



# TRANSATLANTIC FORUM ON INCLUSIVE EARLY YEARS

INVESTING IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF YOUNG CHILDREN  
FROM MIGRANT AND LOW-INCOME FAMILIES



## THE FIRST YEARS ARE CRITICAL

Research increasingly shows the importance of the early years for child development, the value of investment in early childhood development and the risks of inaction. The early years are critical for a child's cognitive, emotional, linguistic and social development, which lay the foundation for later success in school, university and the workplace, as well as for physical and mental well-being.

During these early years, development outcomes differ for children from middle- to high-income families and those from low-income families, and the gap widens as time progresses. Meanwhile, young children with less exposure to majority languages in their early years will face language acquisition challenges as they begin their primary schooling. Early childhood development and quality interventions give children, regardless of family income, an opportunity to reach their full potential – reducing intergenerational poverty.

## A HIGH RETURN ON INVESTMENT

Investment in early childhood development – particularly for children from migrant and low-income families – yields a high return on investment: improved educational achievement and economic productivity, responsible citizenship and successful parenting.

Young children who participate in early childhood interventions, such as high-quality, centre-based early education programmes, demonstrate enhanced development. Later public interventions to decrease disparities can be more costly and less efficient than early childhood interventions in education, care and parental support.

## THE TRANSATLANTIC FORUM ON INCLUSIVE EARLY YEARS

The King Baudouin Foundation, together with partner foundations from Europe and the United States, have created the Transatlantic Forum on Inclusive Early Years, bringing together leading scientists, practitioners, civil society members, business leaders and political decision-makers from Europe and North America. Forum participants will explore policies and projects supporting the early childhood development of children from migrant and low-income families.

The aim is to exchange newest research results, strategies, policies, innovations and best practices and create the opportunity to scale-up existing knowledge and evidence-based research. Exchanges on this critical issue involving participants from both sides of the Atlantic have only rarely taken place. The Forum will bring together high-level policy-makers and decision-makers with a view to making early childhood education and care for children from migrant and low-income families a priority on the political agenda in Europe and beyond.

Early childhood education and care within Europe and the United States differs widely. The United States is strong in quantitative research and research-based practice. In Europe, with its social system of diverse large-scale care and education services, policies and programmes, research is more qualitative and typically does not transcend linguistic borders. This diversity will lay the groundwork for a rich exchange and a shared learning experience.

*"The vitality and sustainability of any society depend on the extent to which it expands opportunities early in life for all children to achieve their full potential and engage in responsible and productive citizenship.*

*We view healthy child development as the foundation of economic prosperity, strong communities, and a just society, and our mission is to advance that vision by using science to enhance child well-being through innovations in policy and practice."*

*Center of the Developing Child, Harvard University*

*"There is a growing body of evidence to show that investment in services for society's youngest children can help improve children's lives now – and help prevent more costly intervention later on."*

***Inspiring Change: an early childhood education and care study visit to Sweden and Poland, King Baudouin Foundation, July 2011***

## KEY THEMES I

Focusing on children aged 0 to 6 from migrant and low-income families, the Forum will explore several key themes in depth:

- Evaluate access to and affordability of quality services, including the barriers faced by children across policy and practice levels, and how they are being addressed.
- Propose improved workforce-preparation systems by better understanding changes in instructional practice, teacher preparation and curricula that have been successful in engaging children from migrant and low-income families.
- Explore what systems, standards and regulations have been successful in ensuring access to quality child care and examine how to engage migrant and low-income parents to become their children's "first teachers" and life-long advocates for their children's education.
- Identify the advantages and disadvantages of current models of education (e.g. bilingual education and second language immersion) in multilingual settings, taking into consideration culture, identity and integration.
- Examine the role that national governments can play in leveraging national goal-setting and regulation to implement early childhood policies that promote equality as well as investing in meaningful evaluations.
- Identify effective strategies that ensure the needs of children from migrant and low-income backgrounds are being met, particularly as a number of nations move towards integrating their early care and education systems into a streamlined network of services under the umbrella of a lead government ministry or agency.

## FACTS & FIGURES

Early childhood development is not yet a top priority within Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, which spend about 1.6% of GDP on family services and preschool for 0 to 6 year-olds and 0.43% of GDP on preschool alone.

According to the Center of the Developing Child at Harvard University, every dollar invested in early childhood interventions results in US\$ 4-9 saved in crime, welfare, health and educational remediation; such early age investments also translate into increased tax revenues when children reach adulthood and achieve at higher levels. Overall, early childhood interventions can bring a return on investment of US\$ 1.26-17.07 per dollar spent, according to a RAND study.

In the United States, more than one in four children under age six lives in households that speak a language other than English, with great diversity in language ability. Research shows that quality early education can provide significant benefits to children of migrants, addressing school readiness and language acquisition and better preparing them to succeed in the classroom.

The 'Effective Pre-school and Primary Education Study (EPPE)' research in England and the 'Effective Pre-school Provision in Northern Ireland (EPPNI)' study in Northern Ireland showed that children benefit from early experiences in high-quality services and that the most deprived children benefit most. Positive effects on cognitive, social and emotional effects are found to last well beyond primary school age. Equally, population studies in Germany and Sweden confirmed the beneficial effects, particularly for children from poor and immigrant families, of early childhood education and care.



## HOW WILL THE FORUM WORK?

The Forum will meet six times over a period of three years in Europe and in the United States. Each meeting will last two days, focusing on a specific topic, and will take place in a different country to facilitate onsite visits. The Forum will bring together a diverse group of high-level stakeholders from Europe and North America for open and constructive dialogue in a confidential setting. A maximum of 40 participants with different policy backgrounds relevant for the issue at stake (Early Childhood, Migration, Social Justice and Poverty) will be invited to attend, including:

- ▶ Political decision-makers
- ▶ Leading scientists
- ▶ Practitioners
- ▶ Civil society representatives

Various papers will be prepared as a basis for discussion. A report summarizing the debates, presenting best practices and recommendations for policy-makers and practitioners will be published after each Forum meeting. The reports will be presented at EU-level public events in Brussels and in the participating countries.

An advisory board of around 15 key experts and decision-makers will advise on content questions and help identify and access key networks and decision-makers.



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- › [King Baudouin Foundation](#) (BE)
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Meetings are prepared, organized and facilitated by the operating partners:



[The Migration Policy Institute](#) – United States



[The VBJK, the resource and research centre  
for early childhood care and education](#) – Belgium

*"The central problem for all developed countries (...) is that intervention happens too late, when health, social and behavioural problems have become deeply entrenched in children's and young people's lives. (...) It is time to recognise that the prevailing culture of late intervention is expensive and ineffective."*

*"Through Early Intervention the next and succeeding generations could be prepared and made ready for school, for work, for parenthood and for life itself – and a virtuous circle would replace the current vicious circle of failure. Breaking the inter-generational cycle of dysfunction and under-achievement is the greatest prize that Early Intervention can offer."*

**Early Childhood: the next steps.**  
**An Independent Report to Her Majesty's Government**  
**by Graham Allen MP, January 2011**



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Working together for a better society

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