

To: EECERA Board of Trustees
From: Carmen Dalli and Mathias Urban
Re: Special Interest Group on Professionalism in Early Childhood.
Report on activities undertaken and planned 2004-2007
Date: 21 August 2006

The Special Interest Group on Professionalism in Early Childhood formed in Malta in 2004 following a series of individual paper presentations of its current members on issues of *profession*, *professionalism* and *professional development* at EECERA conferences (Alkmaar, Cyprus, Glasgow).

It has since been active and has undertaken a number of activities listed below.

Names and Emails of convenors and current members of the SIG:

SIG Convenors:

Dr. Carmen Dalli (carmen.dalli@vuw.ac.nz)

Dr. Mathias Urban (mathias.urban@paedagogik.uni-halle.de)

Current SIG members:

Adams, Kate / Bagakis, George / Barbour, Nancy / Cable, Carrie / Calder, Pamela / Dalli, Carmen / Dayan, Yael / Devereux, Jane / Formosinho, Júlia / Hayes, Nóirín / Hughes, Anne / Karila, Kirsti / Karlsson-Lohmander, Maelis / Kinos, Jarmo / Kuisma, Marja / Lekies, Kristi / Loizou, Eleni / Markiewicz, Mikolaj / Maxwell, Shirley / McCormack, Marlene / Miller, Linda K. / Oberhuemer, Pamela / Ogrodzinska, Teresa / Peeters, Jan / Rabe-Kleberg, Ursula / Sandberg, Anette / Santos, Paula / Schloemer, Klara / Urban, Mathias / Woodrow, Christine

Activities undertaken by the SIG since establishment:

2004

- held inaugural meeting in Malta 2004;
- collated a list of contact addresses to enable participants to pursue points of discussion raised at that meeting;
- submitted formal proposal to establish SIG and received approval by the Board of Trustees;

2005

- circulated and discussed papers on professionalism in 2004/2005;
- organised and held a one day pre-conference in Dublin 2005;
- hosted two self-organized Symposia within main conference in Dublin 2005

Titles:

1. *Professionalism in Early Childhood : Theorising Practice in Early Childhood Education and Care*
 2. *Professional Development: Approaching "best practice" in initial and further education and training;*
- developed and submitted proposal for themed special issue to Coordinating Editor and Board of Trustees;
 - Initiated discussion of a collaborative research project 'A day in a Life of an early childhood / early years practitioner' (project convenors: Linda Miller and Carmen Dalli);

2006

- January: Members invited to submit working definitions of professionalism as basis of pre-conference meeting in Reykjavik;
- February: Discussed and prepared joint session with new SIG on Diversity in Reykjavik 2006 (n.b. meeting will not take place because Diversity SIG is not holding a meeting and has not been approved by BoT yet);
- March: Linda Miller and Carmen Dalli met at the Open University and drafted fuller proposal for *Day in the Life* Project. This will be discussed in Reykjavik on Saturday 2 September, Room E-302;
- Mathias Urban and Carmen Dalli discussed possible link-up of activities with Diversity SIG;
- July-August: Planning notes for *Day in the life* project circulated for comment in advance of meeting in September;
- circulated working definitions of professionalism and revised papers for monograph to be discussed at a one day pre-conference meeting in Reykjavik on Tuesday, 29 August;
- prepared self-organised symposium to be held by SIG at main conference. Title: *From Skills to Habitus? Becoming Professional in Early Childhood Education and Care*.

Planned SIG activity post Reykjavik 2006:

- Collate papers from SIG members by February/March 2007;
- discuss, edit and finalise themed monograph, submit for publication by June 2007;
- hold international conference on 'Professionalism in EC' in collaboration with EC+P, University of Halle, Germany;
- finalise collaborative to work on the 'Day in a Life of a Practitioner' Project.

The links and networks established with other institutions and organisations:

- EC+P. Early Childhood and Profession. International Centre for Research, Studies and Development, University of Halle, Germany
- Institute for Early Childhood Studies, Victoria University of Wellington, Wellington New Zealand
- Open University, Milton Keynes, UK
- SIG Diversity

How SIG activities fit with aims and ethos of EECERA:

The SIG on Professionalism in Early Childhood addresses most relevant questions for the expansion and further development of early years' systems in Europe and beyond, as these are closely linked to an emerging discourse on the distinctive nature of the early years' profession(s). In both research and practice development, the SIG pays special attention to professional learning, attitudes and 'habitus', providing a forum to reflect upon these issues cross-nationally and cross-culturally. It aims at creating a space for shared thinking and for creating synergies between participants from a wide range of professional and scientific contexts.

In line with EECERA's main principles, the SIG provides an academic and rigorous forum at European and international level to develop and disseminate high quality research on the early years' profession. The self-organised symposia held in 2005 and 2006, current negotiations to develop the cross-national 'Day-in-the-Life' project, and ongoing email discussions on working definitions of 'professionalism' in early childhood are facilitating collaboration among researchers from various countries and encouraging a clearer articulation of the meanings of professionalism. The proposed monograph on Professionalism will also advance these aims and heighten the visibility and status of early childhood research.