



CYPRUS

NATIONAL POLICY BRIEF

The objective of this policy brief is to present the current situation and progress made in family support on behalf of the children's rights in Cyprus towards achieving quality standards using the quality assurance protocol for family support services developed by the 19 countries participating in the COST Innovators Grant IG18123, QA[4]EuroFam. The aim is to provide key messages on current strengths as well as recommendations to key audiences, bringing relevant views and appraisals from the group of interdisciplinary experts, representatives of various sectors in the field at national level.

National Working Group

Consensual responses were provided by members of Cypriot National Working Group comprising 15 researchers and coordinators of services and social entities at national, regional, and local levels in social, education, health, and community sectors.

1. Contextualization and characterization of family support in Cyprus



Q Definition and understanding of family support: Family support in the Republic of Cyprus encompasses a wide range of services, both formal and informal, as well as supportive relationships and resources. Statutory and voluntary agencies address the complex needs of families and promote their well-being and functioning within their own homes and communities. These services primarily focus on supporting vulnerable children in disadvantaged areas and may include initiatives such as children care, protection, and welfare, by safeguarding their care and safety in their family environment, protecting children against neglect, abuse, abandonment by parents or guardians, or poor parenting. Other family support initiatives are related to preschool education, parental education, development and support activities, homemaker schemes, visiting programs, and youth education and training projects.

Q Family support services in context: Family support services in the Republic of Cyprus have both formal and informal provisions in both public and private sectors. The social welfare services provide accessible, affordable, friendly and targeted social services, a holistic support of individuals and the family in a human-centered, multidisciplinary and efficient manner, safeguarding social cohesion and social solidarity, social protection, social protection, attaining social inclusion, promoting equal opportunities for all citizens in the Republic of Cyprus, combating poverty and social exclusion, promoting the interests of individuals, families, and communities. More collaboration among pro-profit, non-profit, and public entities is needed in all areas: healthcare, education, and social services.

Q Political perspective on family support: Family support is a political priority in the Republic of Cyprus as families are the foundation of every society and therefore need the best possible conditions to achieve positive social results for education, security, social cohesion, development, protecting, caring, recovering and continuing the existence of society. In Cyprus, family support and social welfare services implement EU policies for the well-being of the family as it is a priority pillar in the European agenda for the next five years. EU provides the tools and resources for child- and family-centered policies and funding for national family support programs and initiatives.

2. Key messages from the National Strengths and Recommendations Report



Families and Children

STRENGTHS

1. The planning and delivery of family support services are based on the objectives of partnership between families, and service providers.
2. The family support services are designed to recognize and strengthen the family's capacities/competences in the social sector, in the health sector, and in the justice sector.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The prioritized areas for improvement are the education and the social sectors regarding a collaborative relationship with the families, involving them as active participants in all phases of the family support service.
2. The prioritized area for improvement is Education in order to enhance the objectives of the services from the standpoint of a strengths-based approach, and oriented to achieve family autonomy.



Professionals

STRENGTHS

1. The family support services address families' needs in a responsive and timely manner across most sectors.
2. Opportunities for families to be supported through all levels and types of need, with a focus on early intervention and informal community-based resources and supports. This can be achieved via a combination of measures, joint work and collaboration of various actors related to family support in public and private sectors.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Prioritized areas for improvement and evaluation of the family's needs and characteristics aim to determine which is the best response to their needs in the social, education, health, and justice sectors in a coordinated manner. There are training needs at the administration, the service, and the professionals' levels regarding the continuous and consistent evaluation of the families' needs and characteristics in all sectors. Family support services should build on families' capacities and adopt a bottom-up approach and take into account children's rights and agency.
2. There are training needs at the administration, service, and professionals' levels regarding the continuous and consistent work with respect to family support services based on the continuum of services provided from support, protection, and alternative care, which emphasize preventative approaches and informal supports.



Policymakers

STRENGTHS

1. More work is required as well as collaboration between policymakers, researchers, and practitioners regarding family support services. Collaboration between policymakers, researchers, and practitioners to promote and ensure the quality of family support should be promoted both in private and public domains.
2. More work is required to promote quality assessment and shared continuous improvement plans to the service to promote quality assurance. Collaboration and joint efforts are needed for all agents and stakeholders in all sectors as well as adequate funding for family support services.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. There are training and staffing needs at the administration, service, and professionals' levels regarding the continuous and consistent work with respect to the development of stable collaboration between policymakers, researchers, and practitioners
2. There are training needs at administration, service, and professionals' levels regarding continuous and consistent work concerning quality assessment and shared continuous improvement plans to the service to promote the quality assurance.



Academics

STRENGTHS

1. More work is required to ensure exchange and dissemination among different audiences of relevant information on best practices for quality family support. Active role and engagement of family support service actors are needed to organize meetings with various audiences to exchange and disseminate best practices on quality family support through presential or social media communication.
2. More work is required to ensure recognition of teams and services endorsing best practices guidelines. There should be more acknowledgment of the efforts made by professional teams or services to adopt best practices guidelines to improve the quality of family support, both in the private and public sectors.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. There are training needs at the administration, service, and professionals' levels regarding the continuous and consistent work with respect exchange and dissemination among different audiences of relevant information on best practices for quality family support.
2. There are training needs at administration, service, and professionals' levels regarding the continuous and consistent work with respect to recognition of teams and services endorsing best practices guidelines.

3. Insights and lessons learned regarding the quality of family support



1 While there is an existing collaboration between public and private entities, public authorities, and regional administrations, there is still room for improvement. Although the needs of children are taken into consideration, the right of children to participate in decision-making processes that affect them is not sufficiently addressed across all aspects.

2 International ethical principles are safeguarded by the legislative framework in Cyprus, which is secured by public authorities, relevant ministries, and policy experts in collaboration with family support service providers. Nevertheless, further efforts are necessary to reinforce these measures.

3 The National Working Group in Cyprus has reached a consensus that formal family support is accessible to all family members, and there is a commitment to providing a comprehensive range of formal supports. This recognition emphasizes the need to address the diverse needs of families in all their forms.

4 The National Working Group in Cyprus has reached a consensus that a comprehensive approach to family support acknowledges the diversity of families, ensuring that all families are provided with support that is respectful of their cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

5 The provision of family support services should be guided by the principles of partnership between families and service providers. Education and social sectors are key areas for improvement, specifically in fostering collaborative relationships with families and involving them as active participants in all stages of the family support process.

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This document is based upon work from COST Innovators Grant IG18123 A quality assurance protocol for family support services in Europe. An evidence-based and culturally informed model for professional practice, supported by COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology).

COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology) is a funding agency for research and innovation networks. COST Actions help connect research initiatives across Europe and enable scientists to grow their ideas by sharing them with their peers. This boosts their research, career and innovation. www.cost.eu

Any citation of this document should use the following reference:

Karpava, S., Peteinou, K., Symeou, L., Rentzou, K., Pampoulou, E., Taxitari, L., Loizidou Ieridou, N., Koushiou, M., Kakoulli Constantinou, E., Hadjiconstantinou, S., Angelidou, M., Themistokleous, P., Kaourani, E., Spania, M., & Kontolemi, E. (2024). *Cypriot National Policy Brief*. EurofamNet.



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ISBN 978-84-09-65738-4