Introduction

In the debate within the profession about quality standards in ECEC centres, it is becoming increasingly clear that team diversity, in which female and male ECEC workers with different cultural and professional backgrounds and biographies work together, is a real gain for a team’s development and for its educational work. However, for this to become the norm, ECEC centre managers and ECEC workers must perceive this diversity within teams as a strength and recognise the role it plays in actively shaping teams. If we consider this in terms of ‘broader inclusivity’\(^1\), it can be said that a conscious and considered diversity among the team of ECEC workers is not just beneficial for children and parents, but is in fact a necessity. Diverse teams can better meet the quality standards of ECEC centres and have a better awareness of, sensitivity to and support for children with diverse backgrounds, different inclinations, competences and interests; they can also more easily identify and deal with discrimination. What is more, having a diverse ECEC team can also improve cooperation with parents.

The current shortage of qualified ECEC workers in many regions of Germany provides an opportunity for ECEC centres to diversify. Heterogeneous and multi-professional ECEC teams, however, do not just develop out of thin air. Rather, ECEC providers and centres are called upon to develop and implement strategies that will attract new groups of people, such as people with a migration background\(^2\), men, male and female career changers from very different professions and academically qualified ECEC workers to work in ECEC centres. In addition, a consciously reflective attitude and (further) training is required among ECEC centre managers and teams so that heterogeneous teams really can put into practice the aforementioned quality expectation of better inclusion. Team diversity plays a decisive role in realising the quality expectation of ‘inclusion in ECEC centres’.\(^3\) There is unfortunately a lack of empirical knowledge on this subject which might be made use of. We at the “Men in ECEC Centres” Coordination Centre can bring examples of gender themes in everyday practical work in ECEC centres as this forms part of our work focus. However, to our mind, it is very important to go beyond gender to include other dimensions of heterogeneity. With our experiences in mind, we therefore attempt in the following to highlight links to other dimensions of heterogeneity in teams. We see this text as a support tool for dealing with heterogeneity in teams in cases where they have become more heterogeneous due to the recruitment of new groups of people.

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1. When we talk about ‘broader inclusivity’ we are referring to the inclusion of plural aspects of diversity. Kersten Reich (2012) describes five necessary standards for inclusion in his book *Inklusion und Bildungsgerechtigkeit*: 1. Practising ethno-cultural fairness and reinforcing anti-racism 2. Creating gender equality and doing away with sexism 3. Allowing diversity of social life forms and preventing discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation 4. Expanding equality of opportunity across socio-economic groups 5. Creating equal opportunities for people with disabilities. In their article *Heterogenität als Grundbegriff inklusiver Pädagogik*, Frederike Heinzel and Annette Frengel (2012) speak about the fact that “inclusive education is distinguished from all other educational approaches by the fact that it is fully committed to the model of the diverse learning group.”

2. The term migration background should take into consideration the influence that migration has on the living situation in Germany’s majority society. The term bears the risk, however, of alienating or stereotyping certain groups in society. Furthermore, it is a term that often goes hand in hand with discreditation and discrimination.

3. Written communication from the “Fachstelle Kinderwelten” as part of comments on this text.
Reasons for forming diverse teams in ECEC centres

There are various reasons why ECEC providers and centres work to create diverse teams and attract new groups of people. Increasing the percentage of representatives of new groups like men, male and female immigrants, career changers and graduates in child education goes hand in hand with the increasingly wish for the educational staff in ECEC centres to reflect the diversity of their clientele (children and parents). The promise of better quality inherent in the debate about diversity in the profession can find a place in ECEC centres and enrich the everyday work there by integrating different life models and behaviours accompanied by the concomitant consideration. Diversity among ECEC workers increases the likelihood of reflection, by all those involved, about stereotypes and norms within society, such as a gender-based division of work assignments, or reinforcing stereotypical images of “men” or “women” or “immigrants” or “Germans”. If this process of self-critical reflection is successful, this also puts ECEC workers in a position to professionally implement inclusive educational practices in the broader sense, as described above. Another argument in favour of this is the increasing need for qualified ECEC workers and the chance this provides to diversify ECEC teams. People with a migration background, men, career changers and graduates in child education have been extremely underrepresented in ECEC centres up to now and it is hoped that they can, under certain circumstances, be attracted in greater numbers to the profession of ECEC worker. What is more, in the discourse taking place in the profession, there are additional arguments in favour of attracting people from new groups and more multi-professional teams; however, some of these refer only to specific groups. These arguments are briefly outlined in the following (see Cremers/Krabel/Calmbach 2010).

“More Men in ECEC Centres”

Increasing the percentage of male ECEC workers goes hand in hand with a desire for more gender equality. More male ECEC workers in ECEC centres – it is assumed – could lead to a breakdown of outdated and obsolete ideas about men and gender, thus increasing levels of professionalism. One female ECEC centre manager interviewed as part of the “Male ECEC workers in ECEC Centres” research project put it as follows:

“However unusual the encounter between a very young child and a man might be – with the adult as a kind of father substitute, you might say – it is an encounter where a great deal of physical contact can take place. So much loving care, so much affection. That is something that not all children and not all adults experience in their everyday lives. And seeing and experiencing that directly also makes it easier in my opinion to do away with entrenched ideas about stereotypical roles.” (see Cremers et al., p. 54)

In this context, it is vital for both male and female ECEC workers not to be forced into gender-stereotyped roles in the ECEC centres they work in and/or get stuck in such roles themselves. Rather, their individual competences and interests should be realised and promoted with by others and by themselves. Thus, male ECEC workers should not only be responsible for leading sports, craftsmanship or technical activities with the children. What is more, both male and female ECEC workers should be motivated to broaden the – also sometimes limited and gender-stereotyped – scope of their own activities. A mixed-gender team can help members look more critically at their own gender stereotypes and help raise awareness of gender-conforming behaviour and move beyond this.
Attracting people with a migration background

One of the reasons why many ECEC centres increasingly want men and women with a migration background is that it is believed such team members can help make the centre more accessible for parents and children who themselves have a migration history. Thus, it is hoped that certain parents with a migration background will feel better represented and/or better understood in ECEC centres with ECEC workers with a migration background, and that barriers which make it difficult for them to participate in the everyday events at the centre can be broken down more easily in this way. The following summary of some points made by one ECEC centre manager show that employing ECEC workers with a migration background can certainly have such a positive effect:

It became very clear when we had a male Turkish trainee here. Many of the fathers with a Turkish background used the opportunity to come here and talk with him. The fact that he could speak and understand Turkish was just as important in this respect as the fact that he was a man. Of course the fathers were sometimes surprised when he contradicted them, speaking as a trainee from the perspective of the ECEC centre and a future professional ECEC worker. However, it was very clear that he had built bridges. (see Cremers et al., p. 55)

There is continued hope that ECEC workers with different language backgrounds can also support and respect children in their respective ‘mother tongue’.

Another reason given for employing more people with a migration background is that well-functioning and well-integrated intercultural teams can act as role models “for the clientele, for external cooperation partners and for the social environment as successful examples of equal and productive intercultural work” (Gaitanides 2010, p. 153).

Attracting male and female career changers

Those working in the area of elementary education who speak out in favour of opening up the way for more career changers to train as ECEC workers and work in ECEC centres generally quote the ‘more team diversity’ argument. Career changers, they say, bring in new competences and resources from their original training and practical work experience and from their wealth of experience in life, which benefit both the children and the staff at ECEC centres. What is more, these competences and resources can also be used as a unique feature in the ECEC centre’s concept planning, depending on what professional experience, resources and competences are present. Until now, older people, however, have had a relatively difficult time starting a new career as an ECEC worker, partly because the three-year training period is unpaid. This is why an increasing number of part-time training courses with in-service training have recently been developed, where ECEC workers in training work in ECEC centres from the beginning of their training course and are paid. This should make it easier for people interested in changing careers to take up the profession of ECEC worker.

Nevertheless, such efforts are in their initial phases and practical experience has shown that both the training locations (workplace and college) and the career changers in question currently have a lot of structural problems to contend with and that these often affect the team dynamics in ECEC centres. In Berlin, for example, career changers are often included in the ECEC worker-to-child ratio figures, even though they are at the beginning of their training and still need to become familiar with their new work; this generally requires on-the-job training, but there is often no time for this, due to the already-overstressed ECEC worker-to-child ratio in ECEC centres in Berlin (and elsewhere). In other German federal states, by comparison, career changers are not seen as regular members of staff, but
this also means that trainees are generally badly paid and career changers cannot live from what they earn.

**ECEC ECEC worker as a university-level qualification**

For some time now, the discussions about multi-professional teams has included a demand for the profession of ECEC ECEC worker to be raised to a higher academic level and for ECEC centres to be paid more respect in society as institutes of education, and some progress has been made in moving towards that. There are now more than 90 courses of study at universities of applied sciences and other universities in the area of education and early childhood education in which graduate ECEC workers gain a qualification to work in the area of ECEC facilities. The result is that high school graduates qualified to enter higher education are increasing in importance as a target group, especially for management positions.

**New groups of people – possible effects on team dynamics**

While some practical knowledge has been gained from work practices, there has been little empirical research into the concrete effects on ECEC teams of the (increased) employment of people with migration background, men, career changers and graduate ECEC workers. The German federal programme “More Men in ECEC Centres”, which was initiated in 2010, has provided a larger corpus of knowledge about possible team conflicts and dynamics in mixed-gender ECEC teams (see Cremers et al. 2012; Neubauer 2012). By comparison, there is little documented practical knowledge and research into intercultural team developments in ECEC centres (see Sulzer 2013). Even greater is the lack of research with respect to the two other new target groups – career changers and graduate ECEC workers – which is why we (must) try to apply knowledge about the possible team conflicts and dynamics that (may) arise in mixed-gender teams to other aspects of diversity.

Examples of some team dynamics and possible difficulties are described in the following; these (can) arise in particular in mixed-gender teams, but, we believe, are also to be expected in teams with other heterogeneity aspects.

**Developments in mixed-gender teams**

The fact that male ECEC workers are rare in ECEC centres can lead to them having a special status, meaning that men in ECEC centres are often paid special attention. As such, experience gained in the ESF model programme “MORE Men in ECEC Centres” showed that while men were basically accepted and wanted in ECEC centres, closer inspection reveals that this acceptance is often only superficial. Men in ECEC centres are judged by different standards to their female colleagues, and their work and competence is often questioned. Their ‘special’ status merely has to do with the fact that gender stereotypes still have an effect in society, resulting in specific gender-based territories in institutions. If men encroach on territories that are traditionally seen as female, such as ECEC centres, this can lead to a situation where their female colleagues see those men’s work in a different, and therefore special, light than they would regard the work of a new female colleague. “Is he doing that right, can he do it right, will he manage it? Does he know how to cope with children? What if I ask him to plait a child’s hair, for example, will the result be a decent hairdo?”

It is seen as normal and natural for women to work in ECEC centres, and that is combined with the unquestioning assumption that often accompanies such notions, namely that new female colleagues are also able to competently complete stereotypical female tasks at work. When women begin work at an ECEC centre, they subject to less scrutiny than men. On closer inspection, the revealed diverse
nature of a ‘purely female team’ would reveal why, against the background of using aspects of diversity, a gender-based reflection is useful and beneficial not only for mixed-gender teams, but also for groups that are homogenous in terms of gender.

Another significant aspect of this special role of men in ECEC centres is that they introduce a ‘novel’ element into such centres, in contrast to the ‘usual’, or this is expected of them. Research on this subject has shown that male ECEC workers always prefer to lead sport and movement activities, and/or it is expected that they do so. They also engage more often in ‘rough and tumble’ with the children and are generally more willing to allow the children to engage in more risky behaviour than their female colleagues (see, among others, Aigner/Rohrmann 2012 and Cremers et al. 2010).

In addition, reports from actual experience as well as research show that ECEC managers and ECEC workers react to unusual and new working styles or activities in different ways and depending on the situation. Thus, one female ECEC centre manager told how a male ECEC worker, who was the only man working in her facility at the time of interview, had had the spontaneous idea on a hot summer’s day of hosing the children down with a water hose. The children were enthusiastic about the activity and had a lot of fun. Two of the female ECEC workers, however, were troubled by the “wild” water games and as they also got wet, they complained to the centre manager. They motivating the children to splash each other with water as counterproductive to their function as role models. The ECEC manager subsequently brought up the topic at a team session, making sure, however, that the subject of “splashing with water” was not treated as a gender conflict, but as a professional educational matter. During the team discussion, it turned out that other female ECEC workers supported the male ECEC worker and his actions. Ultimately, the team even decided to anchor the subject of ‘water splashing’ in its concept plan. In this case, an activity that had been unusual for that particular ECEC centre and which was introduced by a man, led to an internal debate among the team members about goals and quality standards (see Cremers/Krabel 2012, p. 67f).

This stands in stark comparison to the interview statement from one male ECEC worker who said he allowed the children to take part in “wilder and more dangerous” activities such as climbing up high trees during his initial period of working at his ECEC centre. However, he soon learned that the (female) team felt very uneasy with this and so he stopped doing it. In the interview he said: “I would rather just avoid without some learning activities rather than rub someone up the wrong way.” (ibid, p. 68).

The examples outlined here highlight potential areas of conflict that can occur when male ECEC workers are employed. The conflicts in these examples were solved in different ways, or not at all. They make clear that (apparently) gender-typical working and communication styles can become an issue in ECEC centres and these need to be dealt with professionally. This also includes both personal and team (self-)reflection on gender stereotypes, whether in a mixed-gender group of in a same-gender group.

Another important issue in connection with the special situation of men in ECEC centres is the generalised suspicion of men. This term refers to the fact that men in ECEC centres are suspected, again and again, of being potential child abusers. As the following quotes by two male trainee ECEC workers make clear, while male ECEC workers might deal in different ways with this generalised suspicion concerning abuse, it affects their work in one way or another.
“I had great difficulty at the beginning letting the children come close to me at all. (…) It was just that I was consciously worried and afraid that someone might interpret it in the wrong way.”

“When a child comes to me and wants a cuddle and I also feel like cuddling, then it’s not a problem for me, I just have a cuddle with them. Jumping to conclusions about sexual abuse is not okay of course. But it is a difficult and delicate issue.” (see Cremers/Krabel 2012, p. 71).

Generalised suspicion regarding abuse can lead trainee and qualified male ECEC workers to feel insecure and can restrict them in their everyday work. It is important for ECEC managers to seek direct dialogue with the men in such situations and speak with them together with the team about how generalised suspicion can be dealt with. However, surveys and reports from everyday work have shown that some men reject such open discussion of the subject as generalised suspicions have not (yet) played a role in their own work history. In view of the relevance of the subject, however, there is no way of avoiding closer examination of this issue (see chapter Fehler! Verweisquelle konnte nicht gefunden werden, in this publication).

What ultimately must be kept in mind is that the “MORE men in ECEC centres” hype also met with resistance. The public debate and the great interest at the present time in increasing the percentage of male ECEC workers can lead female ECEC workers, who have been doing a good job in ECEC centres for a long time, to feel offended and defensive. This applies not only specifically when male ECEC workers are actively sought and recruited, but also when employing men is justified by arguing that they can compensate for assumed deficits in the educational work of female ECEC workers as well as statements to the effect that men work more professionally in many ways, something that is expressed clearly in the following comments by a female trainee ECEC worker:

“And a man can perhaps contribute more new aspects than a woman. When I put it like that, I feel put down as a woman. It has always been a female profession and now the men are coming to make everything better. I mean, I’m not a hardcore feminist or anything like that. (…) But the idea that men can do things better really hits you in the guts. I am happy for any man to do his job, but it makes you think. (…). It’s not really talked about openly. I don’t always want to say that I’m jealous.” (Cremers/Krabel 2012, p. 69).

It is difficult to say whether feelings of offence and rivalry have become widespread among female ECEC workers because of the “MORE men in ECEC centres” debate. This partly has to do with the fact that female ECEC workers and trainee ECEC workers don’t necessarily find it easy to express these negative feelings. In ECEC centres, however, negative feelings of this kind can lead to tension and conflicts at work and these should be considered and dealt with.

The effects of different migration backgrounds

Employing ECEC workers with a migration background can lead to conflicts and educational practices becoming ethnicised. Gaitanides, who works with intercultural teams of social workers, writes that, while intercultural teams that are well-integrated with one another act as role models, the way to achieving such teams is often a long and winding path. In his opinion, intercultural teams do not develop organically, but it involve “an intense and systematic learning process.” (Gaitanides 2010, p. 153). One element in this learning process, for example, is dealing with the assignment of specific characteristics based on ethnicity. Typical assignments of this kind often flare up, according to Gaitanides, when it comes to the question of the “correct” professional ratio of closeness and distance with the clientele. As such, non-migrants often accuse their migrant colleagues of being
“over familiar” with the clientele and of having difficulties maintaining the appropriate distance from the clientele, or accuse them of not sufficiently separating their private sphere from their work (see Gaitanides 2010, p. 157). To what extent such assignments can be transferred to the “ECEC centre” as a workplace, where relationships between ECEC workers and parents are generally “more informal”, is a matter for further examination.

It is possible, however, that the issue of “generalised suspicion” of men (see above) has special significance for some male ECEC workers with a migration background, if they are used to having a more “physical” relationship with children (and adults) and therefore tend to be more vulnerable to such generalised suspicion. This came to light in the words of one male ECEC worker with a migration background, who stated the following when we interviewed him as part of the research project “Male ECEC workers in ECEC Centres” (Cremers et al. 2010):

“Since I have been working at the ECEC centre, I have been afraid of being suspected (of abuse). Where I come from, it is perfectly natural for men to have intense physical contact with children. We hug children and cuddle with them. But here? I am sometimes so afraid when the children come to me and want to cuddle. I believe children need that kind of physical contact, but because of my fears I keep my distance.”

On the other hand, social workers with a migration background accuse their (German) colleagues in conflict situations of being unable to understand certain positions or relationships because they are “Germans” or because they have a “typical German mentality”. “Such ‘killer phrases’ as these make an objective professional debate about controversial problem definitions and solution strategies difficult and exacerbate polarisation within the team in a counter-productive manner.” (Gaitanides 2010, p. 154).

Gaitanides suggests that such assignments along ethnic lines be identified in a joint process of team reflection. One possible way to begin such a process of reflection, he says, is to develop “alternative ways of interpreting” such assignments and, for example, to ask whether the closeness/distance conflict is possibly based on an intercultural misunderstanding. As such, the greater personal closeness that social workers with migration background have to their clientele can certainly be regarded as very professional, as the client might see “getting directly to the point” as tactless and impolite (Hofstede 1997 in Gaitanides 2010, p. 162f).

ECEC workers with a migration background in ECEC centres must also expect to encounter discrimination that goes beyond ethnically aspects. Discrimination can take the form of direct, hurtful insults and name-calling by parents, colleagues and children, or may occur more subtly when people are prohibited from wearing a Muslim headscarf, for example, or such people can find themselves excluded from meetings and decision-making processes. In general, ECEC workers with a migration background may be hurt by a lack of sensitivity towards discrimination on the basis of skin colour, ethnic origin or religion in the ECEC centre. Beber (2003), for example, describes the forms discriminating behaviour might take in ECEC centres. She writes about one ECEC worker who had problems with the fact that a Turkish colleague spoke Turkish with the Turkish parents: in her opinion, they should have learned German. She also writes about one ECEC worker who called a dark-skinned child “chocolate biscuit”. When confronted about this, she defended herself by saying she meant it affectionately, because everyone likes eating chocolate biscuits. And Beber also writes about parents who thought it was very good that the ECEC centre offered an English course, but rejected the idea of a Turkish-German morning circle. And of Arab parents who were accused of not
being interested enough in their child, because they never asked the ECEC workers about anything to do with their child other than the child’s eating and sleeping habits. (see Beber 2003, p. 143)

It is likely that ECEC workers (male and female) with migration backgrounds feel that they are not respected enough in such ECEC centres and that it is difficult for them to feel at ease there and that such experiences lead them to leave such centres.

**Career changers and graduate ECEC workers**

Until now, employees in ECEC centres have tended to be homogeneous and subject to little hierarchy. Differences in educational backgrounds (e.g. ECEC worker/childminder) have not been the subject of much discussion and often do not have much of an influence on the joint practical work when colleagues have worked together for a long time. This leads to a situation where staff have little experience in dealing with conflicts that might be caused by different educational backgrounds.

Employing career changers and graduate ECEC workers changes this situation, because the spectrum of previous experience and the diversity in levels of education is clearly broadened. This is a situation which ECEC workers and/or practical instructors may not be able to cope with. It is possible that career changers or graduate ECEC workers have more know-how or better competences and skills in certain areas than their colleagues. This might make working together on an equal footing more difficult.

This situation presents a particular challenge for ECEC centre teams, especially when ECEC workers feel that they are not seen as professional and respected colleagues in every aspect by graduate ECEC workers. On the other hand, both career changers and ECEC workers with a university degree often find their practical competence being questioned, because they have “insufficient practical experience” or “only theoretical knowledge”. University graduates are also often accused of aiming for management positions – an accusation that is also often aimed at male ECEC workers. This is something we look at in more detail in the following.

To summarise, it can be said that different educational qualifications can have a considerable influence on team dynamics. Even if more diversity and/or multi-professional ECEC centre teams are basically seen in a positive light, it is clear that this involves challenges that have to be taken into consideration and reflected upon as part of the team and organisational development.

**Diversity in teams: ideas for reflection**

Provider managers, professional consultancy offices and ECEC centre managers should be aware of the team conflicts and dynamics described here, which may become an issue in diverse ECEC teams, so that they can pick up on them and work through them accordingly. This is advisable, as such conflicts (can) make working together professionally more difficult. Taking into consideration the above, the following questions for the reflective process should help identify possible team dynamics and conflicts.

**Does organisational and personnel development by the provider and the ECEC centre promote the creation of a diverse team and/or reflective cooperation within the diverse team?**

- Does your provider or your ECEC centre employ male ECEC workers/ECEC workers with a migration background, career changers or graduate ECEC workers? If so, in what percentage ratio?
- Does your provider and/or your ECEC centre pursue strategies and measures to increase the percentage of male ECEC workers, ECEC workers with a migration background, career changers or graduate ECEC workers?
- Do the provider managers and ECEC centre management signalise in their external communications (leaflets, website, etc.) or at parent’s meetings that male ECEC workers, ECEC workers with a migration background, career changers and graduate ECEC workers are welcome in the ECEC centre? If so, what reasons were given for this?
- Are you suitably represented, recognised and supported in your ECEC centre? In what ways is this apparent?
- Does your ECEC provider have a contact point for ECEC workers who feel discriminated against because of their gender (this would also include the “generalised suspicion”), skin colour, ethnic origins, religious or ideological convictions, disability, age or sexual identity? If so, is it clear externally that this contact point is responsible for all employees and for all forms of discrimination in equal measure?
- Does your provider or ECEC centre provide working groups in which the ECEC workers (can) talk about/learn more about diversity aspects?
- Does your ECEC provider or centre have an anti-discrimination officer?

*Do diverse team dynamics and/or conflicts influence the educational work and/or cooperation with parents?*

- Are there ECEC workers in the team who are, either openly or “secretly”, against recruiting ECEC workers with a migration background, male ECEC workers, career changers or graduate ECEC workers? If so, what arguments are used and how are these dealt with?
- Is there a climate of open discussion at the ECEC centre that allows ECEC workers to express their misgivings about ECEC workers with a migration background, male ECEC workers, career changers or graduate ECEC workers? Do ECEC workers who are of another opinion have the chance to speak out against such misgivings?
- Does the prevailing opinion in the ECEC centre tend to be that all ECEC workers are “equal”, and that it is personality that matters, or does the idea prevail that diversity aspects influence both the personality of the ECEC workers and the educational work?
- Is the educational work and the work with parents allocated differently between male and female ECEC workers and/or between ECEC workers with and without a migration background? If so, did the team deliberately choose this allocation of work activities or did such differences “creep in” (unnoticed)?
- In the event that such differences in the allocation of work activities occur, are the ECEC manager and ECEC workers happy with this situation?
- Are there excluding or generalising assignments or statements in the team, such as the following: “Africans or Europeans or Germans are such and such”/”That’s because you grew up in the (communist) GDR”/”That is typically male or typically female”/ “Graduate ECEC workers are stuck-up and arrogant”/”Older career changers don’t like to be told what to do”?
- If exclusive or discriminatory statements are expressed in the team, how do the ECEC workers react; what arguments do they put forward? Are such statements made as part of internal team discussions?
• Do ECEC workers, parents or children act in a discriminatory, disrespectful or derogatory manner? If so, how do those affected react? Do they receive support from the team? Do they receive support from the ECEC provider?
• Have there already been conflicts in the ECEC centre in connection with the diversity aspect? If so, how did the team deal with these conflicts?

Does generalised suspicion of men in ECEC centres influence the practical educational work?

• Do male and female ECEC workers perhaps approach the issue of physical contact with children differently? If so, why?
• Are there certain activities requiring physical contact that are only carried out by female ECEC workers? If so, why?
• Have the male ECEC workers ever had the feeling that parents suspect them of molesting, overstepping boundaries with or acting violently towards a child? If so, how did they react to this?
• Have male ECEC workers ever experienced, either during their training or in their everyday work, parents or colleagues wanting to stop them or prohibit them from carrying out certain activities that require physical contact? If so, how did they react to this?
• Are there clear instructions specifying how ECEC centre managers or ECEC workers should react when parents (or other ECEC workers) want to prevent male ECEC workers from carrying out certain activities requiring physical contact? If not, what might such joint rules of discussion and conduct look like?
• Can parents insist under certain circumstances that their children are not cared for by, or do not have their nappies changed or similar by a male ECEC worker? Are there clear rules for this in the ECEC centre?
• Is it possible to discuss such questions in the team or with parents?

We see the above aid to reflection as a support tool for dealing with diversity in the team in the event that the team has become more diverse due to the recruitment of new groups of people. Furthermore, we do not regard the above aid to reflection as a closed and finished instrument. It is our intention to further develop this aid to reflection in future. We would therefore welcome every report we receive of practical experiences from everyday work and every suggestion for additions or improvements to the questions reflected upon here.

References:


