

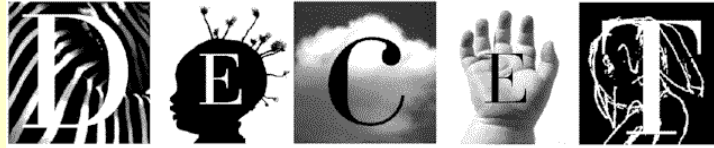


# Diversity & Equity

## Making sense of good practice

- An action research project -

Presentation:  
Anastasia Houndoumadi



Diversity in Early Childhood Education and Training

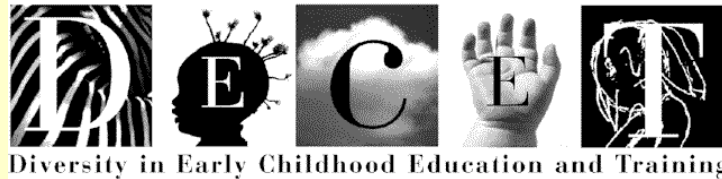
**All children and adults  
have the right  
to evolve and to develop  
in a context where there is  
equity and respect for diversity**

- DECET network is promoting early childhood provisions where **everyone**, children and adults:



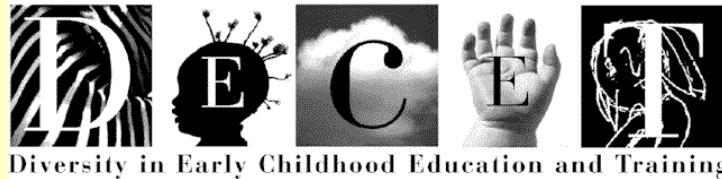
## Everyone ...

- feels that he/she belongs.
- is empowered to develop the diverse aspects of his/her identity.
- can learn from each other across cultural and other boundaries.



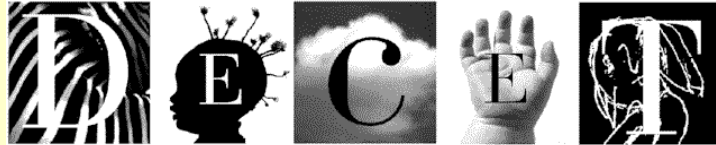
## Everyone ...

- can participate as active citizens.
- actively addresses bias through open communication and willingness to grow.
- works together to challenge institutional forms of prejudice and discrimination.



## Research questions

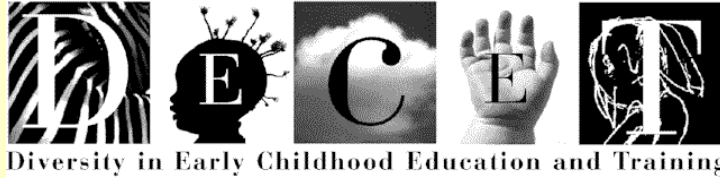
- How do partners in the DECET Network understand these goals as principles for action?
- What do these principles mean for the diverse stakeholders: children, parents, staff, managers, policy makers.....?



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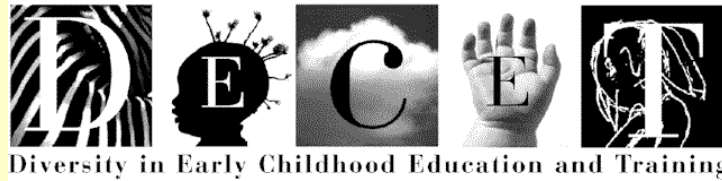
## Working process

- Conducted a literature review
- Attempted to define “good practice” in terms of equity and respect for diversity
- Consulted with experts
- Collected vignettes from our participating countries
- Co-constructed quality criteria concretising the principles
- Conducted participatory research



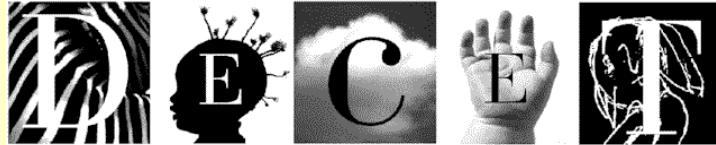
## Participatory Research

- Developed criteria to define the principles
- Held discussion groups with diverse groups of stakeholders in six partner countries
- Reformulated the criteria
- Collected testimonies and examples
- Produced a document for further work



## Research crossing borders

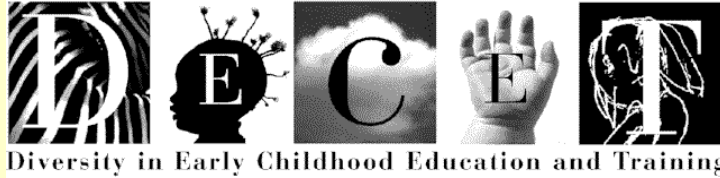
- **Belgium:** trainers and heads of centres with deeper knowledge of DECET principles
- **France:** different groups of students, trainers and practitioners with deeper knowledge of DECET principles
- **Germany:** heads of centres of a service provider that expressively is striving for „respect for diversity“



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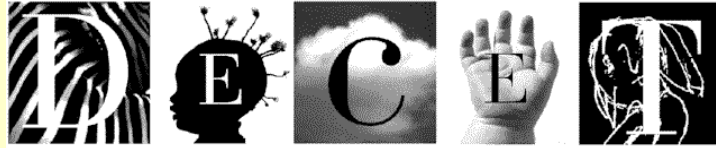
## Research crossing borders - cont.....

- **Greece:** educators and animators in an intercultural centre for creative activities; culturally diverse group of parents
- **Scotland:** heads of centres, in mono-ethnic and multiethnic communities, who have little knowledge of DECET principles, to implement a staff training programme
- **England:** multiethnic/ mainly white British/ newly arrivals; parents/ ENCOs/ children



# Research in England: Methodology

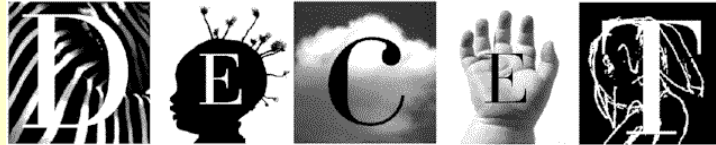
- Persona dolls.
  - Stories created using 6 principles
- Video footage as stimulus.
  - Small group – in pairs
- Sessions video recorded.
- Role-play.
- Observation.



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## Key findings

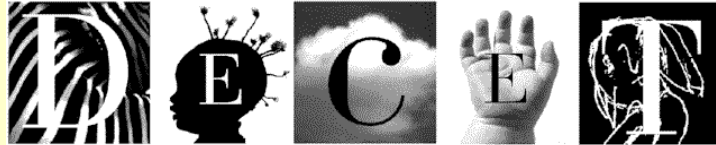
- Sense of belonging.
  - Adults body language (smiling)
  - Correct pronunciation of name
  - Photographic images reflecting diverse identities and family members
  - The use of heritage language, staff and other children
  - Multi/dual lingual story books
  - Music from home played when children arrive



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## An inspiring document

- addressing diverse target groups
- deepening understanding
- challenging policies and practices
- inspiring co-construction
- mainstreaming in all DECET languages



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## Translation

- Languages:

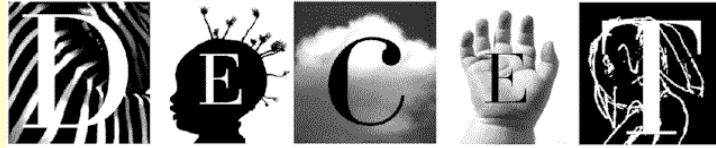
Dutch

French

Greek

German

Spanish: Castilian and Catalan



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## Testimonies

- “I am very happy that Anette (the professional) knows that I have two names: a Turkish name from my father and a German name from my mother.”  
*Aline Öztürk, four years old*
- “We had no racism in our school, until Matthew started our school.”  
(Matthew is a black child.)  
*Tom, headteacher*

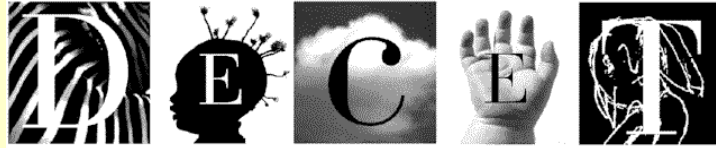


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## Pictures



Diversity & Equity - Making Sense of Good Practice



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## Availability

- <http://decet.org/news/index.html>

### PDF files:

- English Version: *Making Sense of good Practice*
- German Version: *Orientierungen für die pädagogische Praxis*
- Dutch Version: *Zin verlenen aan praktijk*
- Greek Version: Τι σημαίνει «καλή πρακτική» στην προσχολική αγωγή;
- Spanish Version: *Dar sentido a las buenas prácticas*
- French Version: *Donner du sens aux pratiques de qualité*



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# Making Sense of good Practice



# Foreword

Recently the OECD issued the second comprehensive and influential "Starting Strong" report. It makes a strong case, backed up by international research, that early childhood matters. But also that not every early childhood matters in a similar way in order to enable all children to benefit from early childhood care and education, service provision must offer high, rather than average quality. And that obviously is a matter for continuous debate: what constitutes high quality?

Recent international research contributed to the understanding that quality is not an objective truth that lies out there, waiting to be discovered by experts; it is constructed and reconstructed over and over again. Developmental psychology, for instance, has helped us to understand children's needs, but it has historically also been a science about the average child that of course, does not exist. Today it is clear that what quality is also depends on who the families are we wish to serve. What excellence is in an inner city of the UK differs significantly from what excellence is in a Greek culture. Consequently framing universal quality criteria has very often contributed to privileging the already privileged groups in our western societies.

This understanding of quality as contextualized and value laden has often been misunderstood as a "postmodern" perspective, wishing to deconstruct all standards. In turn, this may lead to an attitude of "anything goes" that may convey the message that early years management or policymakers can withdraw from their responsibilities. The United Nations' International Convention on the Rights of the Child does not allow us to cherish such a "laissez faire" attitude. It is after all our common responsibility to set the highest standards possible for today's and tomorrow's children. But to do so in a way that involves all stakeholders and that includes practitioners, parents and children.

That is exactly what the **DECET** network has been attempting to develop over the last three years. They started from three basic and very simple questions: What kind of early years service provision is appropriate to give each child a sound and positive image of belonging, the self-confidence to build on in later years? What early years service provision fosters the building of communities, where different people can communicate with each other? And what kind of service provision contributes to social justice in societies that are marked by growing diversity, by fragmentation and led individualisation. These questions are at the heart of many concerns shared by educators and policy makers alike concerning citizenship, social cohesion and social inclusion.

The uniqueness of what the **DECET** network presents in this document is threefold: It is not only based on the expertise within the network, but also takes into account local contributors of educators, parents and children; it acknowledges that quality is value laden and clarifies its values explicitly in the introduction and throughout the publication and it presents clear standards to build upon, but in an open-ended, non-prescriptive manner. By doing so, they offer us a document which stimulates us to think and act and consequently it is a document for change.

**Dr. Michel Vaananne**  
Department of Social Welfare Studies, Chuo University



## Some personal questions

Before you start making the progress with these criteria, we would like you to reflect on some personal questions:

What gives you a sense of belonging?

How far are your opinions/ aspects of your identity well accepted or recognized in your environment? How did this make you feel?

Do you think it's important to have a better idea of variation of flowers from yourself? How are you aware from others?

What can help you to act in an active situation?

Do you believe that open communication can break down barriers, and how are you aware of this?

Have you ever challenged bias, prejudice or discrimination directly? Can you describe the feelings that overwhelmed you?

Can you see traditional forms of prejudiced discrimination in your daily life and work? How are you able to challenge this?

What's your sense of equity and respect for diversity in B2C practices?

# Everyone feels that she/he belongs



- The staff actively shows to all users of the early childhood education and care provision and the local community that everyone is welcome and that they are invited to be part of the provision.
- The provision guarantees equality of access to all members of the community throughout all its services.
- The needs of everyone are recognised and given individual attention.
- The setting and the pedagogical process reflect diverse characteristics of all families.
- The policy, practice and organisational structures of the centre are transparent.
- Professionals regularly reflect their own experiences, feelings and attitudes.



"I myself need a very long time to feel that I belong. What I need is being accepted and a feeling of trust."

*Maria, centre manager*

"It is a very pity that no member of the staff can speak my language. But at least some important information has been translated. I am able to manage my everyday life in this country. But I cannot exchange on my area for the education of my children."

*Serap, mother of three children*

"It is very helpful that I can bring my daughter around eleven in the morning after breakfast and a nice time of playing with her. Then I go to sleep after my night shift."

*David, taxi driver*

"You are only a guest here. Behave according to the rules!"

*Alexandra, director*

"When my son was born with Down Syndrome I was very concerned about if it would be possible to find appropriate children. The centre invited me to have a close look and I got answers to all my questions. I got an information sheet that told me everything about their philosophy. I really felt invited, so I can imagine that my son will be well here, too!"

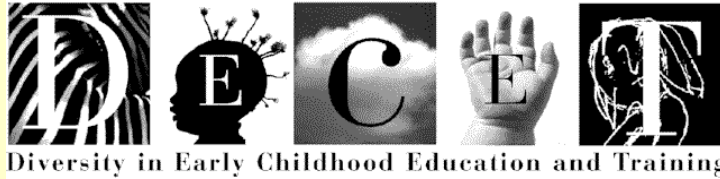
*Nayana, mother of two children*

"In the lobby of the centre all staff members present themselves with a photo and some personal information: what is important for them in their work, a photo of them as a child, their hobbies, their own children, the languages they are capable to speak ... They impressed me very much."

*Alex, father*

"The little baby-boy was crying and could not sleep. We asked his mother what we could do to help him. She always sings a lullaby for him. This gave us the idea to record her singing, so now when the boy is tired or upset we play the song for him."

*Tekime, early childhood educator*



## Partners

- Belgium, VBJK: Veerle Vervaeet
- England, CREC: Dalvir Gill
- France, ESSSE: Françoise Moussy
- Greece, Schedia: Anastasia Houndoumadi
- Scotland, CAF: Peter Lee
- Germany, INA/ISTA: Regine Schallenberg-Diekman