



Towards Opportunities for Disadvantaged and  
Diverse Learners on the Early childhood Road

## Report

# Promoting the Wellbeing of Toddlers within Europe

**Compiled by:** Helen Sutherland and Jan Styman  
Kingston University, England

**Contribution from:** Annelies Depuydt and Veerle Martens  
University College Arteveldehogeschool, Belgium

Julie David  
Haute Ecole Libre Mosane and ENCBW, Belgium

Ove Steiner Rasmussen  
University College South Denmark, Denmark

Helen Sutherland and Jan Styman  
Kingston University, England

Alexandra Hackel, Timo Meister and Euline Cutrim Schmid  
University of Education Schwäbisch Gmünd, Germany

Monika Rothle and Elisabeth Ianke Morkeseth  
University of Stavanger, Norway

Maria João Cardona  
Instituto Politécnico de Santarém, Portugal

Mona Vintila  
West University of Timisoara, Romania

Carme Flores, Angels Geis and Cristina Corcoll  
Universitat Ramon Lull, Spain

## Introduction to the Report

The TODDLER Project focuses on one of the EU Commission's priority themes for 2009-2010 identified in EURYDICE (2009), by supporting early years' practitioners, teachers and students in their understanding of how to promote development of toddlers (aged 18 to 36 months) from diverse and disadvantaged backgrounds.

“The policy challenge, therefore, is to (re)build (current) systems of early childhood care and education that meet crucial design features as outlined above, that provide high quality care and education for all children, that are integrated, attractive and affordable to all families regardless social class or minority status, yet that is sensitive to differing educational needs and to compensate early educational disadvantages” (EURYDICE, 2009:39)

The aim of the TODDLER Project is to develop reflective practitioners who can promote and improve practice to provide effective early years care and education for diverse and disadvantaged toddlers in reaching their full potential.

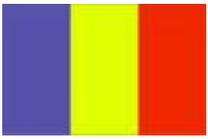
This report has been compiled using experiences and expertise from each partner country exploring the different contexts and perspectives of wellbeing that influences practice. These materials have been left verbatim, as far as possible, to maintain the context and originality of each country.

Each partner has been asked to provide a definition of wellbeing and to identify their country's underpinning legislation and research on wellbeing. This information has been compiled into a report/handbook which can be used as teaching materials in conjunction with the PowerPoint.

Contents include:

- Definitions of wellbeing
- Theoretical backgrounds
- Literature Reviews
  - Curriculum documents
  - Piece of National Research
  - Recommended Reading

These materials are photocopiable for teaching purposes.

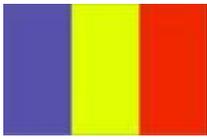


## Definitions of wellbeing

Children's wellbeing refers to their needs and problems, refers to the society and its influence on children, to families, governments, agencies/organizations and professionals. Wellbeing refers to what we do for children and how to make them better. Children's wellbeing is dependent on the interaction between them and their environment.

Children's wellbeing is centered on family wellbeing because the family is the dominant part of the child's environment. The family is the major instrument for providing child wellbeing. The family is one that meets the needs of social care, education and child health. The family is negotiating with the whole environment to ensure that the child's needs are met. The whole society is involved when families prove to be unable to provide child wellbeing.

*Lecturer Alin Stănescu, PhD*



## Romania

### Theoretical background to children's wellbeing

There is no official definition of well-being or legislation/political documents on this topic in Romania. This does not mean that children's wellbeing is not focused on. Even though child well-being is not explicitly present in legislation, such documents that provide normative in that direction exist.

Child protection is guaranteed by law in Romania:

- Constitution
- Family Code - United Nations Convention on Rights of the Child, ratified by Law no. 18/1990,
- Law no. 272 / 2004 and the regulations that were derived from this

One of those is the law 272/2004 on the protection and promotion of child rights, reflecting the international conventions to which Romania is part. Although it is one of the most important laws on the field, its implementation faces difficulties, and on the other hand all national legislation on child protection should reflect all the policies, strategies and European recommendations, given the Romanian membership on the European Union since January 1, 2007.

Given the decision taken by Heads of State and Government at the conclusion of the Intergovernmental Conference in Lisbon on October 19, 2007, to grant legal status (in the Treaty of Lisbon) for the European Union Charter of Fundamental Rights - "Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union"- Article 24 it becomes a new legal basis for the development and implementation of future strategies on the Child Rights (Article 24 stipulates specific provisions on children's rights and explicitly states that "in all actions related to children public authorities or private institutions should take into account first the best interests of child");

At national level, the new legislative framework in the field of child protection is defined by Law no. 272/2004; unfortunately it does not have the status of a framework law that provides general principles to be followed by other special laws. Law no. 272/2004 offers no opportunity to the Government to adopt methodological norms for the application of the law; items to be regulated later are specially listed and limited by law; so any gaps would be covered only by amending the law.

This law regulates the legal framework regarding the compliance, promotion and safeguarding children's rights.

The law is structured in 13 chapters as follows:

1. General Provisions and Definitions
2. Child rights

The term "wellbeing" is mentioned in this chapter in the section on family environment and alternative care, art.30: *"Parental rights and obligations exercitation must consider the child's best interests and provide material and spiritual wellbeing of the child, especially through caring, maintain-*

*ing personal relations with the child, ensuring growth, education and its maintenance, as well as legal representation and management of its assets.”*

The term is also mentioned in the same chapter, the "Health and welfare of the child" section by reference to the child's right to receive medical services and ensure his physical and mental integrity.

3. Special protection of children deprived, either temporarily or permanently, the protection of his parents
4. Protection of refugee children and protection of children in armed conflicts
5. Protection of children who have committed a criminal act and not criminally responsible
6. Child protection against exploitation
7. Institutions and services responsible for child protection
8. Private institutions
9. Licensing and inspection of services responsible to prevent child's separation from his family, and the special protection of children deprived, either temporarily or permanently, the protection of his parents
10. Funding of child protection system
11. Special Rules of Procedure
12. Liabilities and Sanctions
13. Transitional and final provisions

Another important Law is no. 123/2008 for healthy eating in educational institutions also known as the Law on prohibition of eating fast food in schools.

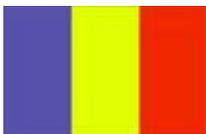
The Ministry of Public Health issued in 2008 a normative act providing a number of obligations for commercial units and educational establishments on the eating principles and recommended food for children and teenagers.

Child's diet should follow the following rules:

- Food should include a wide variety of elements from the basic groups: bread, cereals, rice and pasta, vegetables, fruits, milk, cheese and yogurt, meat, poultry, fish and eggs.
- Food must be served before the children are really hungry, tired or irritated.
- Several types of food choice and at least one favourite food have to be provided.
- To ensure the daily ration of nutrients, meals must be supplemented with snacks consisting of cereal and milk, sandwiches, fruit, fruit juice, plain yogurt or yogurt with fruit, cheese.
- The menu has to contain elements of different colour and consistency, in order to stimulate the appetite.
- The quantity of food must be appropriate to the child's age.
- The meal must end when the child is satiated, becomes irritated or loses the interest.

List of unadvised food for preschool and school children:

Unadvised food	Limits of unadvised food	Example
High sugar content	over 15 g sugar/100g	Cookies, candies, lollypops
High fat content	over 20 g fat/100 g	Fried products, pizza, burgers
High salt content	over 1,5g salt/100g or over 0,6g sodium/100g	Chips, salted peanuts, salted pretzels
Juices		any type of soft drinks, except bottled water or bottled mineral water
High calories content	over 300kcal/ unit	
Unpackaged food		Bulk foods, unpackaged sandwiches
Unlabeled food		



## Romania

### Literature Review

#### Curriculum Documents

Romania. Ministry of Education, Research and Youth (2008) *Early childhood education Curriculum for ages birth to 6 / 7 years.*

Available at: <http://www.edu.ro/index.php/articles/10133>

The curriculum includes all the activities existing within the organizational structure of the kindergarten, to promote and stimulate intellectual, emotional, social and physical development of each child and intends to achieve the following finalities of early education (from birth to 6 / 7 years):

- The free, full and harmonious development of the child's personality, depends on his needs and rhythm, supporting his autonomous and creative development.
- The development of the ability to interact with other children, adults and the environment to gain knowledge, skills, attitudes and new conduct. Encouraging exploration, exercises, tests and experiments, as autonomous learning experiences;
- The discovery by each child of its own identity, autonomy and the development a positive self-image;
- To support the child in acquiring knowledge, abilities, skills and attitudes necessary for its entry into school and throughout life.

Development areas covered by the curriculum are:

Physical development, health and personal hygiene Area:

- includes a wide range of skills and abilities (from large movements such as jumping, running, to fine movements such as drawing or modelling), and coordination, sensory development, also knowledge and practices concerning care and personal hygiene, nutrition, health maintenance practices and personal security.

Area dimensions:

- Physical Development
- Health and personal hygiene

Socio-emotional Area:

-Aims the beginning of child's social life, his ability to establish and maintain interactions with adults and children. Social interactions mediate how children look at themselves and the world around them. Emotional development focuses especially children's ability to perceive and express their emotions, to understand and respond to other people's emotions and also to develop self concept that is crucial to this area. Correlated with self-concept develops the child's self-image with a decisive influence on learning.

Area dimensions:

- Social Development.
- Emotional development

Language and communication development Area:

-Aims to develop language (in matters of vocabulary, grammar, syntax, but also understanding the meaning of messages), communication (including listening skills, oral and written, nonverbal and verbal communication) and early acquisitions for literacy, accompanying development in each of the other areas.

Area dimensions:

- Language and communication development
- Developing reading and writing permissions

Cognitive development Area:

- defined in terms of the child's ability to understand relationships between objects, phenomena, events and people beyond their physical characteristics. This area includes logical thinking and problem solving skills, basic mathematical knowledge and those regarding the world and the environment.

Area dimensions:

- Logical thinking and problem solving development
- Basic mathematical knowledge and skills; knowledge and understanding of the world.

Capacities and attitudes in learning Area:

- refers to how the child engages in an learning activity how to approach learning tasks and contexts, and his attitude towards interaction with the environment and people around, beside skills and abilities listed in the other areas of development.

Area's dimensions:

- Curiosity and interest
- Initiative
- Persistence in activity
- Creativity

## National Research

The Project on the Respect for Children's Rights in Romania - conducted by the Federation of NGOs for Child - FONPC in September 2007 - July 2008, financed by UNICEF Romania and France MFA.

The Country Report gives the broad picture, focusing mainly on describing the set of laws that became enforced on January 1st 2005. The Country Report is highly technical and it points out most of all the changes to some legal texts and procedures, failing to provide an effective analysis of the progress made in relation to the application of laws and of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

This project involved a total number of 83 NGOs and professional associations and experts in the field of child protection and wellbeing. Representatives of these associations and organizations have made available to the Federation materials (reports, studies, research, case studies etc) and have directly participated in working groups in this project.

They organized 11 working groups and three workshops in Bucharest and in other regions of the country (Cluj-Napoca, Timisoara, Iasi). Each working group was coordinated by a professional representative of an organization / association, an expert in the child protection and wellbeing.

The report contains few concrete examples or statistical data for the general principles of child rights and civil liberties. Moreover, the overall feature of the report is to analyze and interpret in a theoretical manner the convention articles' formulations.

In other words, the report is presented rather as a statement of intent of what should be done and not what has actually been done. A serious analysis to highlight the serious situation of child rights observance in Romania in accordance with the requirements and provisions set out in the Convention is missing.

## Recommended Reading

Lecturer Alin Stănescu, PhD, (2007) *Child Wellbeing – course support*, University of Bucharest, Faculty of Sociology and Social Work.

The book is a course for social work students without being available to be purchased by the public. The subject of child wellbeing is approached in an extensive and theoretical manner.

The main topics are:

1. Introduction to child wellbeing
2. Child growth and development
3. Child rights convention
4. Principles of child protection rights
5. Definitions and indicators
6. Social policy for child wellbeing
7. Child in difficulty
8. National adoption
9. Abuse and maltreatment