sugar, or salt as part of a celebration.

### Other learning tools

<http://solskilonec.si/>

<http://prehrana.si/moja-prehrana/predsolski-otroci>

<http://www.ellynsatterinstitute.org/index.php>

[https://www.monell.org/research/nutrition\\_and\\_appetite](https://www.monell.org/research/nutrition_and_appetite)

Erin K. Eliassen, The Impact of Teachers and Families on Young Children's Eating Behaviors

## Unit 2 – Matter of Taste: taste, smell, sight, touch, and hearing. Hands on nutrition pedagogic starting form taste events to cooking classes in kindergarten.

### In this unit I will learn how to:

1. observe and understand the sensitive nature of children
2. realize healthy and savory menu in the phase of the weaning
3. organize activity which stimulate the development of senses in the children and their awareness of these

### Introduction into the topic:

In kindergarten, among the main experiences to be seen as opportunities for cognitive, physical, affective development of children, we have the sensorial experience: in early childhood, actually, senses (taste, smell, hearing, sight and touch) are the first and the best way to get self-knowledge and to become aware of the surrounding world.

At the same time, food is the main immediate connection with the outside, while satisfying the primary needs of children. So, when children enter kindergarten, their first challenge is the weaning, i.e. passing from mother or formula milk into several, diversified food flavors and smells. For that reason, the teachers organize specific activities focused on using "jelly", so that children become able to test some new flavors and smells, at the same time developing their skills in playing.

## Chapter 1 – Kids and five senses

According to some prenatal psychology scholars, the human being begins to develop his sensory abilities since the first weeks of gestation.

### Touch before birth

Touch sensitivity appears early, first in the area around the mouth towards the 7th week, then expands to the face and the genitals (10th week), hands and feet (12th week). But four-dimensional ultrasound revealed that as early as the 9th week, if it touches the foot planks, the fetus folds his fingers or fan out them, drawing the leg to escape contact.

The child would above all can sense a series of vibrations through the amniotic fluid. Towards the 22nd week, nerve endings finish to develop the tips of the fingers and the baby begins to touch her body, umbilical cord and uterus walls.

## Touch development after birth

At birth, the child's safety and protection needs lead him to look skin-to-skin contact for with his mother. This will calm him and, through a sort of extension of uterine life, will introduce him into the outside world. The newborn loves touch and heat from the earliest hours of life.

With growth, touch becomes an important tool for the child to know and explore himself and the world around him. Since the 4th month, the infant begins to discover himself and to touch his hands, feet, face, etc. By the 7th month, however, the child learns to grasp the objects and explore them.

## Smell before birth

At the 11th week, the baby begins to swallow amniotic fluid and expel it with the first urine. Then the dissolved substances meet the vomeronasal organs, the smell receptors, which ripen around the 13th week.

The collection of these molecules, derived largely from ingested by the woman food, is for him the smell of mom and it will be immediately recognized after childbirth, at first contact with her skin. The smell, developed at birth, will carry him towards mother's breast.

## Smell development after birth

Studies have proved that children develop their smell long before the other 4 senses. In a couple of hours, the infant uses the smell to locate her mother. The infant also recognizes the smell of human milk and can distinguish it from the milk of a stranger.

There is also evidence that pleasant smells can effectively improve the immune system, reduce stress and induce sleep. Research has shown that a scent stimulates different receptors in the brain, which is also responsible for basic learning skills.

However, they are the most important scent receptors in the nasal cavity that have the capacity to differentiate over 9,000 several smells. Each receptor has a place where a scented molecule can form a bond with it so that the brain can smell it properly. Smell does not require air; it simply asks for a scented molecule.

However, the actual smell development happens during the weaning, when it comes into contact with the most varied scents.

## Sight before birth

At the 8th week the optic nerve is formed, but the fetus begins to open his eyelids only to 26th. From this period onwards, if you move a strong light source on the surface of the womb, the little one follows her with the look.

Sight, compared to the other four, is still a "delayed" sense: at birth, the infant cannot focus more than 25 centimeters and distinguish a few colors. But it is exactly what it takes to attach the look of mom (for an innate mechanism recognizes a human face, though only drawn on a sheet) and locate the nipple for the first feeding.

## Sight development after birth

At birth, the eyes and areas of the vision-oriented brain are immature, which explains why very young children cannot clearly see red, yellow and pastel colors. White and black branded models provide the strongest contrast. The faces are particularly appealing to young children, though the most exciting image after birth is the face of the mother.

The newborn looks for the pupil, which resembles the shape of the nipple. Objects can be seen at a distance of 20 to 25 centimeters, which corresponds to the size of the mother's mother when she nurses or embraces him. Routes that transmit information from the eye to the occipital lobe in the back of the brain develop quickly. From the age of two months, both eyes can focus in the same way and follow the movement of an object if it is not too far away. The colors become distinct with a preference shown first towards the red and yellow and then towards the green and the blue. From the age of three months, the child will follow an object for a full bow from right to left. At this stage, the child is particularly captivated by the lights movement, as long as they are not too strong. From the age of six months, pastel colors are recognized and remote objects can be identified from a distance.

Additionally, the child develops depth perception (three-dimensional view) and turns to an object put to a different perspective. Children watching television see images in two sizes and cannot determine the exact size, position, and shape of an object. At eight months, color vision is fully developed and the baby begins to see with much greater precision.

It will take 4 or 5 years for the child's vision to reach the level of an adult.

## Taste before birth

The taste buds appear on the tongue towards the 12th week. When the fetus swallows the liquid in which it is immersed (from 2 to 4 centiliters per hour), the buds start experiencing their flavors and transmit their sensory information to their brain areas. So, it seems that once passed into amniotic fluid certain foods, if they are very much appreciated by Mom, are combined with a feeling of well-being, pre-disposing the brain of the unborn to appreciate them in the life of extrauterine.

## Taste development after birth

The taste buds on the tongue can distinguish four qualities - bitter, sweet, salty, acidic: all other flavors are identified by the olfactory receptors in the nasal cavity. Evolutionary speaking, the obvious preference for sweetness ("taste of safety") can be explained by the fact that sweet taste is a source of energy (carbohydrates) that are not harmful and are safe to eat. Instead bitter taste warns us about toxic foods, an acid flavor can warn against spoiled foods for example, while a salty flavor may suggest the presence of minerals.

Babies are extremely able to differentiate a variety of tastes, which may be in breast milk, and then to develop their preferences. So, weaning is the moment of meeting the child's genetic tasting patrimony with a framework of adult preferences: this encounter will be crucial. In fact, it's shown how eating behaviors achieved in the very first years of life are kept even in adulthood, underlining the importance of investing in this period to improve the quality of life of tomorrow's adults as well.

## Hearing before birth

By monitoring the movements of the body and the heart rate, it has been observed that the fetus reacts to sounds from the 16th week, long before they develop hearing organs: baby According to some hypothesis, would be able to feel the vibrations through skin and skeletal structure.

After the 24<sup>th</sup> week it can normally hear, not only the physiological noises of the maternal (the heart, the breath, the blood circulation) body but, partly, also those outside. From half pregnancy in then, the baby can recognize the voice of his mother (if she affectionately speaks to him, he is excited and its cardiac rhythm changes) and also of his dad; it distinguishes some simple syllables and ago evolutions in the liquid amniotic to the rhythm of a music (what sweet must be, otherwise it kicks annoyed).

The hearing, therefore, is fundamental to create a sort of "family bond" anticipated. And sonorous stimuli compete to the cerebral development of his child engraving himself in its memory. After the birth, just reunited to his mother, the baby immediately recognizes "that" cardiac pulsation, "that voice." Not only. It is observed that a newborn knows how to distinguish, among the so many, a particular melody often felt in the prenatal period, and even a fable. But child also has an auditory perception of himself: if he makes him listen to a recording of his weeping he stays indifferent, while he is getting excited and he starts in turn to scream if it originates from other children.

## Hearing after birth

A newborn with only few days of life feels all the noises and some of them can provoke in him a called reaction "reflected of Moor", open and described for the first one turned by the Austrian pediatrician Ernst Moro. It manifests him with a reaction suddenly accompanied from a sudden opening of the arms caused or from a sudden noise or when the supine newborn supports him in way some abrupt or rapid.

In these cases, the newborn has a bump, stretches arms widening hands and fingers and subsequently folds up her, then it normally follows the weeping.

- Just born, the newborns start in answer to a strong and sudden sound, sometimes turning the head in direction of

the noise.

- Around the 2 months: the hearing of the newborns is improved, he should be the degree to hear sounds of different tonality now.
- Around the 3-4 months: child is able of to gather and to understand the source of a voice or a noise for then to turn in the correct direction, starts besides to articulate some consonants and vowels.
- Around the 5-6 months: baby starts to understand that he can provoke some noises himself, as for instance when it will throw objects for earth for the taste to feel that it makes noise. The confused sounds that it sends forth look more and more like the words.
- Toward the 7 months: he will begin to stammer and to produce sounds to manifest the really state of mind, this ability of lallation will increase around the tenth month.
- Toward the 8-9 months: child starts to understand the relationship that ties the words to the gestures.
- Toward the 11-12 months: baby will turn him if called for name and he will be able to associate a name to an object. He should start to pronounce simple words as "Mother" or "it Eats up".

In conclusion, especially in the first three years of life, until toward the seven years, child is completely organ of senses. In him there is no separation among body, soul and spirit and all of this that it operates to the outside he is internally reproduced. Child lives in how much he tastes everything how much he welcomes in itself.

## Chapter 2 – Changing in the child feeding: from lactation to primary school.

As sustained by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), the maternal milk it is enough to satisfy the nutritional demands of the greatest part of the babies at 6 months. The weaning should not be on its way before the 17a week of life, of it over the 26a (European Society for Pediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition – ESPGHAN).

In the baby the requirement of lipids is great in comparison to the following ages: up to the first year of life, a fat contribution of the 40% of the daily calories recommends him, percentage that has decreased to 35-40% since 12 to 36 months thin to arrive, after the three years gradually to the recommended quota for the adults (from 20 to 35%).

In fact, the milk to the beginning of the feed is to contained lower part of fats and to tall content of lactose, sugar, proteins, vitamins, mineral and water. During the feed, the content of fats (50%) increases and that of sugars (7%) decreases. Such percentage allows the baby to take less risks than to become obese, since a possible correlation exists among elevated protein assumption in the first phases of the life and the risk increased to develop obesity and chronic-degenerative illnesses in the following periods of the life.

Besides maternal milk contains over 700 types of bacteria that help her child to develop the immune system and to build the intestinal bacterial flora.

Then maternal milk offers the good approach to his child to a healthy and rich life of affection: in fact, during the feed, his child lives an intimate relationship with his mother, which initially is no other from himself and then becomes the first representation of the world.

Although the maternal milk both a complex inimitable biological system, from 1915 the first prepared formula is had on industrial base beginning from bovine milk: today day the formulas of the artificial milk extend to draw near to that some maternal milk more and more, even if it needs to underline that in the artificial milk it increases the quantity of the consequential calories from proteins and that it needs to be careful to the qualities of the ingredients of the milk in dust.

Therefore, an assignment of the pediatrician is also that to prescribe a type of milk rather than another in base to the demands of the baby, explaining to his/her parents which are the characteristics of that determined artificial milk and because it is fitter for that newborn, making besides to understand to the people the differences of price among the different products, that could appear unjustified to an inexperienced eye.

According to the OMS indications, toward the sixth month it is necessary to begin the weaning because in this phase alone maternal (or of formula) milk is not enough to satisfy the increasing nutritional requirement of the baby, above all as it regards energy's contribution, proteins, iron, zinc and vitamins, so the feeding must be integrated with fit complementary foods. Besides, in general, the baby is ready to receive solid foods to six months. In fact, around this age "the intestinal maturation is completed and the neurological development allows to grab, to chew and to swallow in effective way".

Specific ways and menu don't exist to begin the weaning: the proper timing for the introduction of the first different foods from the milk depends on numerous individual variables, among which the specific nutritional demands, the neuro-physiological and anatomical-functional development, the stature and ponderal growth, the relationship mother-child, the specific demands of mother and the partner-cultural context.

Following the lines drives for the weaning of the World Health Organization, it gradually needs to introduce in the diet of child seed-solid foods and then solid, in other words "complementary foods" that they don't forcedly have to replace the maternal milk but to integrate it: in fact, even though more exclusive, the nursing to the breast must also continue after the introduction of other foods, and it is desirable for the psycho-physical (a smaller incidence of certain typologies of tumor is ascertained as the childish leukemia, and of certain types of metabolic and autoimmune illnesses and a great intellectual development) comfort of child up to that such practice continues when child and mother desire it, also over one year of age.

**The complementary foods can be classified in:**

- Foods of transition (past, in purea, semisolid), belonging foods that is to specific categories but adapted for responding to the particular nutritional demands and physiological of the baby.
- Family foods, based on a various and balanced family diet, with some small adaptation.

Between the 6 and the 8 months these foods must be offered 2-3 times a day, increasing to 3-4 times after the 9 months and adding a nourishing snack 1 - 2 times a day after the 12 months, if child desires it. Then generally the weaning is begun with fruit and eat up of it, but "without forcing child, allowing him to touch food in the dish and to eat with the hands" (baby led approach) and "alternating different foods for color, taste and consistence.

Initially not approved food must have proposed him however with patience in following days, eventually prepared in different way. And then it is important that child eats sat with the erect back (preferably in the high chair) to avoid the risk of suffocation and to allow to actively participate him in the meal, touching and messing up with the food.

As it regards the nutritional demands of child from 1 to 3, the general energetic contribution must adequately be divided among the different macro-nourishing. According to the recent indications of the "Levels of Assumption of Reference and Energy for the population" (LARN), such contribution should derive for 50% from the carbohydrates, for 40% from the fats and only for around 10% from the proteins.

The carbohydrates include the flours and the sugars. They are naturally found in all of this that contains flour of whatever type (bread, pasta, laughed etc.) and in all of this that contains sugar (sweets, fruit, honey etc.). The proteins are contained especially in every kind of meat, fish, eggs, dairy products, cereals and vegetables.

The fats: they are divided in saturated, present in the milk-cheese products, in fat meats and in certain vegetable (oil of palm and oil of coconut) oils, and in unsaturated, present especially in the vegetable (oil of olive) oils, walnut-trees, filberts, peaches, olives.

To underline it is the fact that, in comparison to the past years, the criterion of the progressive introduction of the foods is set aside according to the degree of allergic reaction, for a great attention to the character and the tastes of child. In fact, the weaning poses some practical problems, what the problem of the teaspoon, of the taste, of the consistence, of the tolerance that the educators can overcome trying to:

- to be reasonable, or to try to understand what's the best moment to begin the weaning in accordance with the characteristics of your child;
- possession calm: to gradually introduce in the diet new foods, assuring himself that child is meanwhile adapted to those precedents;
- to be prudent: being very careful to as your child put up with every new food;
- possession patience: it is important that during the meals attention is paid to your child, encouraging him and not forcing him to eat, avoiding distractions around him, speaking to him and helping him with love.

**In the menu processing, it is recommended to respect some principles:**

- Little salt
- Few simple sugars
- No pepper or spicy seasonings
- Fruit and vegetable always present
- Few fat of animal (to prefer the thin meat) origin

- To offer white fish e/o yields of sea 2-3 times a week
- To offer an ample range of nourishing foods
- Threshold the quantity of fruit juices
- For a child not nursed to the breast, after the 12 months, 200-400 ml / die of whole bovine non-diluted milk are recommended if others foods of animal derivation are included in the diet, 300-500 ml / die if I am not it
- To avoid honey to 1 year
- To prefer the use of seasonal and biological foods
- To prefer the simple cooking as the steam cook.

Generally weaning is begun with "it eats up only", where all the ingredients are mixed together, for then to pass to some foods to thin (beginning with vegetable, cheese, fish and so on) to reach the meal to more courses. The "it eats up only" she realizes with the vegetable broth. Vegetable broth is prepared using fresh vegetables of season. With this broth the creams of cereals (rice, corn, oats, rye, mixed cereals) are melted getting used child step by step to a great consistence, and passing from the creams to the semolina, to the bows and finally to the pastina or to the well-cooked rice.

After the preparation of the it eats up, they are added parmesan cheese, oil virgin extra of olive and finally 2 - 3 teaspoons of past vegetable, the same one used for getting the vegetable broth.

Together the meat is added: it is begun with freeze-dried and homogenized of chicken, turkey, rabbit and lamb, less allergens, for then to also insert calf and steer.

Gradually other protein sources are fitted into the diet, as fish, vegetables, cheeses, reducing the daily contribution of meat to three times a week, the correct dose for a baby that has been growing then for the year in. For the portions, for a 7-8 month-old child it can be used 50g of past of vegetable (potatoes, carrots, zucchini and lettuce) or 200 ml of vegetable broth, with addition of 14 g (2 table spoons) of pastina or 12 g (two table spoons) of cream (rice, fines cereals, corn and tapioca), a teaspoon of oil of olive. Like protein source, it can be chosen among: 40 g of homogenized meat or fish; 25 g of ricotta of cow; 5 g of meat lyophilizate or 12 g of dry (around 1 table spoon) lentils.

Between the 9 and the 12 months they are also added as protein sources the egg, the cooked or raw ham without fat (15g) or the ricotta of cow (25 g). Between the 12 and the 24 months they increase pasta's (28 g) portions, rice and semolina (25g) for first; meat or fish fresh (30g); dry vegetables (15g); fresh cheese (25g) for second course, to always serve with mixed (100 g meal) vegetables. Between the 24 and the 36 months the portion of pasta, rice or pastina reaches 45 g, with also a slight increase of the protein (20 g of affected and 40 g of fresh fish) quota.

## Focus on babies' vegan / vegetarian diet

In front of the increasing number of individuals and families that the so-called alternative alimentary regimes choose, in the different kindergartens vegetarian/vegan menu has been introduced in the different kindergartens, in base to the "lines of national address for the scholastic food service" that they foresee suitable substitutions of foods correlated to reasons ethical - religious or cultural: who refuses the foods of animal origin for ethical motives, it does it not to cause sufferings to the animals and to have an inferior environmental impact on the ecosystem.

The vegetarian diet foresees the elimination of meat and fish, but it admits the consumption of all the other animal foods as eggs, milk and cheeses; instead the vegan diet excludes all the foods of animal origin, that is it foresees a feeding 100% vegetable: accordingly to replace the animal proteins, the vegan diet offers pasta, laughed and other cereals, vegetables and soups, fruit shoal, bread, pizza breads and salty cakes, algae, vegan variety of the typical dishes, through the use of the tofu (milk of soy) in substitution to the cheese and of the seitan (wheat's gluten) to the place of the meat.

To underline it is that still heated is the debate among the experts of health and feeding respect to the veganism, or if the vegan diet is proper for his/her/their children from a nutritional point of view: in fact the babies vegans are more exposed to deficiencies of vitamin B12, folic acid (vitamin B9), zinc, iron and kick and the assimilation of the essential substances for the organism it is around the triple one in the foods of animal origin in comparison to those vegetable (matter of the bioavailability of the nourishing ones).

## Chapter 3 – Play as a sensorial food experience.

How it is possible to arouse interest in child for new foods? Through the game.

As recognized in the art. 31 of the Convention on the Rights of the Infancy, the play is a right of child: “States Parties recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.

States Parties shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity”.

With the game children express themselves, they tell, they interpret and they combine in creative way the individual and social experiences. Child that plays gets himself occasions of growth, because the same game encourages affective maturation, active and it develops partner-cognitive skills (ability of decentralization, divergent thought, reflexive ability, development of the social language.). Above all, and in more general terms, it represents for child a meaningful and deep existential experience, that entirely involves him giving comfort and the sense of his being to the world.

So, the game is game when it is finalized to himself, free.

As we have previously seen, child up to the seven years is internally a sculptor: child has need of images that arouses in him impressions. In the game, as in whatever activity or object of the man, child doesn't look for the target, the profit but what in it he lives. If you try to put of forehead to a child a doll done of rags and a beautiful plastic all defined in her features doll, you will see that child will prefer the doll of rags because to this he can give his form, on this he can elaborates his idea of doll.

This example allows to realize the function that the game should have in the life of a child, or to draw from the images the sense of the things (symbolic value of the leisure activity). He behaves like an artist: the images become in him shaping strength.

Therefore, all of that is intellectual, that doesn't allow the child to create, to make alive and felt anything through the imagination, it is injurious to the child evolution: this should make to reflect on the intrusive role of the technological games that leaves little space to the imagination and the imagination more and more, well present instead in simple games as hide-and-see, blind fly and so on.

So, considering philosophers, sociologists, anthropologists and pedagogics theories on the role of the game in the process of evolution from the infancy to the adult age, it can be ascertained as in the last years that common mentality that viewed the leisure experience only as synonym of comfort / recreation has been given up, while it is being tried to show its phenomenal wealth and its multiplicity of expressions and articulations.

The game is educational for his nature end statute: in fact, through of it human learns to know the world, to experiment the value of the rules, to be with the others, to manage his/her own emotions, to discover new runs of autonomy and to experiment for attempts and errors the convictions on the things and on the others. It's the background where the identity of child can develop and then consolidate. Besides, the game is privileged field of observation because, for his spontaneity, it constitutes a valid context in which it is possible to observe launchings and different individual styles, as well as connected peculiarity to every child. Then, it proves to be a valued ally for the adult, parent or teacher, to inflict a more deepened knowledge of the child and to direct his more effectively educational-didactics and therapeutics action.

Now, how is possible to made leisure teaching?

Departing from the systematic observation of the single children and the daily life, those activities are individualized playful that is believed to promote the growth of cognitive, affective, social skills. Such activities are technically divided in:

Structured game (game): activity thanks to which the educator, prompts directly child and observes the experience that he is doing in the individual dimension, in social spaces and in a circumscribed context.

Free game (play): activity characterized by the free child's choice that has a symbolic value because child lives more times both more difficult experiences for him and those more reassuring, through the game. In this type of game, the educator develops the role of "actor", every time that has involved in the game of his child.

Focusing on the game structured in preschool (0 - 6 years) age, nowadays the space is always great given to the artistic activities and manuals to feed the enthusiasm of the imagination, the curiosity, the creativeness, the communication of yourself and the world that we perceive: this happens although still artistic activities are not planned in the curricula for the first infancy and in that of the teacher training of many European countries (eg. Italy, France etc.).

Today we know that the perceptions come from the sensory input, present already in the intrauterine (then in a

precocious phase of our development) life they are the essential step to the development of the nervous system, of the emotions and of the conscience. Day after day, the impressions that we incessantly receive through the senses, from the environment and from the culture in which we are steeped, they define connections in our brain and in our memory, molding her.

So, the perceptions firstly are a personal matter.

How much the experiences and the stimuli are rich and diversified anymore, so much great it seems to be the possibility to develop a harmonious personality, able to orient with equilibrium in the complex world of the social relationships and the consumption. Besides differences and multiplicity of stimuli contribute to preserve the individual differences as collective patrimony.

The food is a sensorial experience beginning from the first months of life with the nursing, involving all five senses and for this it often introduced in educational paths that contemplate to the discovery of yourself and the world.

Here following they specifically intend some tied up activities to the food to encourage in child:

- the discovery, knowledge and use of the five senses
- the acquisition of perceptive skills
- the acquisition of the capacity to express feelings and emotions
- the creativeness development
- the perception of the scholastic environment as a family environment.

However, it is to remind that up to the 7-8 years children have a vision of the subjective, intuitive and global reality. So, they labor to separate the different sensorial area the one from the other, to face the trials in analytical way and to rationally examine the others point of view. In this phase, it is preferable therefore to make lever on the suggestions that spring from the occasions of the daily life. The family kitchen and school, the snack with friends, the visit in farm, in the garden or in the wood, the sequence of the seasons, represents solicitations to learn to distinguish the senses the one from the other and to intuitively associate them to the reality enriching it of imaginary and emotional aspects, that contribute in conclusive way to form the sensorial memory of kids defining tastes and habits.

At the end, they are described some examples of playful didactic activities:

- **The basket of treasures:** it is a game of sensorial exploration that offers the opportunity to learn to discover the relationships to child, the differences / equalities between objects and materials. They are set food in a closed box or in a non-transparent pouch, as for instance an apple, a banana, walnut-trees etc., and child touching them must guess what they are.
- **Manipulation:** we propose to our children make the dough. This practical test allows to observe how the consistence of dough change from a phase to the other of the workmanship. You can continue to prepare egg-pasta, bread, tortillas, short pastry. If the addition of butter or oil is planned, you try to verify what it happens with and without the addition of the fat. Does something change? What? It is important to come up to the realization of the ended product and to share the taste.
- **Look and not touch:** you locate children in front of three or more foods and you invite them to observe their aspect, that is the form, the tones of color etc. Then you propose them to realize a paper of identity of the observed foods, drawing them in a sheet and trying together to describe the most interesting characteristics.
- **The Sonorous Mime:** you organize a competition of sounds and noises food imitation. Who is the best to imitate the noise of a French fry? And the noise of a coffeepot while coffee is climbing?
- **The blindman's bluff of the scents:** you put a small quantity of the every select fragrant ingredients in two of the boxes. Leave you one of it open and you cover the second with a square of cloth, opportunely fixed with the help of an elastic or of the string. You mark the closed box with one it initials of recognition written on a label. Before beginning, you explain well whether to perceive to the best the smells needs to inhale more times to brief intervals. You introduce, one to the time, every of the aromatic grass, inviting each to observe it and to sniff it. Which grass does it have the prickliest odor? Which is it more delicate? To this point you proceed to the test of recognition to the blind one.
- **Olfactory walk:** you develop a walk in the country or in the city with children making him to pay attention to smells that feel, asking him what according to them is the source of the scent and to describe it to you.
- **Myths and Legends:** tell the children myths or legends where food is the element that from place to the narrative interlacement, as for instance the myth of the gold apple or the myth of the knob of the Esperidis, to arouse curiosity in children and to at the same time feed their imagination.
- **Transfers:** you prepare containers of different dimensions on a table and different consistence's food, liquids and

solid, granular and floury etc., and you get child to decant from a container to the other.

- **Food decorations:** often on the occasion of the national festivities to spruce up the place, decorations are realized using dried fruit or vegetables, as for instance making to insert some nails of carnation in the citrus fruit as oranges or mandarins, to get some happy and aromatic decorations to support to the center of the table or on an inside windowsill.
- **Garden preparing:** If you had an available external space, you turn it to garden and during the whole scholastic year, you accompany children in the different seasonal jobs as the preparation of the ground, the seeding, the elimination of the weeds, the harvest. And you do all this accompanying the practical activity with singing nursery rhyme in group and letting pay attention all the living beings that our garden lives.
- **Painting:** to develop above all the sight and the sense of smell, paintings can be realized on cardboards, sheets, plotted using colors realized with extracts of vegetable e/o it yields. You apparently submit to the attention of children boxes which contains tempers, but of which, already by the smell and by the unusual consistence, their vegetable nature is recognizable.
- **Collage:** using the peels of the fruit or the vegetable, children can glue them on a sheet / cardboard and then paint them, so creating some original collage.
- **Music with cookware:** to develop the sense of the hearing and the rhythm, you offer the dish to the children as orchestrate musical and you accompany their metallic sound with onomatopoeic compositions about food.
- **Water test:** children will experiment the various ways to transform the water with the addition of salt, sugar, juice of lemon, of orange, soluble tisane and with their relative taste.
- **Objects Realization with Foods:** you propose to child spin of cloth or string together with varied shapes of pasta and candies: then child can create fanciful necklaces or bracelets.
- **Tasting of dishes:** you make to taste small portions of the whole disposition foods. You invite to lend ear to the sonorities, generally different, that are freed during the first bites and subsequently, when the saliva has softened the food inducing a change of its consistence. You bandage the children. As turn, one of them the bandage will remove from him. Deliver him one of the foods previously tasted and ask to bite him/it to him and to chew him/it, possibly to open mouth so that to favor the diffusion of the sounds. In the meantime, the others, staying bandaged, they will try to guess the mysterious food.

## Unit 3 – Seasonal Festivals in Kindergartens

### In this unit I will learn how to:

1. Valorize Season Festivals as a development way for children in early childhood.
2. Use Season Festivals to enhance nutritional education among childrens.
3. Valorize Season Festivals as an integration way for children coming from cultural heritages other than ours, as in case of refugees and migrants.

### Introduction into the topic:

Season Festivals are a meaningful way to increase child awareness about how they are a part of a living community marked by specific cultural heritage, at the same time able to integrate different cultures based on shared human values.

## Chapter 1 – Season Festivals enriching children's identity and social life

Every human community is marked by a mix of natural environment, cultural values and human social organization. Schools and kindergartens are all established in a specific location, which provides them with a natural environment, a cultural framework, a social context, where teachers and children live in together.

Currently, festivals are only occasions for people to be on vacation: it is a leisure moment, allowing people to meet friends, spend time together, travel, enjoy food and different kinds of entertainment. The original, deeper meaning of festivals has been lost in modern societies. But, it was completely different in the so called **traditional civilizations**.

Thomas Stearns Eliot, the great writer and poet of XX century, wrote that each of the great world cultures (Egyptian, Roman, Greek, Byzantine, Medieval, Islamic, Chinese, etc.) is the social and artistic expression of a **religious worldview** which is handed down through a specific cultural tradition.

So, we can define **tradition** as the social deployment by which the original religious worldview comes to permeate and imprint its stamp on the collective life of a civilization. Then, we could speak of “traditional civilizations” just when a society is entirely permeated by a religion, as in the case of the above cited great historical civilizations.

Consequently, the most relevant annual festivals all over the world every time stem from different traditions which historically characterize different societies. It is worth noting that traditional civilizations saw any annual festival as a step of an overall cosmic rhythm, influencing both nature and human lives as a whole. Festivals are a way for human beings to be actively involved by and be part of the life of visible and invisible spiritual forces operating all over the universe.

As every community has special times in his life, connected to the ancient cultural traditions and religion faiths, festivals become particularly relevant for children, allowing them to feel themselves as a part of an organic human society, together with their parents, friends and educators.

By this way, festivals contribute to design a **common identity** of a human community, through shared behaviors, habits and mindsets which children get in a more easy, direct and emotional way, in the same age when they are directly learning their mother tongue.

At the same time, festivals can mark and highlight the year course, throughout seasons, each one with its rhythms and its specific moods: following them, children become more and more aware of nature, empowering their inner individuality thanks to the idea that a wise order manages the world life as a whole, increasing their sense of security and their own positivity.

This is probably the best way to let children appreciate all the gifts nature provides to the human being, from flowers to earth products: this is an approach able to give children a well-balanced relationship with food, while learning to love and respect nature.

The idea that, like animals, trees and flowers, food is a gift nature can provide every year thanks to its wise season paces: but we can eat food only thanks to the human work employed in growing, picking and preparing them. This is maybe the best way by which children start feeling **gratitude** towards nature and human beings, all together operating in harmony around them.

Maybe, it is a first stimulus to the idea that **a society** is around him, supporting him and providing him with what he needs in every season, all along the year.

**Season Nature Tables** are a first practical suggestion to create the right feelings and to make children familiar with nature and seasons. Season Nature Table could be even a cupboard or a chest of drawers, arranged in the kindergarten, in the classroom or at home. It could be either very simple or very elaborate, as you could choose the solution best fitting the time you have and the natural environment you have access to.

In any case, two are the most relevant points, when you decide to prepare it:

- its **connection** with the current season and the upcoming festival or holiday;
- children **participation** both to its preparation and to take care of it.

These are the main aspects you must take into consideration to project and set it up:

1. The **Color Background**. You must pay attention to the colors related to the season, to create an appropriate atmosphere. So, blue could be the best choice for Christmas, fresh green to spring and Easter, yellow for summer, a radiant and warm red for the autumn.
2. The **Nature's Gifts**: you could use flowers, plants, fruits and stones belonging to the season time you are in, and children could be involved in searching for and disposing them in the Nature Table. Depending on the season, as a sample, you could use flowers like spring flowers, roses, sunflowers, autumn colorful leaves, etc.
3. **Pictures** on the Nature Table: in festive times, you could position a relevant picture or an art postcard there. You should have to choose images based on children's own impressions instead of adult perceptions and ideas. When Nature Table is prepared at home, you must take into consideration the needs of older siblings, if there are any, as well.

A little daily care for the Nature Table you have built is a good way to enhance children's attention and love for nature, increasing their awareness of it. That does not request too much time, but it might let children to be absorbed by these preparations and care small activities they usually love, able to increase their attitudes through attention and imitation.

## Chapter 2 – Season Festivals activities and foods

In this chapter it will be taken into consideration what teachers and kindergartens, communities and families, all together, could manage to involve children in the most relevant season festivals belonging to the European cultural heritage.

European traditions are the result of a long history merging religious contributes together along many centuries: consequently, for instance, Christian festivals took the place both of Celtic rites in West Europe and of ancient Roman *ludi* in Southern Europe. In addition, when Christianity divided into Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant (a long process lasting quite seven centuries), some festivals changed while other ones have been added.

Due to so rich and diversified cultural traditions, it is really difficult to indicate a common approach about how to manage Season Festivals in kindergarten, as quite each region in each Country has its own specific habits to do that. Each educator in kindergarten could search for local specific traditions and habits about festivals, following a creative approach able to enrich children's experiences.

So far, we will give only some short information about Festivals, following the course of the year, to stimulate educators' and teachers' imagination.

### Advent and Christmas

To create a solemn and quiet atmosphere approaching Christmas festive season, children could be involved in very simple and humble works, like to help you in cleaning the room where you will place the Christmas tree and the Nativity scene. After that, you could either read some short poetries, or listen to some short music pieces.

At the same time, children could work with paper and wood to create decorations inspired to the Christmas themes, they could paint them, maybe adding candies and sweets.

So, you have the possibility to develop a huge number of activities:

- Clear the room
- Create and paint decorations, better if made of paper, wood and wax
- Search for moss and pick it up
- Decorate walls and windows in the kindergarten
- Create Advent Calendar
- Prepare Advent wreaths
- Set up Christmas tree
- Prepare Nativity scene

### Epiphany

Epiphany ends the Christmas Feast days, so it is quite a climax for children, especially if you will be able to motivate families to spent these twelve days between Christmas and the Epiphany with their children in a quiet and calm atmosphere at home – even if it is not so easy nowadays, as we said, because these days are normally employed to go away for travel on holidays.

The idea that Three Wise Men, represented as kings, are coming could stimulate children imaginations: Melchior, the red king offering gold (wisdom); Balthasar, the blue king offering frankincense (piety); Caspar, the green king, offering myrrh (vitality) – could give raise to many possible activities for our children.

- Update the Nativity scene with coming kings
- Create little plays with children, letting them act as the three kings (you could do it all along January)
- Read to the kids some short poetry and listen to music pieces

- Ask children for help to take down the Christmas tree and all the other decorations.

## Carnival

The need to change our own role in our everyday life almost once every year is luckily and normally satisfied by children while playing. So, Carnival is a season festival which immediately could involve children.

In this case as well, you could try to do something useful to improve the child imaginative impulse, from one side giving them as a theme for their costumes gnomes, fairy tales, castles with queens and kings: but, on the other side, you could propose to your children to impersonate crafts and professions, so that they could establish both a connection with adult life, imagine ancient activities typical of your territory, and feel themselves got older.

We can suggest you these possible activities:

- create several separate areas in your classroom, if possible divided by screens
- inside there, create different workplaces for different trades, like farmers, shoemakers, carpenters, painters, fishermen, bakers, etc.
- each trade could prepare its own tools and things, colors and materials
- children will prepare costumes related to festival
- each different workplace could be decorating just before Carnival, in the right way to identify the different trades
- on Carnival, children will arrive at kindergarten already dressed up and could "work" at his own workplace or could go and work anywhere, irrespective of their costumes
- you could add games and dances, involving families and friends.

In general, during **Winter time**, you could also refer to the traditional basic elements of nature to create simple activities:

- Earth and fire: to prepare little sheaves of dry sprigs to burn in the fireplace, to cut bark, to make earth, sand, mineral available for free games.
- Air: to play with the snow to hang light wool bows. To cook biscuits and to taste its warm aroma.
- Water: experiences with snow and ice, to make her/it loosen, to pick up in buckets.

## Easter

It is not necessary here to highlight the relevance of Easter for Europe cultural heritage, neither is it necessary to explain the reasons by which Easter festival is strictly connected to the Spring and how much is it meaningful for children to have an inner perception of the mutual correspondence of "death and resurrection" in human being's life just like in the nature surrounding them.

As for Christmas, there are really hundreds of different ways to approach Easter in our European traditions, here we like better to give some ideas about activities you probably already do, maybe with some bigger or smaller differences: e.g., eggs, hares and lambs are common images we all share about Easter, so you will probably already familiar with the activities we are just going to suggest.

We can suggest you these possible activities:

- preparing earth to sow seeds in your outdoor space or in some small vases in a room well illuminated could be an exciting experience for your children in the kindergarten.
- to follow as they sprout from the earth and they quickly grow in this time, it will surely be occasioned to involve children in the spring atmosphere.
- Easter hare
- Easter lambs
- preparing and painting Easter Eggs
- searching for hares and eggs
- creating Easter candles
- suggesting ideas for home Easter preparation

In general, during **Spring time**, you could also refer to the traditional basic elements of nature to create simple activities:

- Earth: to hoe, to clean the garden, games with the sand.
- Air: to hang aromatic grass to desiccate, to create and to hang wool birds, to blow the blowpipes of tarassaco to

play to ball.

- Fire: experience of the sun and the heat.
- Water: to walk under the rain to squirt in the puddles! Providing changes of clothes and explaining it to the children parents...

## St. John's and Summer Festival

Summer solstice and St. John's Festival combines with the beginning of summer, so that children could sense the turning point of the year, and normally it coincides with the end of schools and with the approach of summer break. They maybe fill themselves free to being outdoors in the light, air and warmth, to play with water and sun.

Please, remember that all these intense outdoor activities ask for specific precautions, like wearing sunhat and sun cream, and to ensure that in any possible little summer trip there are places under trees, bushes or parasols.

We can suggest you these possible activities:

- Observing busy life of insects and drawing them immediately afterwards.
- Searching for flowers, picking and collecting them (they could bring them at home at the end of the day).
- Dancing and singing outdoors, choosing pieces appropriate to summertime.
- St. John's fire. It is an exciting experience for children, when they see flames leaping up and sparks flying. It is however mandatory that teachers give children an example how to keep the necessary respect for fire: so children must stay at a convenient distance and pass pieces of wood or old brushes to be burn to the teacher, almost until flames gradually diminish.
- Create butterflies from colored wool.
- Create flower crowns.
- Make colored strings of bunting to create different game areas in the garden.
- Organize games with gifts in the garden, placing them in the area you had delimited just before: fishing-like game, obstacle courses, ship-pulling game, dancing circles, etc.

In general, during **Summer time**, you could also refer to the traditional basic elements of nature to create simple activities:

- Earth: water is added to earth and sand, to reap the wheat to beat the ears.
- Air: to make butterflies of paper valine, garlands.
- Fire: collect, dry and burn weeds.
- Water: mix water and earth in molds, inspired by foods.

## Michaelmas

This is a festival which is getting increasing relevance in kindergartens, especially in Central and North Europe, while in South Europe it is quite forgotten, even if in Middle Ages Saint Michael, the Archangel has been one of the most remarkable figures of the medieval Catholic tradition.

We consider his festival (on 29th September) a very nice opportunity for children to start kindergarten new year with a festival and, at the same time, to enter Autumn season in the most proper way.

Michaelmas could be celebrated together with Harvest festival, especially if your kindergarten is close to agricultural areas: it depends on the connection you could have with farming in your location.

These festivals are particularly relevant to suggest to the children the right relationship with food, as they could experience how nature provides human beings with fruits just at the end of summer, giving men the possibility to survive and to get ready to the coming winter.

We can suggest you these possible activities:

- As Saint Michael, the Archangel is the protagonist, you could put a traditional image of him in the kindergarten, inviting children to imitate it in their drawings.
- Children could prepare their little swords and red mantles, in the simplest way (two little sticks tied together with a piece of string are enough, and they are absolutely not dangerous!): they can add red mantles and golden helmets as well, to impersonate Saint Michael.

- Apples are the most important food of this festival, so that you could prepare them with children, choosing the most colored (especially in red) and shiny, putting them in little decorated baskets.
- Children could be gathered around a long table all together, and teachers will distribute red apples to each one.
- You could find a lot of nice poetries and songs about Saint Michael, focusing on the possibility for every human being to develop his best inner forces for the benefit of all the human beings.

## Lantern time (Halloween, Martinmas)

The end of October and the first Days of November are another meaningful festival time in the European (and North American) traditions: on October 31, Halloween, stemming from the celebration of the ancient Celtic new year (Samhain), is getting increasing relevance as a “commercial” festivals, especially spreading out among youngest generations all over Europe. It is overcoming the more traditional All Saints' Day Christian Church celebration on November 1, even if this festival upholds its relevance in catholic Southern European Countries. On November 11, Martinmas, the Feast of Saint Martin, has a similar meaning, as all these festivals mark a transition point during the year: a sensitive point, where life and death are very close, both in nature and in human souls.

We can suggest you these possible activities:

- carving pumpkin lanterns
- prepare costumes
- adults like “angel guides”

In general, during **Autumn time**, you could also refer to the traditional basic elements of nature to create simple activities:

- Earth: to make provision of fruit to prepare jams, to pick up vegetables, chestnuts, filberts; observe either where ants go or of how many forms and how many different colors leaves have.
- Air: to desiccate tomatoes, to make garlands of leaves, to make to fly kites, walks in the fog.
- Fire: experience the decrease of light and heat.
- Water: learn children how to protect from rain, wind and snow, as a game, suggesting to them how to create mantels, caps and overshoes.

An active relationship among Festivals and sustainable Food could be easily established as season festivals are clearly connected to the rhythms of nature. So, you could help children to pay attention to this connection, both letting them collect seasonal fruits and vegetables, for instance, and involving them in the food preparation.

To do that at best, you could find some specific recipe, getting it out of local cultural food heritage. To give you a sample for that, you could find here a traditional recipe from **[put here a link to a .pdf file containing a season festival recipe from your Country/Region]**

Your approach will ensure:

- to involve children when choosing food raw material;
- to accustom children to handle food and observe its different characteristics;
- allow them to do basic operations during food preparation and cooking;
- invite them to take part in food and table preparation and presentation;
- ask them to collaborate in cleaning the table and tidy up rooms after meals.

## Chapter 3 – Food in Season Festivals as an Integration Way

This chapter is devoted to individuating season festivals stemming from other cultures and traditions which could be employed as useful opportunities to ease the participation of young children from different native cultural heritages in the same kindergarten.

In this chapter, it will be described some samples about religious traditions from the most important world regions. Thus,

kindergartens could involve children families and communities of different cultures into common activities, giving people the opportunity to meet and to develop a mutual awareness about their traditions, at the same time promoting the exchange of opinions and experiences about children education.

Before starting this part, a good way to create the right mood for you as a teacher or educator is to have a look at this poem by Derek Walcott (1930-2017):

*The time will come  
when, with elation  
you will greet yourself arriving  
at your own door, in your own mirror  
and each will smile at the other's welcome,  
  
and say, sit here. Eat.  
You will love again the stranger who was yourself.  
Give wine. Give bread. Give back your heart  
to itself, to the stranger who has loved you  
  
all your life, whom you ignored  
for another, who knows you by heart.  
Take down the love letters from the bookshelf,  
  
the photographs, the desperate notes,  
peel your own image from the mirror.  
Sit. Feast on your life.*

We will now have resort to some examples about how different religious cultural heritages connect season festivals with food.

Operators in kindergarten should carefully analyze the composition of their classes to get inspired from the different customs and traditions followed by the families of their children: not only to better interact with children but even to learn more about what they eat and how their typical dishes are prepared.

Basically, you could involve children in the preparation of the simplest foods for Christian traditional festivals, like paint eggs for Easter time, sweets for Carnival or Christmas **[you could put here a link to some more specific recipes in your region/Country]**. But, if you will be able to get friendly with children's families, you could even propose to share their traditional food preparation for Festival with all your children in the kindergarten.

Here you could find some ideas about possible starting points with different religious and food traditions of your children.

## Chinese Traditions

A sample of ancient Asian Season Festivals is the Mid-Autumn Festival, falling on the 15th day of the 8th lunar month, near the autumnal equinox (on a day between September 8 and October 7 in the Gregorian calendar). This is traditionally China's and Vietnam's harvest time, but this festival is present even in several other Asian Countries, like Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Sri Lanka.

Every family makes various delicious food and good wines to celebrate the festival. Over the centuries, the rich and colorful Mid-Autumn Festival diet customs were formed. The most popular Mid-Autumn Festival foods include mooncakes, pumpkin, river snails, taro, wine fermented with osmanthus flowers, duck and hairy crabs.

Mooncake is the most popular and important food eaten during the Mid-Autumn Festival: they are traditionally Chinese pastries which consist of a thin tender skin enveloping a sweet, dense filling. Mooncakes were used to be made at home, but very few people make them at home nowadays.

The traditional fillings include lotus seed paste, sweet bean paste and egg yolk: however, mooncakes with modern flavors such as ice cream mooncakes and chocolate mooncakes have appeared in recent years. Many other fillings are possible, like kernel and roast pork, seafood, red bean paste, fruit and vegetable, cream cheese.

## Induism

This religion offers a quite different approach to food during festivals. Living the command of the *ahimsa* (it means “not to injure” and “compassion”), Induist believers undergo to an alimentary diet previewing a limited range of products.

Induists motivate their own choice of fasting in occasion of festivals because they consider this sacred time a privileged moment to dedicate exclusively to the divine and not to the material dimension of life: consequently, he will be able to feed itself only after the end of the festivity.

This alimentary norm, however, does not prevent him to manifest his joy also when eating. For example, the festivity in honor of **Ganesh** – son of Shiva, depository of wisdom and science, usually represented with an elephant head – falls on the month of Bhadra (August-September) and it is the occasion to introduce typical dishes, serving mainly dishes based on milk and rice.

## Islam

Just to give a sample about Islamic traditions, we could say something about the **Id-al-Fitr**, the celebration at the end of the practiced fasting period during the month of **Ramadan**: a tradition that marks in depth the Islamic food diet. It is worth underlining that a rich offer of foods exists in that month, intended to be consumed only in the allowed timeframes, or rather from after the sunset up to the dawn of the following day.

For instance, **Harira**, or Ramadan Soup, traditionally is a recipe considered as a breakfast, that is an interruption of the fasting: it has the characteristic of a unique dish, normally based on Mediterranean vegetables, able to reinvigorate the believers approaching to the table after many times of total abstinence.

Harira is usually served together with **Shebbakia**, a dessert composed by shreds of fried pasta with sesame seeds, toasted and then soaked in warm honey. Many other desserts are available in the Islamic tradition in order to celebrate their religious faith, between which: **Khushaf** (bagels), **Atayef** (a kind of white flour pancake and semolina, filled with stuffed cheese and syrup) and **Ataif**, really delicious fritters disposed to pyramid, decorated with syrup and whipped cream.

We can already imagine it is not too difficult to involve children in such a kind of food preparation!

## Hebraism

It could be interesting to present a classic Jewish food tradition for **Pesach** (Easter), falling on the 14th of the Nisan month. In this solemn day, on every table, it is mandatory a tray containing: a lamb leg; a hard-boiled egg, singed on the flame and dipped in salt water; a compound of walnuts, shredded apples and honey; a celery stem, a small branch of parsley, some other vegetables, all dipped in salt water; bitter roots and herbs.

**Shabbat Bescialach**, a festive day that generally falls in January or February, is a further proof of the tie existing between religious festivities and culinary traditions. In this case, the Escape of Jewish people from Egypt and the vain attempt of the Pharaoh's army to force them to return is remembered in a dish, which obviously varies from region to region, the **Frisensàl**, “wheel of the Pharaoh”, made up by pasta layers with roasted meat, sausage of goose, raisin, pine nuts and noodles.

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If you decided to try it, a last but very relevant and sensitive issue is about how to manage the participation of your children coming from different religious traditions to inter-cultural activities based on the preparation of traditional festival dishes.

The first step is to inform families about your idea and to ask them for their opinion, just to evaluate if they are willing to participate to such a kind of activity. It is possible that you must take time to meet parents, to explain your idea and to discuss it together: so, you must not be in a hurry for that, as this initiative must absolutely not sound like an obligation and its educative aims have to be clearly shared with and accepted by all the participant families, to get the requested pleasant atmosphere.

If you attain this result, you then must identify the right times during the year, to exactly decide which activities are easier

to be developed, to choose which recipes to adopt, to design the program of the festival day.

To do that, you will be obliged to carefully study many details, to search for further information, to talk with children and with their relatives. Our suggestion is to pay specific attention to:

- how to set up premises and ornaments in your kindergarten;
- how to welcome and have cordial greetings;
- how to prepare food together (you must take into consideration legal norms concerning the management of kindergarten's kitchen);
- when and how to serve dishes;
- when and how to eat it;
- to have time to some games children could play together, before or after eating.

## **Module 5 – How to communicate with and inspire parents**

This module will give you some basic ideas on how to make teachers and parents work together in order to maximize the educational benefits for children. Also, one unit looks at the imminent issue of integrating immigrant families into the school community.



### **What is the goal of this module?**

**Unit 1 – Children in the middle: how education works if pedagogues and parents work together**

**Unit 2 – Learn ways how school can develop a dialogue with parents, with practical examples of activities**

**Unit 3 – Integrating immigrant parents into kindergarten community**

### **Introduction into the topic:**

This module will give you some basic ideas on how to make teachers and parents work together in order to maximize the educational benefits for children. Also, one unit looks at the imminent issue of integrating immigrant families into the school community.

## **Unit 1 – Children in the middle: how education works if pedagogues and parents work together**

### **In this unit I will learn how to:**

1. enhance the parental involvement and how to achieve a mutually satisfying result through cooperation.
2. identify the continuous line of communication through overcoming the barriers and building bridges in communication

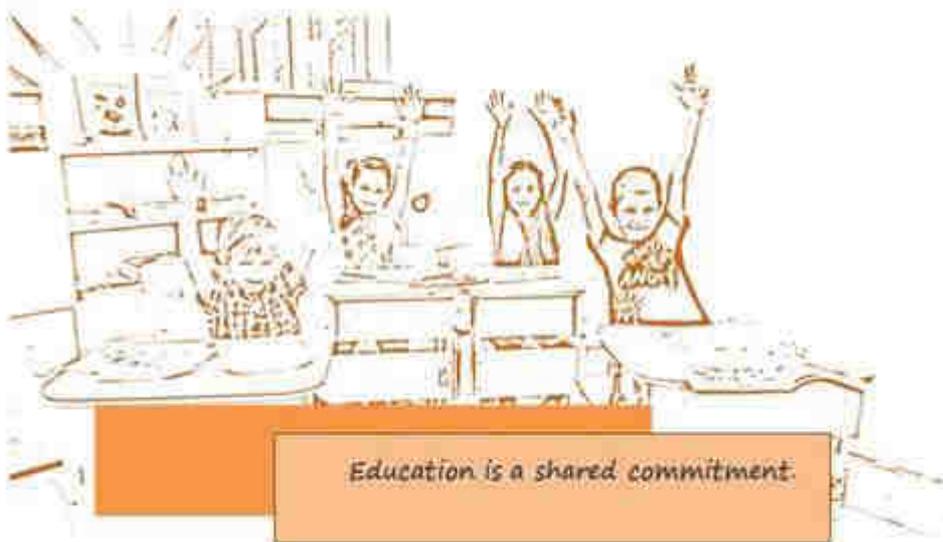
3. prepare teachers to work with culturally diverse children and their families.

## Introduction into the topic:

Modern life requires teachers and parents to unite efforts in the name of getting children the best education and upbringing. The learning system changes relatively often and it is influenced by many external factors, it can only act if teachers and parents believe in it. This chapter discussed the ways of developing effective partnership between teachers and parents, barriers and bridges to communication and the importance of achieving a cultural compatibility.

# Chapter 1 – Parents and Teachers: What Does an Effective Partnership Look Like?

## Why parental involvement is so important?



We used to think that professionals know better than parents what is necessary and useful for the children. We accept as normal that most of the day our children spend in institutions - nurseries, kindergartens, schools, study halls. In these institutions, qualified personnel take care of them, and they give our children proper education and upbringing. And finally, we believe that almost all the work will be done by someone else i.e. our children will be educated and socialized while we are at the workplace.

More and more people, however, realize that this model is vicious and it deprives parents of their active role in child-raising and creates unnecessary barriers. They also realize that the relationship between families and kindergartens and schools is broken and the processes that take place in both places are not connected. As a result, the child fails to get the necessary upbringing and education. To overcome this fragmentation and the gap between home and school, it is necessary teachers and parents to work together in partnership, to share information, ideas, and opinions, to improve decision-making and to share the childcare.

Unit 2 in Module 5 presents some good examples how teachers can communicate with and inspire parents, as well as chapter 2 discussed how parents can be integrated into kindergarten community.

## Different points of view

Everything begins at home. But it must continue through the schools. And somewhere in the middle there are different perspectives on how to create and manage this unique relationship between home and school resulting in maximum benefits for each child.

Many parents avoid contact with a teacher until major problems occur because they are unfamiliar with the process. Because of this it is important that the partnership is built with maximum transparency and mutual trust. To meet the different points of view, two simple questions have to be answered: what the teacher wants from the parent and what the parent wants from the teacher. One of the most important parts of this process is the culture of involvement which must be nurtured and prioritized. Teachers need to be willing to work with the parents no matter their assets or deficits'. Parents need to educate and communicate constantly with their children and thus to create the necessary basis for moral values that will shape the children's social skills, attitudes and responsibilities and this way to support the main teacher's task: to teach. Children need to feel that the adults care about them and they provide a safety net when needed to feel successful in their own education and growth.

### **Question 1: What do teachers want from parents?**

#### **Teachers want:**

- parents to be responsible.
- parents' proactively involvement in their child's daily school progress;
- parents to co-teach from home.
- parents to teach their children about moral behavior. Teachers know how to teach reading, math, science and so on but values should come from home.
- parents to "discipline—not punish—their children". Positive discipline method allows reinforcing positive behavior, promoting successful decision making and teaching expectations to children.
- parents should teach children to be responsible, speak respectfully, express their own reasoned opinion, to accept responsibility for their actions and accept the consequences of their deeds.

### **Question 2: What do parents want from teachers?**

#### **Parents want:**

- teachers to respect parents and children.
- teachers authentically care about teaching by raising standards and having high expectation for all children.
- teachers to think outside the box, because each child is unique and the learning approach must be different.
- teachers to communicate openly, share sincerely and inform timely.
- teachers must remain objective and follow their main responsibility: to teach.
- teachers to communicate for positive results not just the child didn't do homework, or was talking in class.

### **Question 3: Where might their interests converge?**

Both teachers and parents want to have better communication with each other, which will allow them to work as a team in the child's education. However, it is hard to converge the two paths. The main dividing line is the fact that both sides do not properly define their duties and rights and very often have excessive expectations or just talk in different languages. The environment we live in is changing and evolving rapidly and society are facing more and more new challenges. It is therefore important to include a more compressive system of communication. On the one hand, teachers should make a sincere effort to know the family and make a genuine connection, from another – parents need to be more active in their children's school life. Achieving a mutually satisfying result is possible through cooperation.

Parents, teachers, community leaders, and school administration will achieve more if the goals are met with a team approach: "Together Everyone Achieves More". Children learn at both home and school. Learning takes place during every waking hour of every day.



### Good practice from Bulgaria

- [Activity Sheet 1](#)
- [Activity Sheet 2](#)

## Chapter 2 – Communication is the key

### Components of Effective communication



The best way to avoid misunderstandings with parents is to have ongoing, clear lines of communication from the beginning. The more you keep them informed about kindergarten's activities and include them in everyday events, the more they'll feel like a part of the team. The clear communication makes parents more supportive, understanding, and less negative.

The continuous line of communication with the parents is crucial and the factors that develop effective partnership are:

- commitment to work together;
- parent involvement;
- shared responsibility for child's education;
- mutual trust and respect;
- understanding everyone's perspective.

**Carol says: (November 2, 2010 at 4:25 pm)**

*An effective partnership looks like this. Teacher calls home to discuss grade/behavior and the parent demonstrates that they have knowledge of the area the student is struggling or succeeding in because they have been communicating with their child. Together we discuss a way for supporting the student.*

*Parent calls teacher to discuss student's difficulty with homework/behavior and ask how they can help their student. Teacher shares what they have been doing in class and shows the teacher has noticed the struggles. Together we discuss a way for supporting the student.*

*Reality is that neither the parent nor the teacher seems to have time for the kind of in depth view this requires. We all wish we did. As a high school teacher I had 30 to 35 kids in each class period giving me about 180 students every semester, 360 every year. Even One minute on the phone or in email for each student is 3 hours of work. Every day I had grading, lesson planning, remediation planning, and tests to write so beyond the school day I already had 2 to 3 hours of work to do. Contacting parents by phone occurred when I really had to do it, but I did try to leave detailed comments on the computer grading system, and I sent notes home with students (especially for success stories). In hundreds of contacts over 19 years, I can think of 1 that met my ideal. Still its good to have the ideal to strive for."*

*HOMEROOM-the official blog of the U.S. Department of education*

**Unit 2 in Module 5** discussed some specific examples of ways school staff can connect with parents through events and innovative ways to develop a dialogue with parents.

## Barriers and bridges to communication

The cultural, linguistic and ethnic diversity is growing in Europe and the kindergartens are facing many challenges to improve diversity and inclusion. Also children with disability need assistance with communication, self-care and mobility. One of the key factors in effective diversity practice is to avoid stereotyping children and families based on their gender, race, culture or other attributes. Creating an inclusive community will improve the partnership between all administration, teachers and parents.

**Barrier:** Too busy

**Bridge:** Take the Time

Parents and school principals usually report lack of time as the most important communication barrier. However, studies reveal that lack of planning towards establishing cooperation and lack of developing a mutual understanding are the most important communication barriers. In addition to that, some sort of feelings related to previous negative experiences, religious and cultural differences, transportation problems, and the incompetency and inefficiency of school members may affect school-parent relations negatively. Different forms of communications, in person, on line, in writing and in multiple languages must be utilized.

**Barrier:** Different levels of expectations

**Bridge:** Meeting expectations and driving results

Often teachers and parents have different expectations for each other as well as for the children. Children success in kindergarten is facilitated when parents and teachers clearly define and discuss the expectations for children performance and emphasize children's effort when completing tasks and ensure they understand the consequences for not meeting expectations. Academic achievement is positively correlated with realistic, high parent and teacher expectations for children's performance.

**Barrier:** An Inappropriate Atmosphere

**Bridge:** Create a Good Atmosphere

Teachers also must admit honestly about their own cultural competency and commitment to work with the diversity of children. A positive learning environment is essential for children to learn and develop. It must be rich in play, experience, exploring, and make children feel important and communicative. This environment makes parents feel welcome, involved and empowered.

**Barrier:** Cultural differences

**Bridge:** Meet cultural differences with respect and action

Cultural differences can create communication barriers if the teachers reflect their own cultural perspectives while interacting with the parents from a different language and culture. To deal with this potential miscommunication, teachers should begin a quest for knowledge to help them understand their students' parents' language and cultural differences. Along with gaining knowledge of cultural features, trying to understand cultural differences and values seems to be important from the aspect of dealing with communication barriers.

### Other learning tools:

- [Ideas for partnership between parents and school](#) (in Bulgarian)
- [Presentation "Working with parents"](#) (in Bulgarian)
- [Kid's Corner](#)
- [Teacher's Corner](#)

## Chapter 3 – Working with cultural diversity

## How can we prepare teachers to work with culturally diverse children and their families?



New challenges for kindergarten staffs and manager rise for the integration of refugee children and families. Germany and many European countries have to integrate refugees from various countries. The kindergarten is the place where families with young children meet and where there is a way to integrate them into the European culture through direct interaction and knowledge exchange. Unit 3 in Module 5 ([link](#)) gives a complete picture of this process in Europe and suggest strategies how to build ties with immigrant parents.

But to integrate families as well as children from other countries kindergarten staff must have basic knowledge about the eating habits, the religious background and rituals for not offending the children or the parents with our European consumption patterns. Below are some suggestions for teacher and parents for achieving some forms of cultural compatibility.

## Suggestions for teachers

Culture and family are essential to children's sense of identity, belonging and success in lifelong learning. Teachers play a very important role in supporting children and families with culturally diverse backgrounds. When teachers are friendly and approachable and they can respect multiple ways of living, it helps children and their families to build a sense of belonging and trust. Some ideas that might assist educators to support culturally diverse families include:

- Be open to different types of families
- Work to develop positive relationships with families
- Mutual respect for diversity
- Be thoughtful about communication

Early childhood educators across Europe must be prepared to teach an increasingly diverse population of young children. More children from immigrant households are enrolled in early childhood programs and the trend is expected to continue into the next decade. There is a great need to develop training programs to adequately prepare teachers to meet the needs of today's diverse early childhood classes.

## Suggestions for families

Parenting across cultures can sometimes be a challenge, especially when the values and expectations of a culture are different from one another. This can make it difficult for families to feel a sense of belonging to any community. The ability of the family to develop a cultural identity and a sense of belonging is important for children, because a sense of belonging and a strong cultural identity supports their mental health and wellbeing. There are lots of things that can help families to develop a sense of belonging, including:

- Identifying your own culture - children's cultural identity develops through language, storytelling, relationships, and traditions and routines.
- Building social networks - build connections across many different social and cultural groups.
- Seek support - find the right person or organization to help you and your family.
- Remember that it takes time to integrate - adjusting to a new life after migration can have lots of challenges for families and children.

## Diversity through food and other activities

Food-related events can provide a brilliant focus for engaging a diverse community.

There are many ways to celebrate diversity for example:

- Involve children (module 3)
- Have a feast (module 4, unit 3 and module 5, unit 2)
- Outdoor learning (module 3)
- Involve parents (module 5, unit 1)

### Other learning tools:

**Food Mapping** is a great activity that combined geography, with some science and nutrition thrown in.

### School lunch around the world

### Planting with kids

### Tastes Around the World Party

### Food museum – exploring and celebrating food

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Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework, Evidence Paper, Practice Principle 4: Equity and Diversity, Saffigna, Franklin, Church and Tayler / Department of Education and Early Childhood Development 2011

Ozmen, F., Akuzum, C., Zincirli, M., & Selcuk, G. (2016). The communication barriers between teachers and parents in

primary schools. Eurasian Journal of Educational Research, 66, 26-46, <http://dx.doi.org/10.14689/ejer.2016.66.2>

Ozmen, F., Akuzum, C., Zincirli, M., & Selcuk, G. (2016). The communication barriers between teachers and parents in primary schools. Eurasian Journal of Educational Research, 66, 26-46, <http://dx.doi.org/10.14689/ejer.2016.66.2>

## Unit 2 – Events and innovative ways to develop a dialogue with parents

### In this unit I will learn how to:

1. Implement a shared vision of engaging parents in their children's education.
2. How to create events to involve parents and the community in cooking and growing activities.

## Chapter 1 – Vision for engaging parents

School districts and school staff need to connect and build positive relationships with parents before they can effectively engage parents in improving school programs and activities. First, it is essential for school staff, parents, and community partners to recognize the advantages of working together to guide children's health and learning. This can be accomplished by having a shared school vision for engaging parents in their children's education and communicating that vision to everyone in the school community. The school's vision for parent engagement can set the tone for a positive relationship with parents and the expectations parents have for being involved in school health and academic activities.

Furthermore, school staff should be prepared to work with parents. School administrators can enhance staff knowledge, ability, and confidence to engage parents by ensuring ample opportunities for professional development on effective parent engagement strategies. For example, teachers can learn how to involve parents in students' education homework, how to encourage parents' visits to school and participation at formal and informal school activities or how to reach out to uninvolved parents. Schools might invite community partners to provide professional development in these areas and make staff aware of existing parent engagement resources. In addition, school staff can be given dedicated time to plan and organize parent-friendly activities and events.

Finally, school administrators and school staff should ensure that all parents feel welcomed in the school and should provide a variety of opportunities for them to be involved in school health/gardening/cooking activities. School administrators might use a survey to assess the needs and interests of parents related to academics and health/gardening/cooking. The results from such an assessment can inform school administrators about the best ways to communicate with parents and help administrators prioritize the types of activities to implement throughout the school year to increase parental participation.

### Examples of ways school staff can connect with parents

- Ensure the school or school district has a clear vision for parent engagement that includes engaging parents in school activities.
- Does the school mission reflect the importance of parent engagement and establish a foundation for parent engagement in school activities?
- Does the school have a well-planned program for parent engagement?
- Are policies and procedures in place to maximize parent engagement in the school's health/gardening/cooking activities, services, and programs?
- Does the school have a friendly, welcoming environment for parents?
- Does the school welcome parents to participate in and contribute to the school's health/gardening/cooking activities, services, and programs?
- Ensure that school staff members can connect with parents and support parent engagement in school health/gardening/cooking activities.
- Does the school have a dedicated committee of teachers, administrators, and parents that help the school plan, implement, evaluate, and continually improve its outreach to parents and the quality of parent engagement activities?
- Are there school health/gardening/cooking activities that address the interests of parents, such as healthy

eating/cooking seminars?

- Are school staff members provided with opportunities to learn how to increase parent engagement in school?

## Chapter 2 – Events to involve parents and the community in cooking and growing activities

Involving parents and the community is a key focus of current education policy, and with good reason. Pupils' achievements have been shown to be greater where parents and the wider community are actively involved in school life. Food-related events can provide a brilliant focus for engaging a diverse community.

Below are some ideas to get you started.

### The best of „national/regional“ food

This theme could be used to celebrate regional food from around your country or focus more tightly on local food traditions. It could be a stand-alone event or run alongside another school event such as an open day.

Opportunities could include:

- encourage representatives from local food producers, growers and food businesses to serve tasters/samples of their products, recipes and ingredients.
- the school gardening club could display what they have grown
- the cooking club could offer samples of dishes made using the school grown produce.
- the school catering team might showcase regional dishes they are serving at lunchtime. Samples could be offered and evaluation cards filled out to help identify the most popular dishes to go on the lunchtime menu.
- food Technology/Catering students could be set a piece of coursework to produce dishes that are typical for your country or region, especially using local foods/ ingredients.
- the school parents' club could run a competition to find the best picnic lunch using local foods. This would help raise awareness of what constitutes a good packed lunch.
- local chefs could be invited to demonstrate how to use local and seasonal ingredients.



### Many cultures, many foods

This theme can be used to showcase cooking from around the world, using authentic ingredients that may be unfamiliar

to some members of the community, along with locally produced and home-grown foods. It could take the form of a sit-down evening meal for fundraising purposes or a more casual tapas style tasting event or even a picnic in your school garden.

Opportunities could include:

- involving a range of groups from the school community, all working together, e.g. students from a local secondary school, members of the Cooking Club, the school cook and staff, the school parents' club, teachers and teaching assistants and local community members.
- displays of ingredients, artefacts and pictures could help to evoke the culture behind the recipes.
- consider showcasing a different culture with each course, e.g. Italian antipasto starters, an Indian main course and a dessert from Greece.



## Summer food celebration

The timing of this event could be at the end of the summer term or the beginning of the autumn term. It could be an afternoon or early evening school event, or form part of a bigger community event.

Opportunities could include:

- a vegetable show for the school and local community with sections for:
  - the most unusual fruit or vegetable
  - the largest vegetable
  - the best produce grown by pupils from seed given out in class
  - the best dish using a specified fruit or vegetable ingredient.
- outside agencies, e.g. allotment association or composting association, could be involved in encouraging families to grow more produce at home,
- developing the skills that the children have learned at school.
- community cooking clubs could sell dishes using produce from the school garden.
- a variety of awards could be offered, e.g. cooking the best recipe using home-grown produce.





## Garden Experiments

Experiments are simple trials or observations designed to be carried out at home, in a school garden or on an allotment. They give you the chance to learn about, and experiment with, new (and old) ideas or techniques and to share the knowledge gained.

The whole school community, including parents and the wider community, can be encouraged to participate in one of the Experiments. Participants can attend regular 'get-togethers' to exchange tips, ideas and information. The pupils can co-ordinate the distribution of information and feedback on the results.

The content of the Experiments could be prepared by the gardening, biology, chemistry or any other subject teachers. This could consist of:

- background information
- basic instructions on how to set up and run the trial
- advice on what information you will need to record
- results sheets which make it simple to record your observations and data as you go along
- where appropriate, basic materials such as seed.

Teacher will then compile and analyze the results, then report them in your school magazine or notice-board.



## Grandparent Gardening Week

Taking place in early spring weeks, Grandparent Gardening Week aims to help schools settings get support from the local community to kick start their gardens into action after the winter.

Hosting gardening activities is a great way to reach out and engage grandparents, careers and local residents (including local allotment holders) in your school or nursery activities, and to get your garden in tip top condition along the way.



### Hosting a gardening activity

Identify a time during the week (even after school) to host your Grandparent Gardening Week activity.

Find out what crops everyone would like to see grown, think about where you might plant them or how your cook could use them in their recipes, linking the crops with the kitchen and classroom learning. Share ideas and plans across your school or nursery to involve everyone in the fun!

As spring returns Grandparent Gardening Week is the perfect time to kick start your school or nursery garden, and to engage grandparents, careers and the wider community (including local allotment holders) to provide support, advice and guidance on gardening.

Other gardening opportunities could include:

- School gardens are not one-person projects. To truly thrive, the gardens need support from volunteers. It's especially exciting to have parents volunteer because it gives the garden staying power—it will live on even after the school has graduated. It's a win-win: the garden gets extra hands and parents get to go home with fresh produce to eat at home!
- The school could start gardening and cooking clubs, develop links with a local organic farm and set up an annual 'village show' where pupils can display what they have been growing.
- Stall on Friday afternoons where vegetable plants grown in the school garden are sold to children and their families to grow on at home. School canteen cooks or pupils themselves can prepare homemade soup using vegetables and herbs from the school garden or bake bread and cake and offer them to parents and local community.
- Funds raised are ploughed back into the gardening club.
- Throughout the year, members of the local allotment society visit the school, help in the garden and give advice.

## Unit 3 – Integrating immigrant parents into kindergarten community

### In this unit I will learn how to:

1. see immigrants as a part of Europe, because Europe has always had a mixed identity
2. what are the specifics of immigrant families
3. integrate immigrant parents and children into kindergarten community

### Introduction into the topic

Leaving home country in order to find a better life is usually the ultimate solution for people. Smart destination countries and countries with long immigrant history know, that they should integrate migrants into everyday's life as soon as possible and profit from their skills and knowledge. But because of different cultural background and ways of life, this process has some specifics.

## Chapter 1 – Where migrants come from and the countries of their stay

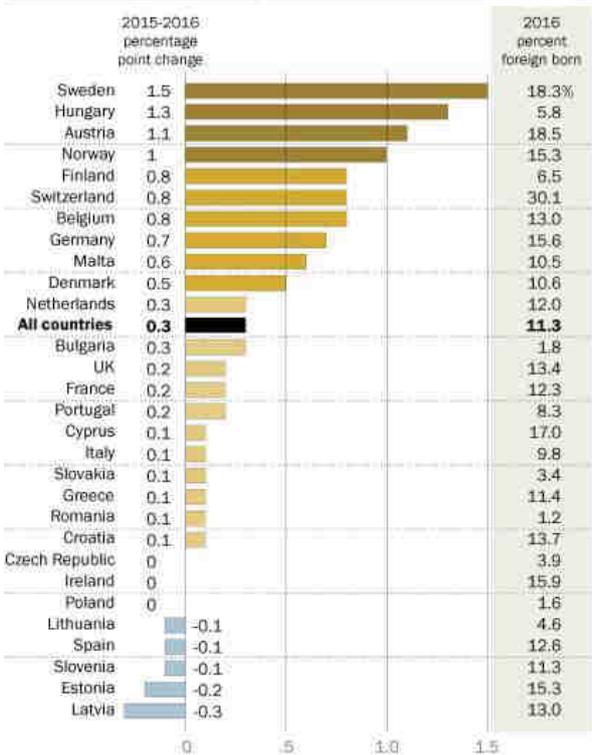
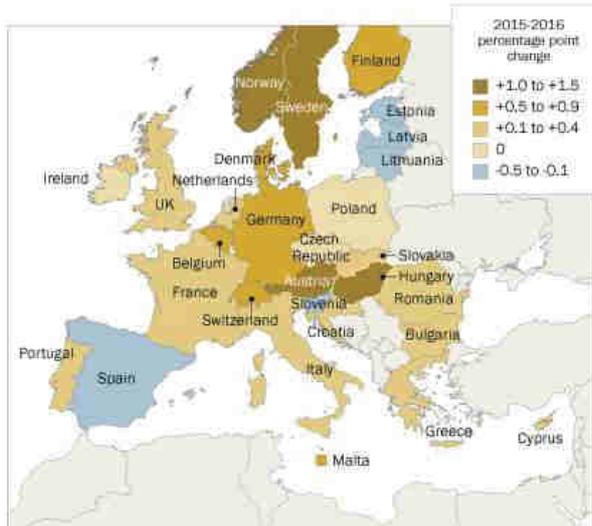
### Europe has mixed identity

Europe is already intercultural and it will remain so, but the fear and hate need to be kept out of the public discourse. However, until now, Europe did not manage to offer a sense of common identity beyond the common values and an idea of Europe, which maintains its "mixed identity" (Europe's Journal on Psychology, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4894286/>)

Immigrant share of population in European countries:

## Migrant surge drives big increases in immigrant share for several European countries

Percentage point change in share of population that is foreign born, 2015 to 2016



Notes: Percentage point change is based on differences between 2015 and 2016 percent immigrant in each country. Numerator for immigrant percentages in 2016 is based on total international migrant population estimated by the UN in 2015 plus number of asylum applications from July 2015 through May 2016 (number of asylum seekers for April through May 2016 unavailable for many countries). Annual increase/decrease of non-asylum seeker migrants – based on change in total number of international migrants from 2010-15 – was also added to the numerator. Denominator is based on the UN 2016 population estimate without migration plus newly arrived migrants estimated in the numerator. Estimates are midyear. Shading reflects rounded numbers; rankings for the bar chart are based on unrounded numbers.

Source: Pew Research Center estimates based on analysis of United Nations data and Eurostat data accessed June 13, 2016.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

In 2016, more than 1 million people applied for asylum in Europe. The immigrants share of the population increased most during this time in Sweden, Hungary, Austria and Norway, with at least 1 percentage point. While that rise might seem small, even a 1-point increase in a single year is rare, especially in Western countries. Recent migrants added to already substantial foreign-born populations living in Sweden, Norway and Austria – all nations in which the foreign born make up 15% or more of the population in 2016. Sweden had the greatest increase, rising from about 16.8% in 2015 to 18.3% in 2016, a 1.5-percentage-point increase. The foreign-born shares in Norway (15.3% in 2016) and Austria (18.5% in 2016) increased by about 1 point over the same period. The United Kingdom and France – countries with significant immigrant populations – received far fewer asylum applicants relative to their population size in 2015-16 than other countries, and each saw a relatively modest 0.2-percentage-point increase in their foreign-born shares (to 13.4% in the UK and 12.3% in France for 2016).

## Countries which received the most asylum seekers

Germany received the most asylum seekers of any European country. But because of its large population, its foreign-born share rose by an estimated 0.7 percentage points to 15.6% in 2016, a substantial but significantly smaller increase than in other European countries. On the other end of the spectrum, nations including Lithuania, Spain, Slovenia, Estonia and Latvia saw their immigrant shares decrease during this time. This is in part because these countries did not receive a high number of asylum seekers during the past year.

(PewResearchCenter, 2017)

<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/06/15/immigrant-share-of-population-jumps-in-some-european-countries/>

### Where the migrants come from

The conflict in Syria continues to be by far the biggest driver of migration. But the ongoing violence in Afghanistan and Iraq, abuses in Eritrea, as well as poverty in Kosovo, are also leading people to look for new lives elsewhere.

## Chapter 2 – Starting life in a new country

### Starting life in a new country

Leaving home country is never easy. People leave there not only their property, but also their social network, job, reputation, they must start a new life, where no one knows them. Future in a new country is uncertain, often with a new lifestyle and habits they don't know. Starting a kindergarten or a school in a new country could be stressful for a child and his parents, but on the other side, this is a good opportunity to bond with other families and kindergarten/school community.

Educators and other professionals should recognize parents' needs for the following:

- **Acceptance of them as people**, rather than as a category.
- **Help in seeing the positive aspects** of the future.

[www.teachervision.com](http://www.teachervision.com)

In kindergarten immigrant families may require extra assistance due to their specifics Immigrant families may require extra assistance enrolling in the program due to language and literacy challenges, transportation, work-schedule logistical challenges, and difficulty meeting application documentation requirements. (Julia Gelatt, Gina Adams, and Sandra Huerta Supporting Immigrant Families' Access to Prekindergarten)

Problem with transportation and long working hours Immigrant parents particularly are likely to work nonstandard hours, work long hours, and have inflexible work schedules that do not allow adjustment to children's kindergarten schedules (Bernhardt et al. 2009; Enchautegui 2013). Further, immigrant parents may be less likely to drive compared with other parents (Chatman and Klein 2013). As a result, logistical obstacles facing most low-income parents, such as a prekindergarten program's hours or location and the availability of safe, reliable transportation for children, may affect immigrant families particularly strongly. Addressing these barriers can assist the enrollment of low-income families overall and immigrant families in particular. (Julia Gelatt, Gina Adams, and Sandra Huerta Supporting Immigrant

Families' Access to Prekindergarten)

## Chapter 3 – How parents can integrate into kindergarten community

### Role of parents on children success

Parent engagement is now seen as an important component of program success in early learning. Parent and family engagement is building relationship with families that support family well-being, strong relationships between parents and their children and ongoing learning and development for both parents and children.

Parents from culturally diverse backgrounds should be encouraged to join parent organizations and share their cultural points of view.

USA has a long history of immigrants and their integration into society. One major finding of MPI's research has been that foundational skills provided by basic literacy, adult ESL (English as second language) programs and cultural and system's knowledge training are crucial supports for immigrant parents seeking o access parent engagement programs on an equal footing with their peers. Language is almost insurmountable barrier to many immigrant and refugee parents.

For children success in early years in US programs addressing parent's skills and involvement are important. Parents are child first and most important teachers. Socioeconomic differences lead to varying child experiences that can cause large gap in cognitive and language development at a very early stage. Longitudinal data demonstrated an achievement gap between many immigrant groups and their native peers that begins even prior to kindergarten enrolment. (Immigrant parents and early childhood programs, pg.12-14)

### Role of community-based organizations

They serve immigrants as a way of reaching immigrant families through a trusted mediator. With their strong community ties, they inform immigrant families about available services and public benefits, and can easily add information about prekindergarten to their message.

## Chapter 4 - Strategies to build ties with immigrant parents

### Educators need new skills to work with refugee and migrant children.

In different countries, teachers can be trained to work with immigrant children and their parents.

There are many ways how to bond with immigrant parents. Countries around the world have similar approaches but there can be differences from country to country. Here are some ideas:

1. All parents and children who interact with prekindergarten staff must be treated in a friendly manner and with respect. Staff should learn at least to say hello in their language.
2. A trained interpreter who shares the cultural background of the parents, helps building strong communication between parents and programs.
3. If possible: all staff should clearly communicate with immigrants: from bus drivers to administrators to teachers, that the program intends to be inclusive of all children in the community, whatever their backgrounds.
4. Cultural sensitivity training for teachers and staff are very useful.
5. Inviting parents into their kindergartens/schools for a variety of activities.
6. Parents sometimes may not be familiar with how kindergartens operate and what they expect from parents.
7. "Cultural nights," where parents can share food from their home country.
8. Monthly breakfast, where parents can stay at school after dropping off their kids, enjoy some food, and hear from a local celebrity, such as someone from the local news station.
9. Educational and informational sessions, covering topics such as children's health and discipline, children's early brain development, and the importance of early education; such programs could be focused on topics of

particular interest to immigrant parents.

10. Programs reported working toward more culturally competent programs through two main strategies: hiring from within diverse communities and training existing staff. Hiring bicultural assistant teachers is also possible. Bringing parent volunteers into the classroom can support cultural competency.

(Julia Gelatt, Gina Adams, and Sandra Huerta, Supporting Immigrant Families' Access to Prekindergarten; and other authors)



## **Chapter 5 - Examples of good practice**

Good practice is to be found in the communities with comfortable and welcoming environment for new coming families. Programs which are successfully with diverse partners and families have an explicit parent engagement and outreach strategy that all staff understand and support.

## Speak language of immigrant's parents

At the beginning of programs is very important to speak in parent's language - otherwise they are just wasting their time and don't understand anything. Parent support in their own language is very important - they will enroll their child where this support is.

You can, for example ask someone from the community who can speak your language to be translator. (Immigrant parents and early childhood programs, pg. 22)

## Workshops for developing multicultural skills

In Slovenia, these workshops are organized for parents, children and educators. The aim is to encourage them for better and respectful relationships and understanding each other. In workshops, they try to point out language and cultural similarities and differences. Activities can be organized only for children or for children and parents. If parents are involved, workshops must be organized at afternoon and they have to be invited in time with an written invitation. At workshops, different opportunities for parents and children in local environment are presented: public organizations, NGO, which offer different supportive networks. (Priročnik za izvajanje programa Uspešno vključevanje otrok priseljencev; ISA institut Ljubljana, 2015)



### Examples of workshops for parents and children

- **Fortifying the families:** workshops where families represent their country: presentation of culture, country, food, celebrations. They can have activities as: making Christmas cards, preparing food together...
- **School for Mums,** where mums from different country and school teachers meet at afternoon once per month. They talk about their countries, eat typical food, prepare food or tea together. Point of meetings is to bond, help immigrant mums to integrate into a society and explain them how country works.
- **Foreign language for parents, which goes together with presentation of school/kindergarten,** city where they live, important buildings they will use in everyday life. They get to know words and expressions they will use in school/kindergartens: rooms in kindergartens, timetable, web sites of school/kindergarten, menu, written apology of non-attendance (they write one example). (Priročnik za izvajanje programa Uspešno vključevanje otrok priseljencev; ISA institut Ljubljana, 2015)
- **Program for immigrant wives: getting to know the local environment.** Program is designed especially for wives of immigrants, because they usually stay at home, so their chances to integrate into a new society are very low. Women in program and their mentor visit important buildings in local environment, which they will use in their everyday life and organizations who offer help to immigrants: library, centre of social work, employment service, market ... and also cultural and natural sights, so that they can get the impression about their new environment

and new cultural habits. Participants will meet local people, speak language of new country and practice communication skills in positive atmosphere. Beside getting to know local environment, women will also get in touch with each other, what couldn't be possible if they would stay at home. Another useful part of the program is visit to possible interested employees. Mentor chooses the most appropriate employer regarding interests of the group. Both, women and employees have to be prepared for the visit and cooperate actively. (Barbara Fajdiga Perše, Tanja Krpan, I AM AN ACTIVE MEMBER OF A MULTINATIONAL SOCIETY Programme for social integration of women – third country nationals: Methodology and guidelines for train the trainer course, Ljudska univerza Nova Gorica, 2016)

**Other learning tools:**

- Migrant Education and Community Inclusion, Examples of Good Practice; Sirius Network Policy Brief Series, 2015
- <http://solskilonec.si/>
- <http://prehrana.si/moja-prehrana/predsolski-otroci>
- <http://www.ellynsatterinstitute.org/index.php>
- [Erin K. Eliassen, The Impact of Teachers and Families on Young Children's Eating Behaviors](#)

**Tips: how to implement the topic to everyday life:**

Strategies to build ties with immigrant parents - please see above

**Tips for more information outside of the course:**

- Priročnik za izvajanje programa Uspešno vključevanje otrok priseljencev; ISA institut Ljubljana, 2015
- Smernice za vključevanje otrok priseljencev v vrte in šole; zavod Republike Slovenije za šolstvo, Ljubljana, 2012
- Inkluzija otrok priseljencev v izobraževanje, eknjiga, Ravne na Koroškem, 2016

## Key Actions

1. **Parental involment is important - make sure you overcome any barriers and start communicating**
2. **Welcome diversity and try to make most of it through food**
3. **Involve parents and community members in the school life around good food**
4. **Try to integrate immigrant familes in the daily life of the school**