



**EARLY YEARS
REGIONAL ALLIANCE**

MANIFESTO



*We, the partners of the Early Years
Regional Alliance **(EYRA)** endorse
the following values and principles*



Every child has the right to a positive early childhood: realising this right is in the public interest and is the responsibility of all members of society.

- Young children are citizens and have universal rights. Government institutions at international, national, regional and local levels are obliged to respect and ensure a child's rights to survival, development, education, protection and participation. This is recognised by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child; it specifically acknowledges the rights of children from birth to 8 years of age in General Comment No. 7: Implementing Child Rights in Early Childhood.
- Young children's individual and collective rights are inseparable from understanding that children's well-being is for the public good and benefits all of the society. Taking responsibility for all children is a crucial factor in any human society.
- All actors in society (e.g. public sector, civil sector, the private sector, interest groups, professional associations) share the responsibility to create and ensure an environment in which all young children and their families can thrive.
- Realising this public responsibility surpasses a simplistic human capital argument which focuses on a 'return on investment'. EYRA believes in a rights-based approach which is committed to achieving basic human rights; improving national levels of health, nutrition and welfare; reducing crime, violence and community unrest; and improving civic responsibility and citizenship for the benefit of not only individuals but for all of society.



The full realisation of young children's rights must be made an explicit public policy priority.

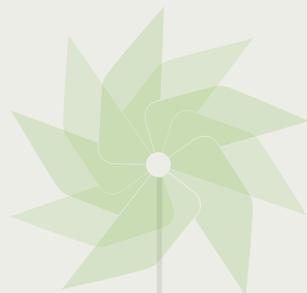
- Public policies that aspire to meet the rights and needs of all young children must be adopted and implemented effectively in every country.
- Beyond the obvious sectors of early childhood development, care and education, the lives of young children, their families and communities are affected by public policy decisions at every level. Fundamentally, public policies concerning primary health care, nutrition, sanitation, housing, immigration, labour, social welfare and protection, justice, finance and equity, including the distribution of resources, civil and legal services, and agriculture, rural/urban and regional planning, may all have immediate implications for young children, their families and communities.
- No public policy is child-neutral. When formulating national policies, strategic plans, laws, by-laws and protocols in the areas listed above, implications for early childhood development and children's rights, and the impacts on children, their families and communities need to be identified and carefully considered, for example, through explicit child-impact assessments. All actors in civil society and the public and private sectors should participate in ensuring children are considered key stakeholders in all policy planning.





Young children thrive in nurturing, responsive, stimulating and safe family environments.

- Families have the primary responsibility for decisions affecting their children and due regard must always be given to their voice.
- Families are entitled to appropriate and effective parenting support and relevant services whenever necessary to ensure their infants and young children are well nurtured, well stimulated and develop to their full potential in secure homes;
- All families, but especially those that are at risk and vulnerable, should be supported and empowered by effective policies that make health, education, employment, welfare, and child protection services available to them.
- No young child should ever be separated from their family, including parents or siblings, or placed in an institution except under exceptional circumstances where the well-being of the child is at risk. In such instances, coordinated efforts must be made to place children in alternative family environments.
- Children and families affected by conflict and other emergencies should have access to adequate special services and support.



Children learn and develop through play and meaningful interactions.

- All children have the right to play and to participate in meaningful activities with other children, family members and members of the community. Realising this right is a precondition for positive development, well-being, health, learning and educational achievement.
- Loving and respectful interactions, reading and play are essential for development and must be valued and embedded in every child's daily life: at home, in preschools and schools, in early childhood services, and the community. Families and other adults working with children should be supported to understand the importance of play and interactions with young children.





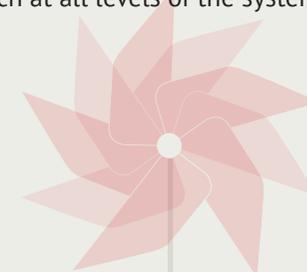
All young children benefit from early childhood development services when they are inclusive and of high quality.

- Accessible and affordable early childhood development services, including early education and care that are holistic, of high quality, inclusive, and respectful of children's diverse backgrounds shall facilitate transitions from home to ECEC centres and later to primary school and give every child a strong foundation for lifelong learning.
- Early childhood development services cannot be reduced to just supporting "school readiness". Simplistic concepts of child development need to be challenged and attention focused on ensuring all schools and communities are able to support all children.
- Children receiving quality culturally-appropriate early education services that include support for language(s) spoken at home and the involvement and empowerment of parents and local communities, make better progress in language, cognitive and social-emotional development. The improvements are greatest for the most disadvantaged children, this contributes to reducing inequality.
- Research demonstrates that a minimum of two years of early childhood education can compensate significantly for negative consequences of poverty and deprivation. Children from marginalised, minority and disadvantaged backgrounds should have access to appropriate and affordable early childhood development services.



Building a just society for all children and their families requires proactive ways of addressing exclusion, inequality, poverty and violence.

- Each child and each family are unique and equally valuable to society.
- Children have the right to grow up in contexts that offer equal opportunities and enable equal outcomes, regardless of their abilities or disabilities, ethnic or linguistic background, religion, gender and socio-economic status. Early childhood services should welcome all children (including children with disabilities and developmental delays or children from different cultures who speak a different language at home), and avoid segregating them according to their differences.
- Decisive action and progressive social welfare policies, combined with access to services, are required to break intergenerational cycles of disadvantage and counteract all forms of exclusion, discrimination and inequality at individual and institutional levels.
- The pre-service and in-service training for early childhood development professionals and practitioners should include a comprehensive diversity and equality / anti-bias component. Equitable, competent and effective early childhood systems, which deliver on social justice objectives, require a comprehensive anti-bias approach at all levels of the system.





Individualised and family-centered services support children with developmental challenges and/or disabilities to reach their full potential.

- High-quality specialised services, known as Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) services, support families and enable children to overcome developmental challenges.
- Effective ECI services apply multi-disciplinary approaches to meet the unique needs of children who experience developmental challenges and/or disabilities as well as their families.
- Investing in quality ECI services, including crucially through public funding reduces long-term costs to individuals and society.
- High-quality ECI services enable children to participate actively in family and community life, strengthening social inclusion and equity.



Integrated and professionalised early childhood systems support positive developmental outcomes for all young children.

- The knowledge, practices and values of all those working with young children have a profound impact on developmental and learning outcomes. This requires caring, competent professionals who are appropriately trained and supported with a special focus on communicating with the families of children.
- In order to stay responsive to changes in society and new research, early childhood professionals and para-professionals require continuous professional development that stimulates and supports self-improvement.
- Early childhood professionals should enjoy decent conditions of work and employment.
- Professionals working with young children will be more effective if their initial and continuous professional preparation and development reflects the diversity of needs and contexts in which children and their families live.
- Together with early childhood professionals, para-professionals and community members play important roles, e.g. in conducting community outreach, providing supervised home visits and group sessions, and supporting professionals in maximising their impact.
- Governments should support and recognise the rights of parents as primary caregivers, but also have the responsibility to pro-actively create and ensure multi-sectoral structures through which public, private and civil society institutions can work together to further early childhood development.





Quality early childhood development services must be a priority for the allocation of public resources.

- Well-resourced early childhood development services, including early education and care, contribute to the social and economic well-being of all societies.
- Public investment in quality early childhood development services reduces the need for potentially more expensive and less effective remedial action in education, health, protection and justice systems later in life.
- Children from the most disadvantaged and marginalised families and communities need to be given priority because there is strong evidence that they gain the most from investment in early childhood development. Investing in marginalised children, families and communities reduces inequality and supports social and economic development.
- Investing in quality early childhood development services contributes to strengthening participation in democratic societies.



EYRA unites many partners and organisations in a movement for early childhood in Europe and Central Asia. We are united around this shared message and pledge to advocate for increased access, equity, quality and investment in early childhood development, education and care.

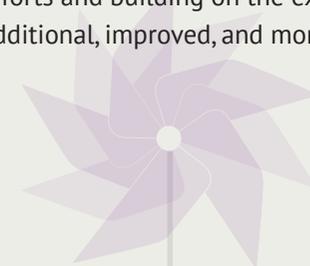
EYRA's mission is to promote a comprehensive, inclusive, and rights-based approach to full development of young children and their parents, the strongest possible foundation for the wellbeing of children and nations.

EYRA aims to achieve this through enabling cross-sectoral dialogue among decision makers, early childhood service personnel and other stakeholders in order to strengthen links between research, practice and policy, and through advocating for convergent, high quality and equitable services for young children (0-8 years), their families and communities.

EYRA aims to influence policy making at international, national and local level through:

- sharing information, knowledge and good practices among partners;
- building the capacity of partners to advocate more effectively;
- initiating and supporting policy advocacy campaigns.

EYRA is a platform for a wide range of actors to contribute to global initiatives, networks, and national activities on behalf of young children and their families. Through joint efforts and building on the expertise of its partners, our alliance speaks out for additional, improved, and more inclusive early childhood development.





INTERNATIONAL
STEP by STEP
ASSOCIATION

ISSA provides Secretariat services to the Alliance.

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