

Webinar on “Bridging quality standards for evaluation with professional practice”



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EuroFamNet is a pan-European family support network currently funded as a COST Action by the COST Association aimed to inform family policies and practices towards the ultimate goal of ensuring children’s rights and families’ well-being. EurofamNet is doing so by building collaborations between researchers, practitioners, policy-makers, children and families, public and private agencies, and general society.

There is a consensus on the notion of evidence-based practice (EBP) as the integration of the best research evidence with consensual professional expertise and contributions of children, adolescents and families regarding their values, goals and preferences within a collaborative framework. However, diversity is the rule in Europe when it comes to the way EBP is adopted in each country. We showcased in four COST Action countries: Croatia, Spain, Serbia, and Italy, with the voice of national and regional policy makers and NGO coordinator, the efforts made to introduce EBP into policies, services and professional work with children and families. The voice of families was also heard through the NGO “Make Mothers Matter” on the relevance of the adoption of EBP for the child, family, and society wellbeing.

This document is collected within the work of EurofamNet **WG3 “Quality Standards and evidence-based programmes”**. For further information visit: <https://eurofamnet.eu/working-groups/wg3>

Key messages

- ▶ **Sasha Stefanovic (The Network of Organisations for Children of Serbia – MODS, Serbia)**. Need to reduce the number of children separated from home and develop family support services at the local level. The challenge is creating innovative services and finding ways to get evidence that they work. A Design Thinking strategy is followed with the relevant actors that consisted of enable empathy, define the problem, promote ideas, write a prototype and test it.
- ▶ **Stefania Boscato (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Department for European family policies, Italy)**. Guidelines for foster care, residential care and vulnerable families to facilitate the best practices. An intensive care Programme of Intervention for Prevention of Institutionalization for families in situation of vulnerability was implemented and evaluated as part of the National Social Policy Plan by the Ministry of Social Welfare and the University of Padova using a transformative participatory and interdisciplinary evaluation approach.
- ▶ **Johanna Schima (“Make Mothers Matter”, Belgium)**. Families want to receive effective support. Family support is relevant to poverty and other situations diverse families face; in response to families’ vulnerability, as well as a prevention of families becoming vulnerable. Important to recognize families in need behind a child in need; and investment in families’ wellbeing as profitable, also in times of austerity. States should ensure that services offered to families are high quality and evidence-based, respectful, safe and accessible to those who need them. Unethical, unmonitored and unsuitable services encountered in practice weaken already fragile families and lead to non-take-up of rights to social services families are entitled to.

Key messages

The panelists shared valuable experiences on the steps taken, discussed the challenges and provided recommendations to be successful in introducing EBP and the culture of evaluation in services, agencies and NGOs.

- ▶ **Milena Koren (Head of Department for Preparation of Tenders in the Field of Social Inclusion and FEAD, Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy; Croatia).** Need for a more developed family support services and effectiveness evaluation of professional work with children and families. New policies and strategic plans for development of social services put parenting support and family support in focus and allocate resources to strengthening preventive work with vulnerable families, to social innovation, and implementing the quality standards, that promote the use of best practices guidelines. Current programming of EU funds for deinstitutionalization aims to stimulate endorsement of EBP.
- ▶ **Javier de Frutos (Subdepartment of Social Rights. Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces, Spain).** Since 2009 “Families in Positive” initiative based on: a) collaboration between the Federation of Municipalities and Provinces, the Spanish Ministry of Social Rights and Agenda 2030 and the group of seven Spanish Universities for dissemination and training; b) Guides of Best Practices and Inter-professional Competences in collaboration with professionals; c) webpage familiasenpositivo.org and online evaluation of intersectoral services and official recognition of EBP.

Implications

Policy implications

- ▶ Focus on a *preventive and protective strength-based approach* to promote child and family competences, addressing family diversity and avoiding the stigmatization of at-risk populations.
- ▶ Build of a trilateral *collaborative* framework between politicians, researchers and practitioners to facilitate informed decisions and the transfer of research to practice and vice versa.
- ▶ Stakeholders *advocate for quality services* that meet the needs of all families in their diversity for informed family support policy with high investment value.
- ▶ High value of the EurofamNet COST Action to help identify ways to promote the adoption of EBP across countries, to improve the quality of the services and to orient the European child guaranty policy approach.

Practical implications

- ▶ Develop *family preservation programmes* at the local level to avoid unnecessary child displacement from home based on a culture of evaluation.
- ▶ Implementation of *evidence-based programs* at the national level delivered by services and NGOs with professionals and the support of experts from the universities to help facilitate the adoption of EBP.
- ▶ Facilitation of *training to professionals* for delivering the programs with fidelity with the support of experts from the universities.
- ▶ Value the *motivation and efforts made by the families* with an official recognition to their participation in the programmes.

Implications

Challenges

- ▶ *Coordination of multiple sectors* (social, education, health, justice, culture) *and levels* (national, regional and municipal) *involved in prevention and protection of child and families.*
- ▶ Identifying and training the *interprofessional competences* involved in EBP to increase the capability of the workforce that shares the commitment to improve the quality of the services.
- ▶ *Provide accessible care and quality services* for all families, when necessary, especially for the most vulnerable.
- ▶ Ensure the *sustainability of the programmes* in the portfolio of the services as part of the preventive network enabling intersectoral collaboration with other services.



Additional Resources

<https://eurofamnet.eu/activities/workshops>

https://eurofamnet.eu/system/files/eurofamnet_workshop_bridging_quality_standards_for_evaluation_with_professional_practice_presentation.pdf



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