



European Campaign on Early Childhood Development

Letter of expression of interest

« Ensemble pour l'Éducation de la Petite Enfance » (France)

1. Information about the French national context for ECD policies

The French national context has changed significantly in the past recent 24 months, as it does provide more significant visibility to the very early years, most specifically related to Early Childhood Development, Care and Education. This overall context lying on a recent change of paradigm does envision to achieve equal opportunities from the very early years of age for children.

Below are a few significant milestones to set the scene in which the overall implementation of an advocacy campaign on Early Childhood Development in France would be relevant for improving the wellbeing of the most vulnerable young children in our country:

- *In January 2018*: Set up of a « Délégation Interministérielle de la Lutte contre la Pauvreté des Enfants et des Jeunes », in which our Association General Delegate, Nathalie Casso-Vicarini, has contributed throughout the [co-lead](#) of a specific working group on « Early Childhood »
- *In March 2018*: Set up of « Les [Assises de la Maternelle](#) » as a national collective call to demonstrate that preschools (“écoles maternelles” from 3 to 6 years old) should be the place for equal opportunities and fulfilment for all young children, taking into consideration all professionals involved such as teachers and ATSEM (Agents Territoriaux Spécialisés des Ecoles Maternelles). Most specifically, the focus had been on language development.
- *In 2019*: 2 Secretaries of State have been set up to address childhood – one specific to poverty and the other one to childhood protection. Both are working under the responsibility of the same Ministry of Health and Solidarities, and working along with the Ministry of Education.
- *In July 2019*: France has become the [56th State worldwide](#) to adopt law to prohibit ordinary educational violence (“violences éducatives ordinaires”)
- *In June 2019*: A “[Plan Ambition 600.000](#)” has been set up to reinforce and promote professional development for all Early Childhood Professionals (within collective daycare centers, individual childminders, etc) by 2022. Again, our Association General Delegate, Nathalie Casso-Vicarini, currently contributes by co-leading this plan implementation.
- *In Sept 2019*: The [French government](#) has launched the “[Comité des 1000 jours](#)”, as a group of 17 experts which role is to provide concrete recommendations addressing parenting and early interventions, in order to draw attention to the shared responsibility hold for the environments (home, daycare centers etc) in which young children live, learn, play and develop. Again, our Association General Delegate, Nathalie Casso-Vicarini, as part of the recognition of our work on the field, currently contributes to this committee.
- *In November 2019*: Secretary of State, Adrien Taquet, has reaffirmed the at the Mid-term strategy plan at the [Council of Europe](#) in Strasbourg. At [UNESCO](#), for the 30th anniversary of the ICRC, French President Emmanuel Macron, has confirmed his willingness to act upon young children protection and development as a priority of his government.

This is about **the right momentum in France to infuse a European campaign and bring further awareness to more social investments in favor of the very young children.**

Data are fairly difficult to address in France given that there were few data collections which provide a clear, substantive and holistic overview of the state of play on early childhood across all sectors from pre-natal, maternal health, parenting support, home visiting and center-based early childhood education and care.



That said, below are a few figures which generally outline overall context for your children in France:

- 3 million of children living in poverty (circa 9%)
- 5% of poor children are going into daycare centers vs. 22% of rich children
- 1.8 million of single-parent families, including 34,9% are deprived families
- In France, the [latest PISA 2018](#) results outlined that France is one of the widest socio-economic gaps observed across OECD countries (OECD average gap: 88 score points)
- In 2016, 785.000 new-born (14.000 less compared to 2015) with a reproduction rate of 1,93 children per woman (amongst the most fertile country in Europe)
- France is 28th amongst 35 EU/OECD countries in inequalities in children's well-being (c.f. image - Unicef Innocenti Report 2016)
- In 2015, there were 56,6 places in collective daycare centers for 100 children under 3 years' old
- Diversity of places for children under 3 years old: out of 100 children, 33,1 are with an individual childminder, 17,8 in a collective daycare center, 4 in preschools (for 2 years old children) and 1,7 by a paid childminder at home
- In 2016, circa 295.357 children are under child protection measures in France



There are many areas where children in France must be further considered. However, we do consider that the main priorities for change in France in key areas:

- **To improve ECD policies and practices** throughout a joint top down and bottom up approach
- **To infuse a change of perspective on Early Childhood** for both regulatory and social norms; in particular getting the French society to shifting its perceptions and resource priorities
- **To enhance quality education** for children from 0 to 6 years old and to support their families, using a universal proportionate principle
- **To enhance early interventions using evidence-based scientific researches**, in particular the sharing of the substantial body of scientific work on the extent to which the earliest relationships play a major role in shaping a baby's brain and in influencing their future mental and physical health
- **To get a national commitment to strengthening a universal community of care and support** for every child and their immediate caregivers



As such, our organization has set up the above listing of **10 concrete proposals** (in French) which outline our short-term and mid-term priorities and objectives.

2. [Information about our organization's motivation, experience & expertise](#)

We firmly believe that joining this European advocacy campaign focusing on young children would be of great support in the following key areas:

- **To pool and coordinate our joint efforts** in influencing and supporting both national French reforms and European ones. Being part of a collective campaign will reinforce our efforts and adding our voices altogether



- **To contribute and engage our available and relevant resources** in order to synchronize with all other national campaigns part of this European Campaign and bring further visibility to children’s voices
- **To share all our experiences in France and in international settings** with all other national campaigns and reinforce the current network that we have lately built in Quebec, Belgium (French part) and the actions we made within an international perspective with the OECD, the UAE Ministry of Education, the Council of Europe
- **To advocate for more social innovative investments from the French government**, with a particular focus on underserved or excluded children and their families, bridging therefore with the European Commission political commitment to ensure a child guarantee in France

Our organization will be willing to assume a national coordination role in France within this European campaign on Early Childhood Development. We do understand that this would require the building of a broad coalition of civil society that represents a variety of excluded groups to implement the campaign at a national level. To achieve so, we would expect:

- **To leverage and build from our existing network** to create a joint community which would include various civil society organizations at local, regional or national levels and which would encompass various knowledge/expertise/experiences, such as: education (including early childhood, popular education), language, promotion of health, poverty and exclusion, fatherhood, child’s rights, music and culture, training centers for early childhood professionals, parenting etc. More digging would need to be further achieved to address children with disabilities, migrant/refugee children, Roma children. Regular meetings in which specific objectives (linked to the European campaign) would be set up, agreed together and implemented could be organized.
- **To utilize our current resources on Child Development based on the latest neurosciences researches** (most specifically our Touring Exhibition “Discover Me” currently being shared in the whole territory of France, meeting with about 1,000 professionals and families every week) to support a wide broadcast of this European campaign. A specific panel could be set up as relevant to complement the existing ones.



Besides, this touring exhibition, which has been drawn up from our national innovative French advocacy campaign “[Early Childhood and Parenting Train](#)” (interactive exhibitions + conferences/workshops in parallel) launched in November 2017 across 20 French cities and 32.000 visitors, has been agreed to be the knowledge base of the “Comité des 1000 jours” to support its strategic recommendations for parenting support in France.



- **To further leverage the existing French network in perspective of our existing influence and advocacy in international settings**, such as what was presented at the 2nd European Education summit (throughout the workshop “For the best start in life” facilitated by Géraldine Libreau, Policy Officer, EU Directorate-General for Education and Culture), at the Strategy plan session at the Council of Europe and as what could be reinforced throughout our upcoming ISSA membership and our organization of the International Early Childhood Action Congress held at the OECD every 2 years.



Using a **bottom up and top down approach**, our organization's values and mission are fully aligned with the campaign's vision to ensure that public policies do provide a nurturing environment for every young child's well-being, in respect of every child's rights defined by the CRC.

In addition to what has been specifically mentioned in the above outlining our experiences in advocacy/campaigning, our organization can provide our on-going activities/experiences which can be harnessed, as needed, throughout the campaign:



- **Implementation of “Ensemble pour grandir en qualité” in a few cities in France:** this is a reflexive approach which has been developed with our Quebec partner and adapted to support French Early Childhood professionals and school professionals in adopting / adjusting their professional day-to-day practices to further impact social and affective development of very young children and create nurturing and caring interactions with all children
- **Organization of our 3rd International Early Childhood Action Congress from June 30th to July 2nd 2020, on the theme of “Quality beyond norms” at the OECD** and which shall attract more than 40 countries (from HIC to LIC), mostly those in Europe as well as recognized speakers. More information on the previous editions organized in 2016 and 2018 can be found on our website www.eduensemble.org. The overall objective of this Congress is to assemble innovative actions and investigate the extent to where those “beyond norms” can be further embedded onto social norms and regulatory norms, throughout the lens of ingredients of quality education from the very early years and the achievement of child development and well-being for all children.

Though we are very motivated to contribute to this European campaign, our team is composed of 7 members, with multi-functional responsibilities of various planned activities and awareness workshops organized in the various territories. Though we recently did launch a network of ambassadors to support our activities in the territory, this is yet to be further consolidated and reinforced. Therefore, it is likely that we would be need strong support for 1 additional Full-Time Equivalent (resource which could be mutualized) to support data compiling, to properly set our country profile and to support the coordination role embedded onto this European campaign.

3. Information about existing or potential civil society partnerships in your country to support ECD advocacy

As per described on the above, there are currently very few alliances amongst the civil society in France advocating on Early Childhood Development alone. The few alliances which do exist are either most specifically dedicated to the specific perspective of children's rights, or on the overall perspective of poverty and exclusion, or on child protection/juvenile justice, or on specific perspective of education in general not specifically addressing standalone early childhood education.

Though this is yet to be built on Early Childhood Development, there are existing contacts and informal networking which can be further leveraged and coordinated within a structured and coherent framework, such as this European campaign on Early Childhood Development. Aligned with the expectation of the national coordination role that our Organization can play for this European campaign, we shall be able to build and coordinate such existing alliance or partnership working on ECD. The more expertise and the more knowledge we would gather throughout this campaign, the better it will be. Objectives, priorities and milestones will, however, need to be thoroughly examined and addressed for the French campaign, in sync with the European campaign.