

TROMSØ, NORWAY, 23 - 25 MAY 2018

Proactive International Network for Newborn and Young Children

Report of 1st Learning Exchange Visit



The Arctic University of Norway, Tromsø



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The Proactive International Network of Newborn and Young Children (PINN) aims to **share best practice in the areas of prevention and early intervention in disadvantaged populations, evidence informed practice, practitioner training in prevention and early intervention approaches,** and the importance of early childhood care and education (ECEC) as a preventative tool. The objective of this learning exchange is to allow partner organisations to develop and reinforce networks, increase their capacity to work at a transnational level, share and confront ideas, practices and methods in ECEC and prevention and early intervention.



The first Learning Exchange Visit of the PINN Project was hosted by the Regional Centre for Child and Youth Mental Health and Child Welfare (RKBU) at UiT, the Arctic University of Norway in Tromsø, Norway.

The 12 participants from Ireland, Norway, the Netherlands and Portugal experienced a 3-day programme of discussion, debate, research presentations, visits to local education and family support settings and sharing of practice experiences.

The theme of the visit was Prevention and Early Intervention in the Early Years. These are the highlights which the participants shared as well as follow up actions being planned as a result of this Exchange Visit.

Highlights

Everyone appreciated the diversity of presentations and the attention to **linking research findings to practice and professional development.**

Monica Martinussen, Head of Research in RKBU, introduced us to two wonderful **resources for researchers and practitioners** wishing to improve the lives and outcomes for young children. These were **PsychTestkids**, an online resource which rigorously summarizes the **quality of measurement instruments** being used to assess children.

We were also introduced to **Ungsinn**, an online journal which describes and rates **effective interventions for children** and adolescents.

Half of the group had experience of both implementing and researching the impact of **The Incredible Years Program**. Everyone enjoyed hearing the teachers in Fagereng Primary School and the Kanutten Kindergarten give firsthand accounts of how the program is positively contributing to the social skills and behavior of the children they work with.



In Bjorn Brunborg's presentation we saw mothers and fathers and their 4 month-old babies enjoy one of the sessions of the Incredible Years Baby Program.

A visit to the **Stakkevollan Family House** was another highlight. Here we met two expert practitioners who passionately described the range of activities and services they provide for free, to support all parents in the neighbourhood. These include: the **Open Kindergarten**, which Line Moldestand and Lana Hansen describe as 'the heart of the centre'. It is a loosely structured 'drop-in' kindergarten for young children and their parents – (lots of dads also participant) which attracts a very diverse group of families – such as mothers or fathers on parental leave with the babies, new migrants to Norway or grandparents with their grandchildren.

We also heard about the **Family Group**, designed to meet the needs of parents with young children who are very isolated or recovering from mental health problems.

And a group called '**Blues Mothers**' a support group for mothers dealing with post-natal 'blues' or depression. Everyone was struck by the calm, welcoming atmosphere of the Family House and attention paid to including specialist support professionals who were regularly available to all families attending.



A very wide ranging and multi-disciplinary research presentation by **Tormod Bøe**, from RKBW West, in Bergen provided much food for thought and lots of book references to follow up on! Tormod's presentation focused on the **links between poverty and the mental health of children**.

Throughout the visit we were also struck by the value given to **nature and culture in children's lives** in Norway. We heard about families with young children meeting together to enjoy cooking around a fire in the snow in early Spring, one of the activities of the Open Kindergarten. We saw toddlers rushing over to the low window of kindergarten to watch a large ship go by as soon as they heard the ship's siren, a daily ritual.

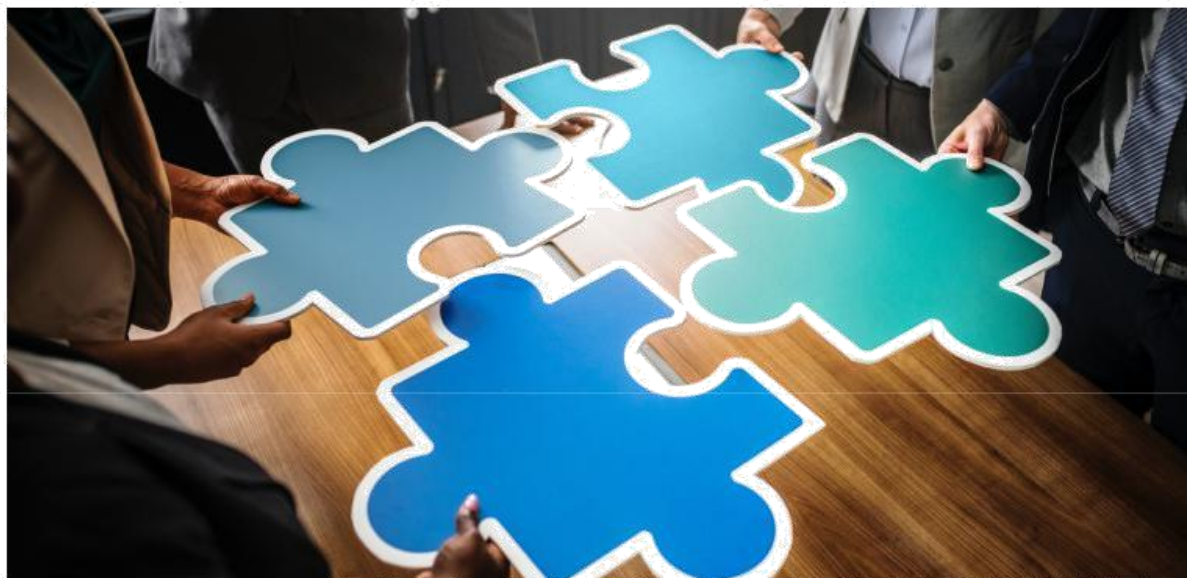
And of course we spotted lots of young children enjoying climbing, building, digging outdoors wherever we went.

An exchange visit like this is most valuable if the learning and discussion leads to some **concrete actions and positive change** for the children, parents, and practitioners we work with.



Some of the actions we are discussing include: further bilateral exchange of resources and information about **Home Visiting Programmes** focusing on babies and toddlers, which the Dutch and Irish partners are implementing; **broadening the perspectives and approaches** in our lecturing; **joint research presentations** on classroom management in primary schools; **collaborating on an article** about integrated governance in services for young children and their families ...and much more.

Finally, an important ingredient in the success of such a cross-national exchange visit is the relationships between all involved. This is a group which is accepting, supportive and appreciative of humour. Thanks to **Oddbjørn Løndal** from **RKBU North** -University of Tromsø-, who coordinated the whole event.



Next exchange visits

The Tromsø Exchange Visit was the first of a total of four.

	WHEN	WHERE
SECOND VISIT	JANUARY 2019	PORTUGAL
THIRD VISIT	OCTOBER 2019	THE NETHERLANDS
FOURTH VISIT	MAY 2020	IRELAND

PINN partner organisations

Ireland, Prevention and Early Intervention Network (*Project Coordinator*)

Portugal, University of Coimbra

Netherlands, International Child Development Initiatives – ICDI

Norway, University of Tromsø