



# NATIONAL REPORT



CARE2LEARN

## Supporting the Transition from Early Childhood Education and Care to Primary School

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## PROJECT INFORMATION

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CARE2LEARN

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The content of the National Report for Cyprus was comprised of interviews and focus groups, that included the individuals that are interested or are working in the field of Early Childhood and Care education, such as parents, teachers, psychologists and experts. Each partner country organized 10 interviews; 5 interviews with the individuals that are related in the field of ECEC and Primary education and 5 parents of children attending these institutions (kindergarten, ECEC, primary school).

## 2. FEEDBACK FROM FOCUS GROUPS – PARENTS (SUMMARY REPORT)

The information gathered are a result of 5 individualistic interviews, as opposed to a focus group, due to the restrictive measures that must be adhered to for Covid-19.

### **1. Which competences of children do you believe are the most important for the successful transition from ECEC institutions to primary school?**

The parents that completed the questionnaire expressed a few diverse opinions about which competences are important about the transition of children to primary school (PS), but did share major commonalities.

Specifically:

- All parents agreed on the importance of communication and social skills. These two competences were highlighted by every parent as the foundation for a smooth transition to primary school. Being able to meet new peers, make friends and express himself/herself during a conversation, are all crucial for this transition.
- Two parents stated that the child will need to have developed his/her adaptability skills, in order to ensure that the child is able to adjust to unfamiliar environments.
- Two parents expressed that a skill very important for this transition is self-independence. Specifically, one parent stated that the school that his child is attending, also known as the Montessori School. This type of schooling promotes intergenerational learning, by promoting older children to educate younger children in certain topics, in order for them to learn how to lead and for the younger children to learn in an interactive manner.
- Two parents agreed that regardless of the psychological competences, children should also be able to master some motor activities. These include; holding a pencil, being able to sit on their chair, being able to color within the lines of a framework and to be able to write the letters and numbers.



- Two from the five parents expressed that articulation and clear speech are also a significant component that can contribute to a smoother transition, as the child will be able to communicate his/her needs.
- Finally, all the parents highlighted the importance of cooperation and the importance for their child to be able to collaborate with other children and participate in team-building activities.

## **2. What competences do you think are important for parents to have that could support their children in transition to primary school?**

The parents shared a few common opinions, regarding the competences required for a parent to withhold, that can ensure to the smooth transition of the child to PS.

- All parents agreed on a few fundamental competences such as being patient, ensure good communication with the child and practice listening to their children, instead of just directing them.
- Three parents reported that setting certain ground rules, but maintaining balance, trusting your child and not being overprotective is one of the most significant skills a parent should develop. This ability can help regulate the child's maturity and promote autonomy.
- Three of the parents expressed a challenge they are currently facing, which is the ability to spend quality time with their children, since nowadays, occupations require a lot of time from your daily life, limiting the time they have with their families. Hence, they expressed that ensuring you allocate a time from your non-working hours to your children, is an essential component for securing a smooth PS transition.
- One parent expressed that is important to try and recognize their own flaws and essentially apologize to their children when necessary.
- One parent reported that a skill required by parents that are currently living in Cyprus is to speak the National Language. She indicated that the parents that do not speak Greek, will not be able to assist their children in the lessons they might be learning and thus their children might be struggling. Hence, it is vital for a parent living in a different country from his/her origin, to speak the language, to ensure a smoother transition for their children.

## **3. Do you think that your relationship with your child is important for his/her successful transition to primary school?**

- All parents reported YES to this question.

### ***a. How/ why do you think so?***



- Three parents stated that the relationship with the child is the most important aspect for this transition and generally for the child. If the child is facing some difficulties in his/her school or with the lessons, they will communicate these with their parents and realize they are not alone and are always supported.
- One parent stated that they are responsible for guiding their children with daily involvement in tasks, creations and tips on how to behave as well as practice.
- One parent expressed that this relationship can help the child improve themselves, as they can identify a flaw or a weakness and support the child in adjusting that defect.
- Finally, an individual reported that it is essential for the parent to take into consideration their child's emotions and not disregard their feelings, irrespective if they are valid or not.

#### **4. Do you think that the ECEC system has prepared your child for the successful transition to primary school?**

- All parents reported with a positive response for this question, as they all believed that the ECEC institution their child is attending, is adequately preparing them for this transition. However, one of the parents responded that on some level they might be lacking on the material they implement.

##### ***a. Why do you think so?***

- All the parents expressed that they can see their child developing certain skills, such as communication and socialization, whilst they indicated that they can observe their child being happy when returning from their kindergarten.

##### ***b. Is there anything lacking regarding preparation for school in the ECEC institution that your child attends?***

- The one parent that expressed her worry about the ECEC institution, shared that they might require additional emphasis on the letters and numbers, in order for the child to be already familiar with these topics when transition to PS.
- Another parent stated that in general, ECEC institutions should try to adapt to the current societal needs and implement upgraded and progressive educational material.

#### **5. Have you ever asked for assistance or guidance from your child's educators regarding the transition to primary school?**

- Three from the parents reported no, since the children of two of the parents had not yet progressed to PS, whilst two individuals shared that they required assistance from the institution their child is attending.

##### ***a. What kind of specific guidance was or would be helpful?***



- The two parents that asked for assistance, both required additional support for their child, regarding the child's articulation. Hence, both parents asked for a speech therapist for their children.

***b. Did your child's kindergarten help in the transition of your child to primary school?***

- Two of the parents stated that the kindergarten that their child attends to has helped in this transition.
- One of them stated that they assisted in this, by integrating the child into an organized ensemble and taught them to collaborate in a group and follow certain rules.
- The other parent noted that they helped the child experience how the lessons will be taught in PS, as opposed to the method they utilize in the kindergarten.
- The other three parents have not yet experienced this transition, since their children are still attending their ECEC institution.

**6. Do you think that the Covid-19 pandemic has affected your child's performance in terms of competences and skills necessary for successful transition to primary school?**

According to the responses, the parents varied in their opinions on how the pandemic affected their children, as two of them noted that they don't believe this situation influenced their child's performance and competences. Contrary, the other three parents stated that Covid-19 did have an impact on their child, when comparing the life, they experienced prior this era.

- The three parents shared commonalities in their statements, indicating that the most impacted competence of their children, were their social and communication skills. Due to the lockdown, the children were not able to see their friends and were of course crying for this restriction.
- However, one parent stated that once the measures were lifted, their child depicted signs of anxiety, as he was worried and shy when exposed with other individuals, except from his family.
- One of the parents that has two children, and was able to observe the difference between the older and the younger one. The parent expressed that the older child, who did not manage to experience a normal kindergarten period, is more introverted, as opposed to her other child, that attended the kindergarten for the whole year.
- Fortunately, all the parents agreed that their children's physical abilities remained intact during the pandemic.

***a. Is there something that surprised you regarding your child's skills/ did you notice a lack of skills for your child?***

- One parent stated that his child was crying when they took away his tablet, whilst all the other parents did not share any specific experience.



## **7. Which children's competences do you believe are the most important for the successful transition of your child to primary school?**

*Please, rate each competence on a scale from 1-not at all important to 5 extremely important.*

The average score that was provided by each parent for each competence was calculated, in order to estimate the level of importance for each skill.

- **Overall health/Physical well-being:** 4.6

### **Psychomotor Skills:**

- Gross psychomotor skills (e.g., running, jumping, climbing): 4.2
- Fine psychomotor skills (e.g., writing, drawing, cutting): 4.2

### **Language and literacy skills:**

- Fluent communication: 4.4
- Vocabulary: 3.8
- Storytelling: 3.8
- Awareness of the written text: 3.2
- Knowing letters: 3
- Reading: 3

### **Cognitive/ Pre-academic skills and general knowledge**

- Pre-mathematical knowledge: 3.6
- Early numeracy skills: 3.6
- Sorting, ordering, classifying: 3.4
- Early life science concepts and general knowledge of the world that surrounds us: 3.6

**Self-care** (e.g., brushing teeth, going to the bathroom, dressing up, eating): 4.6

### **Socioemotional skills:**

- Interpersonal skills: 4.4
- Communication: 4.4
- Relating and interacting with others: 4.4
- Self-regulation of emotions: 4.4
- Self-regulation of attention: 4.4
- Keeping focus: 4.4
- Behavioural self-control: 4.4
- Ability to follow instructions: 4.4

### **Motivational and learning:**

- Willingness to learn: 4.6



- Curiosity: 4.6
- Persistence: 4.6
- Attentiveness: 4.6

**8. In your opinion, does your child need additional support to develop some of the competences listed above in the period of transition to school? (Choose one answer)**

**YES or NO**

- Three parents stated 'NO', that their child does not require additional support, whilst the two parents that asked for a speech therapist, reported 'YES'.

***a. If yes, please specify which competences listed above does he/she lack the most and could need additional support to develop them.***

- The parents that indicated that their children required support with speech, they stated that the communication skills and the vocabulary of their children needs improvement.

**9. What competences of parents do you think are important for you to have to support your child's transition to primary school?**

***Please, rate each competence on a scale from 1-not at all important to 5 extremely important***

- Building quality relationship with the child: 4.8
- Spending quality time with the child: 4.8
- Stimulating curiosity, motivation and learning: 4.4
- Supporting child's autonomy: 4.6
- Supportiveness: 4.6
- Responsiveness: 4.6
- Emotional warmth and tenderness: 5
- Play: 4.4
- Communication: 4.8
- Explaining (rules, causes, consequences etc.): 4.8
- Answering questions: 4.6
- Reading: 4.6
- Providing various experiences (neighborhood, local community, etc.): 4.6
- Providing opportunities for interactions with peers: 4.6

**10. In your opinion, do you think that you could use an additional support to develop some of the above specified parental skills/behaviours to support your child for successful transition to school?**



## YES or NO

- Four from the five parents reported 'YES' in this question, whilst one indicated 'NO'.

***a. If yes, please specify which competences/behaviours do you lack the most and could need additional support to develop them.***

- Each parent from the four individuals that responded 'YES' to the previous question, shared their distinct perspectives.
- One of the parents stated that a parent should cultivate their knowledge about this transition, by participating in educational courses and learn the specific Do's and Don'ts.
- Another parent indicated that it is important for the parents to also participate in physical and fun activities with their children, such as extracurricular activities, exercise, music and painting.
- The other two parents expressed that is essential for the parent to develop skills that can assist in supporting the child's autonomy, trigger their curiosity and emotionally support their children.

**11. Is there anything that I/we did not ask you regarding successful transition of children from ECEC to primary school and you think it is important to mention?**

- One parent stated that it would be appropriate to incorporate some questions about the language of the parents and the children. The possibility that migrant children need to learn the language of the country they are living in, prior attending the PS.

**12. If you could do something different with for/with your child regarding transition from ECEC to primary school, that could better prepare her/him, what would it be?**

- Three from the parents could not think about something they would alter to help in this transition, whilst two of them shared their opinions.
- One parent expressed that it would be more suitable to organize an 'induction week/day', a few days before the child's first day at PS, in order to familiarize the child with the environment, the teachers and their peers. This can also help the parents meet the teachers and exchange information about the child, to lay the appropriate foundations and recognize at which aspects the child, requires support.
- Another parent indicated that she would try to allocate more time with her children, in order to provide the appropriate amount of attention to the needs of her child.



### 3. FEEDBACK FROM FOCUS GROUPS – EXPERTS (SUMMARY REPORT)

#### 1. What do you think contributes to a smooth transition for children from pre-school to primary school?

The experts completed the questionnaire in the same manner that the parents did; via a telephone interview. However, the experts varied in their backgrounds as:

- One is a **sociologist**;
- One is a **psychologist**;
- Two individuals were **primary school teachers**;
- One **primary school director**.

Essentially, each expert contributed to the survey, as they provided different perspectives, regarding the essential skills for the smooth transition of children to primary school.

- All of the experts stated that communication and collaboration skills are essential for the child to be able to adapt to the new setting.
- All of them agreed that the child must reach a level of emotional and holistic maturity before he/she transitions to PS, to comprehend how they need to behave, what they are doing etc.
- Regarding the ‘emotional maturity’, one of them mentioned the difference between Cyprus and other European Countries, that they delay the time a child progresses to PS. During the previous years, Cyprus followed a policy that stated that at 5 years old, a child was ready to transition to PS, which is of course untrue. Children require time to develop emotional maturity and exploit their creativity when they are young.
- Two experts expressed that the child will need to be independent on a certain level and most importantly comprehend the etiology of education and learning, in order for them to enjoy this period as well.
- One expert listed a variety of factors that can assist in the smooth transition of children to PS. She indicated that the relationship between the parents and the educators is quite significant and the information provided to kindergarten teachers about the materials that must be covered prior the transition to PS. Moreover, she expressed that there



should also be opportunities for the children in the kindergarten, to interact with the children of the primary school as well as to participate in common events.

## **2. Which competences of children do you believe are the most important for the successful transition of children from ECEC to primary school?**

- All of the experts agreed on the statements they provided for the first question and mentioned the competences that can assist the children themselves such as emotional maturity, independence, social skills, communication and collaboration skills.
- Two of the individuals explained that the personality of the child is also an attribute that required development and improvement.
- Three experts claimed that motor skills such as being able to hold the pencil and write are also significant competences.
- All of them agreed that a basic level of literacy and mathematical knowledge is essential.
- One of the experts explained that it is vital for the child to have a broader understanding of his/her surroundings, as this is cultivated by experience. The more experiences the child will have, in terms of familiarity with numbers, letters and other activities, the higher the probabilities for a smoother transition to PS

### ***a. Do you notice the lack of specific skills in children for this transition (that you previously specified)?***

- All of them agreed that there are certain instances, at which the lack of skills in children is noticeable.
- Two experts expressed that there is not a lack of skills from the children, but they need to prolong their stay in kindergarten, to enhance their maturity and exploit their creativity. As the child progresses to PS, the lessons and materials that are taught, are more structured and do not promote the liberty of expression, as the kindergarten does.
- Three experts agreed that Covid-19 has impacted the children's ability to develop certain competences.

## **3. What do you think the current ECEC system is lacking for preparing the children for this transition?**

- Two experts stated that the traditional ECEC institutions do not offer activities that can help the child develop his soft skills and instead focus on the development of plainly academic skills.



- One expert stated that the ECEC institutions are ensuring adequate preparation for the children, but expressed that, children should remain in kindergarten for a little bit longer or as long as they need to, instead of following a fixed timeframe.
- One expert mentioned that all teachers should set common goals for the children, with emphasis on all sectors and a variety of skills. There is also no information on what is happening in primary school and what it is required for the children to know for a smooth integration.

#### **4. Do you receive any guidance for helping the children in your group/classroom transition to primary school?**

- Two of the experts were unable to answer, as they are not primary or kindergarten school teachers.
- However, the other three educators responded no, but suggested that the organization of a few educational seminars targeted at updating their educational materials would be helpful.

##### ***a. What kind of specific guidance do you believe was or would be helpful?***

- Not applicable.

#### **5. Which competences do you think are important for parents to have to support their children in the successful transition to primary school?**

- All of the experts expressed similar opinions for this question and covered the fundamental competences that parents need to withhold such as: patience, good communication, spend quality time with their children, provide them with opportunities for expression.
- Two experts suggested that parents need to develop empowerment skills, in order to assist their children, comprehend how to develop resilience and build the child's confidence.
- One expert explained that regardless of the competences that parents might withhold, they need to comprehend that ECEC is vital for the children, as it exposes them to new experiences and allows them to interact with their peers. Additionally, he stated that it would be beneficial for the parents to communicate with their children's teacher and attend a few educational courses, regarding the activities they can complete to assist in this transition.
- Two experts expressed that, parents need to help their children cultivate self-care and independence from an early age, in addition to activate their psychomotor skills.



## **6. Do you notice a difference in a child's preparedness for school nowadays compared to previous generations?**

- All the experts agreed that there is an undeniable difference between children's preparedness nowadays, as opposed to the previous generations.
- Two experts expressed that since the parental style has changed, the development of the child also varies, as parents become less conservative and strict, as opposed to the methods utilized in the older generations.
- All of them agreed that the exposure to the internet, does not only include benefits, but also a few drawbacks.
- Four experts indicated that the internet helps children become more experienced and familiar with digital processes, as opposed to the older generations. In addition, they added that the internet can help the children learn faster, as they can comprehend concepts through digital story-telling and illustrations.
- However, they also stated that the internet delays their emotional maturity, since they are constantly exposed to a screen and absorb irrelevant information, instead of interacting with their peers. Evidently, this affects their attention span, as they are constantly exposed to a different material.

## **7. Do you think that the Covid-19 pandemic has affected the children's performance in terms of competences and skills necessary for successful transition to primary school?**

- All of the experts concurred that Covid-19 deeply influenced children's social and communication skills, as they were restrained from interacting with their peers.
- Two of them stated that children might experience PTSD and Social Anxiety Disorder symptomatology, following the constant rapid testing to attend the school, the social distancing measures and the quarantine.
- However, two experts reported that their exposure to technology could have supported their motor skills, such as hand to eye coordination.
- Another expert expressed that the lack of physical presence to their school and the instant substitution to remote learning, could have impacted the degree to which they take education seriously.
- Another individual stated that their collaboration skills are also affected by the pandemic, as they are not allowed to cooperate with their peers, due to social distancing.
- Finally, two experts shared their concern that a few children might have been exposed to severely negative experiences, as they were constantly locked in their houses with parents that might have been abusing.

### ***a. And if yes, what competences were most absent?***



- All of them mentioned: social and communication skills, collaboration skills, their abilities to disagree and try to comprehend another individual's perspective.
- Two experts added that their attention span was influenced by the pandemic.

## **8. Which competences do you believe are the most important for the successful transition of children from ECEC to primary school?**

*Please, rate each competence on a scale from 1-not at all important to 5 extremely important*

- **Overall health/Physical well-being:** 4.8

### **Psychomotor Skills:**

- Gross psychomotor skills (e.g., running, jumping, climbing): 4.2
- Fine psychomotor skills (e.g., writing, drawing, cutting): 4.6

### **Language and literacy skills:**

- Fluent communication: 5
- Vocabulary: 4.8
- Storytelling: 4.6
- Awareness of the written text: 3.6
- Knowing letters: 4.6
- Reading: 3.8

### **Cognitive/ Pre-academic skills and general knowledge**

- Pre-mathematical knowledge: 4.8
- Early numeracy skills: 4.2
- Sorting, ordering, classifying: 5
- Early life science concepts and general knowledge of the world that surrounds us: 4.2

- **Self-care** (e.g., brushing teeth, going to the bathroom, dressing up, eating): 4.8

### **Socioemotional skills:**

- Interpersonal skills: 5
- Communication: 5
- Relating and interacting with others: 5
- Self-regulation of emotions: 5
- Self-regulation of attention: 5
- Keeping focus: 4.6
- Behavioural self-control: 4.8
- Ability to follow instructions: 4.6



**Motivational and learning:**

- Willingness to learn: 5
- Curiosity: 5
- Persistence: 4.6
- Attentiveness: 4.8

**9. In your opinion, do the children lack some of the competences listed above in the period of transition from ECEC to school? (Choose one answer)**

**YES or NO**

- All of them responded 'YES'.

***a. If yes, please specify which competences listed above are they lacking the most and could need additional support to develop them.***

- All of them stated that competences that require additional support are: social and communication skills, motivation and learning and self-care.
- One expert stated that the psychomotor skills require additional support.
- One expert expressed that all the skills listed in the 'Language and literacy skills', might require emphasis.

**10. What competences of parents do you think are important for you to have to support your child's transition to primary school?**

***Please, rate each competence on a scale from 1-not at all important to 5 extremely important***

- Building quality relationship with the child: 5
- Spending quality time with the child: 5
- Stimulating curiosity, motivation and learning: 4.8
- Supporting child's autonomy: 5
- Supportiveness: 5
- Responsiveness: 5
- Emotional warmth and tenderness: 5
- Play: 5
- Communication: 5
- Explaining (rules, causes, consequences etc.): 5
- Answering questions: 4.4
- Reading: 3.8
- Providing various experiences (neighborhood, local community, etc.): 5
- Providing opportunities for interactions with peers: 5



**11. In your opinion, do the parents lack some of specific skills/behaviours listed above to support their children for successful transition from ECEC to primary school? (*Choose one answer*)**

**YES or NO**

- Four experts stated 'YES', whilst one of them claimed 'NO'.

***a. If yes, please specify which competences/behaviours are they lacking and could need additional support to develop them.***

- The four individuals that expressed that, parents do lack a few skills, stated that due to the current work conditions, parents are not able to spend the adequate amount of time with their children.
- Due to the additive pressures from their demanding occupations, parents do not withhold the time to attend courses that could enhance their knowledge, in terms of helping their children through this transition.
- Two experts stated that parents might be a bit overprotective, due to Covid-19 as well, and might not allow their children to encounter a diversity of experiences, including simply interacting with their peers.

**12. Is there anything that I/we did not ask you regarding successful transition of children from ECEC to primary school and you think it is important to mention?**

- Two experts suggested that parents should stop projecting their own beliefs and experiences onto their children, as this effectively creates stereotypes.
- In addition, they added that they should try to get to know their child as another human being, in order to adjust the assigned boundaries and rules to the child's demands.
- One expert stated that ECEC institutions should aim to upgrade their facilities and include more interactive means for education, such as advanced playgrounds etc.

## **4. CONCLUSIONS/SUMMARY**



The national report aimed to depict the current circumstances that exist in Cyprus, in terms of the factors that can assist children experience a successful transition from ECEC to primary school. We conducted 10 interviews, incorporating 5 experts that varied in their backgrounds and 5 parents that had children that were attending kindergarten and a few were in primary school. Evidently, the focus groups provided a lot of insightful information, that can help the public comprehend the significance of that transition in a child's life.