

D 2.1 Pre-school and primary school PE teachers' needs and assets analysis report

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Content

1. Summary	3
2. Methods	4
2.1 Aims of deliverable 2.1	4
2.2 Set-up of data collection	4
2.3 Survey	4
2.4 Focus group session.....	5
3. Results.....	6
3.1 Participants	6
3.2 Needs and assets assessments	6
Theme 1 - The teacher.....	7
Theme 2 - The PE lesson.....	8
Theme 3 - Other stakeholders	9
Theme 4 - Practical considerations	9
4. Next steps	10
Appendix 1 - teacher survey (short)	11
Appendix 2 - report sheet focus group session.....	12
Appendix 3 - extended survey (distributed in Portugal)	15
Appendix 4 - Detailed overview participants needs assessment	18
Appendix 5 - Overview of themes and factors reported in the focus group sessions	19

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1. Summary

The European Primary Physical Education Teacher Program (EPRIME) project sees a need and opportunity to help teachers to reimagine their PE lessons and PA offering at pre-school and primary school levels. With it, we seek to improve the quality of PE and the promotion of an active and healthy lifestyle from an early age across Europe.

To reach this goal, 6 partners from 5 countries with 1 European network develop a teachers' education program that empowers to better impact on the motor skills and psycho-social development of 4-to-7-year-old pupils. Plus, we provide applicable resources that support awareness-raising initiatives to better include children, parents, sport coaches and other stakeholders in our learning objectives.

In order to ensure that the educational program is in line with the wishes and needs of the teachers we organized focus group sessions in the different partner countries, and set out to identify challenges and weak points at personal, organizational and system levels. Furthermore, we identified good practices within the different partner countries to use as assets for the EPRIME project.

The results of the focus group sessions were categorized into four main themes, factors associated with (1) the teacher, (2) the PE class, (3) other stakeholders, (4) practical considerations.



2. Methods

2.1 Aims of deliverable 2.1

This deliverable aimed to conduct a systematic needs and assets analysis through the organization of focus group sessions with pre-school and primary school teachers. Teachers were recruited specifically in Austria, Portugal, and the Netherlands. Teachers from other European countries were contacted through ESSF to establish the needs and assets outside of the partner countries.

In the focus group sessions, we set out to identify challenges and weak points at personal, organizational and system levels. Plus, we set out to collect existing good practice and assets available in the local environments in day-to-day PE class practice for 4 - 7 year old pupils.

2.2 Set-up of data collection

For the data collection we employed two routes:

1. **Local pre-school and primary school teachers** of three European partner countries were invited to participate in the focus group session. These sessions were organized in phase-to-phase meetings in a local setting.
2. **Pre-school and primary school teachers** from other European partner countries were invited to participate in an online focus group session.

The main topics of the focus group sessions was the same for both target groups. Each session was planned to last a maximum of one hour. At the beginning of the focus group session, teachers were asked to complete a short survey.

2.3 Survey

The survey contained questions on the background of the participating teachers, and their interest in additional training on physical education for young pupils (4 - 7 years). The survey was translated into four languages (Dutch, English, German & Portuguese), and was distributed through an online link. The teacher survey is available in Appendix 1. It proved to be challenging to reach enough Portuguese teachers in the dedicated timespan. Therefore, the survey was extended with additional questions and distributed through e-mail. This version of the survey is available in appendix 3.



2.4 Focus group session

The focus group sessions were organized for teachers from different schools, teachers may not have been acquainted with each other. The focus group leader was a member of the EPRIME project team. The face-to-face meetings were organized in the local language, while the online sessions were conducted in English. Before the start of the focus group session, the background of the EPRIME project was presented. Furthermore, we presented the aims of the focus group session.

We want to collectively build a PE specific training module for those involved in the PE of 4 - 7 year old children

The goal of today is to get insight into:

1. What primary school teachers consider PE specific competences
2. What competences do primary school teachers have that a PE training module should build upon
3. What PE specific knowledge and skills do primary school teachers need additional training on

The focus group sessions consisted of four rounds:

Round 1 - the PE teacher. Here we presented five main teaching competences that a Physical Educator needs in order to effectively organize PE lessons for 4 - 7 year old pupils. The teachers were stimulated to discuss the proposed competences and were invited to make suggestions for change.

Effective teaching competences in Physical Education include:

- PE specific knowledge
- Planning skills
- PE didactics
- PE pedagogical strategies
- Movement assessment

Round 2 - strengths and needs. For each of the effective competences of a PE teacher, write down aspects of the context of your colleagues to build upon and aspects that they may need or lack. You can think of: knowledge & skills, physical environment, social environment and motivational aspects.

Round 3 - organization of responses. Make couples among the members of the focus group session and distribute yourself among the competences. Can you make clusters of the factors that were written down? The focus group members would then define the overarching code and note if the factor was considered a need (-) or an asset (+).

Round 4 - prioritizing. Select the five main needs that CAN and SHOULD be tackled for an educational training module to be successfully implemented in your context.

The responses of the participants would then be translated into English by the focus group leader and the details of the focus group would then be completed in the structured report sheet (appendix 2). We clustered the needs and assets reports of the different focus group sessions into overarching themes. The themes that were mentioned by participants of at least one focus group to be a factor that could and should be targeted were highlighted in the results.



3. Results

3.1 Participants

In total, 100 teachers participated in the needs assessment. Fifty-six teachers participated in 7 focus groups sessions. Participants in the focus group sessions were from Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Germany, The Netherlands, North Macedonia and Portugal. In order to increase the response rate of Portuguese teachers, a survey was developed and distributed through e-mail. This resulted in an additional 44 responses. The characteristics of the participants are presented in table 3.1 and full details in appendix 4.

Table 3.1 - characteristics of participating teachers in the EPRIME focus group sessions and extended survey.

	Total number of responses
Total number of participants in focus group sessions	56
Total number of completed surveys ^a	97
Gender (n=female)	75
Experience ^b	
0 - 5 years	22
6 - 10 years	6
11 - 15 years	5
16 years or more	16
Additional training on physical education (n= yes)	44
How many hour of PE did you teach last week?	
None	9
1 hour	36
2 hours	18
3 hours	16
4 hours or more	18
Would you be interested in additional training on physical education for young pupils? (n=yes)	80

^a Some participants in the online focus groups did not complete the survey; in Portugal, an extended version of the survey was distributed through e-mail to increase participation rates. ^b excluding the data collected in Portugal because of a technical error.

3.2 Needs and assets assessments

In total, the focus group sessions and additional survey resulted in 378 factors of importance for the to be developed education program. All reported factors were coded. Four main themes were derived from the data, namely factors associated with (1) the teacher, (2) the PE lesson, (3) other stakeholders and (4) practical constraints. The four themes, and the underlying factors, were discussed with the four project teams that conducted the focus group sessions in a face-to-face meeting. This meeting was used as a member check to assess if no information was lost in translation. The final overview of the four main themes and the underlying factors is presented in figure 3.1. A more detailed description of the subthemes is described below. The subthemes were reported by teachers from all countries, unless stated otherwise. The overview of the factors reported by each of the project partners is available in appendix 5.

Figure 3.1; themes and subfactors for assets and needs of European primary school teachers for the organization of physical education for 4 - 7 year old pupils.



+ = asset, - = need, * = mentioned in at least one focus group session as a factor to prioritize.

THEME 1 - THE TEACHER

The (lack of) PE specific knowledge was a factor that was mentioned most often in the focus group sessions.

Teachers report to have basic to good knowledge of motor skills in their pupils, know the importance of a healthy lifestyle and the advantages sufficient motor skills in their pupils. If they are provided with new ideas for the organization of a PE lesson, they felt equipped to make adjustments to fit the examples to their own context. Knowledge that was reported to be sub optimal for the organization of PE included better understanding of the importance of motor development in young children and specific insight in motor development requirements for their pupils. Many teachers reported that their knowledge of specific equipment was limited and needed improvement.

All teachers reported to have sufficient didactical and pedagogical skills to guide a PE lesson. This included the skills to provide clear instructions, create of a safe learning environment, setting rules and enforcing them, providing feedback, ensure that pupils are motivated and repetition of the rules. As one teacher put it: *"It must be repeated. Repetition is the mother of knowledge"*. Also,



teachers reported to have sufficient experience with monitoring to be able to use monitoring tools. Factors that teachers reported to be more challenging in the PE setting was the more free setting of PE, managing pupils that are breaking the rules and lastly that they had trouble to reduce the instruction time in PE.

The teachers reported to be good at planning, and were used to develop a plan based on the curriculum goals. Some teachers were also capable of “*creating academic synergies*”. On the other hand, it was often reported that they needed assistance or tools for the creation of a continuous learning plan specifically for PE. This plan ideally would contain a theoretical basis and learning objectives.

The teachers reported that they understand their pupils, and are therefore usually capable of motivating them for PE. Since the curriculum is often focused on academic topic, they need ideas on how to motivate their colleagues to prioritize PE within their curriculum. In some of the focus group sessions (NL), experience was mentioned as a factor that could limit the confidence teachers have in their teaching abilities. During the member check session, also other partners reported that habits die hard in relatively older teachers. Furthermore, this group may struggle more when asked to use digital tools.

Other factors that were mentioned in the focus group sessions of some of the countries included: having a limited repertoire for a PE lesson (A, NL), limited physical capacity of the teacher for the organization of the PE lesson (A, NL, P) and safety concerns (A, NL, other EU).

THEME 2 - THE PE LESSON

The factor that was mentioned most within the theme ‘PE lesson’ was the availability of inspiration for PE lessons. The ideas included; goals setting, ways on how to include some risk during PE, specific exercises (with varying duration and equipment), setting up the PE lesson, reduce waiting times, exercises that include multiple senses, imaginative games, how to work with a large group of pupils. The (online) inspirational material should preferably include pictures with limited text and ideas for different levels. Also, teachers from two countries (A, NL) mentioned that they would like advice on how to set-up a PE lesson together with their pupils.

Differentiation was mentioned regularly in by the teachers, while they recognized that it was important to ensure that each pupil could participate at their own level, it was deemed difficult to achieve this in PE. They needed ideas for differentiation. Specifically mentioned were more guidance on how to differentiate for children with specific needs (DCD, ADHD) or combined classes.

Also, teachers report the need for some level of flexibility when they develop their PE lesson.

An asset that was mentioned by all teachers was to collaborate with others, this could either be colleagues with more experience in PE for example through co-teaching or collaboration with professionals with a different background. It would also help to have an expert available for advice or additional training.

One of the topics that was discussed during the focus group sessions included ‘movement assessment’. Many teachers see the advantage of assessing motor performance in their pupils to ensure that the PE program is a good fit. But many also report that the added value of the assessment should be very clear, and should preferably not be used as a grading tool. It was also



remarked that the curriculum is often rather vague of the expectations for PE. In line with the factors reported for use of assessment in PE, some teachers mentioned that PE should not be focused on performance (A, NL)

An asset we can build upon, at least for some of the teachers (A and other EU), is that teachers are used to employing electronic technologies such as websites and social media. Another asset mentioned by teachers in Austria was the use of repetition in PE.

THEME 3 - OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

The teachers mentioned that they need support in the involvement of other stakeholders. For one, they encounter difficulties within the school. For example with the motivation of their pupils when new activities are to be learned (other EU), or they like tips on how to make the school day more active (NL). Some teachers need advice on how to motivate parents for PE, as was mentioned in one focus group *"The parents insist that children do not sweat, that they come back home completely clean and tidy"*. Reporting of the results of the assessment tools may be helpful to involve the parents more with PE at school.

THEME 4 - PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Time constraints are reported by all teachers, this limits their preparation time, assessment time and also limits the possibilities for a personalized approach during the PE lesson. Some teachers report that academic lessons are prioritized over PE. Another practical consideration is that there is a broad variety in facilities and equipment that are available to the teachers. The educational materials should therefore also include ideas for settings with limited equipment, and maybe even ideas for PE activities within the classroom. *"if it's raining I can't teach the lesson because it has to be inside the classroom"*.



4. Next steps

The assets and needs assessment of general teachers for 4 - 7 year old pupils was used to guide the development of the EPRIME educational program. The factors reported in the focus group sessions were translated into guiding principles for the program, and was used to select the topics and content of the educational modules. The first concept of the EPRIME educational program is presented in table 4.1.

Table 4.1: First concept of the EPRIME educational program

1. Onboarding Technical introduction Objectives course Target group Course flow Learning objectives	2. Planning PE classes Basics/ code of conduct Temporal framing Spatial framing Adaptations Assessment	3. Safety Safe environment F.M.O. safety Risk assessment (Empowerment! No fear)	4. Movement & Play Sports literacy Forms of play "small games"
5. Motoric skills 3 basics Injury prevention (implicit) Adaptations (incl) What should the kids be able to do? (green/red tags)	6. Life skills Trust Community Collaboration Self award Incl adaptation	7. Parcouring Gym Classroom Outdoors <various durations>	Add on module: bigger picture / Engagement Introduction to physical activity during the school day: In school School + sports movement



Appendix 1 - teacher survey (short)

This survey is part of the focus group for the EPRIME project.
Your responses are confidential.

Q1: What is your gender

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Other

q2: How many years of experience do you have as a teacher?

- ☐ 0 - 5 years
- ☐ 6 - 10 years
- ☐ 11 - 15 years
- ☐ 16 years or more

q3: Did you receive additional training on physical education?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

q4: How many hours of physical education did you teach last week?

- ☐ None
- ☐ 1 hour
- ☐ 2 hours
- ☐ 3 hours
- ☐ 4 hours or more

q5: Would you be interested in additional training on physical education for young pupils (4 - 7 years)?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No



Appendix 2 - report sheet focus group session

Reporting of outcomes of focus group session

You can complete most of the reporting template based on the information you collect on paper during the session. Make sure you complete a separate reporting form for each focus group session. Please translate the responses collected during the session into English. Note that it is advised to have a note taker present at the meeting who can make notes and write down interesting quotes made by the participants.

The information that you are asked to report is listed below:

General information focus group session

Number of participants during focus group session	
---	--

Focus group

Were there any problems while conducting the focus group session that may have had consequences for the quality of the data (e.g. dominant teachers, last minute change of venue, etc...)?



Overview needs and assets for educational materials for teachers involved in PE for 4 - 7 year old pupils

Level	Reported factors by teachers
<i>Example</i> (+ is something to build upon, - is a need) If you have a nice quote, remember to add them	+ Build on the teaching skills teachers have + General teachers do know the needs and assets of young children - General teachers do not have enough knowledge of motor skills - Some teachers do not have a gym they can use: QUOTE "I don't know how I should organize PE for my pupils, I don't have a gym so I would need to organize the activities within my classroom or maybe go outside to do something in the playground" - etc....
<i>PE specific knowledge</i>	
<i>Planning skills</i>	
<i>PE didactics</i>	
<i>PE pedagogical strategies</i>	
<i>Movement assessment</i>	

Priority list:

Priority list	barrier
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	



Wrap-up - *Are there any suggestions from the teachers? Any other remarks?*



Appendix 3 - extended survey (distributed in Portugal)



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EPRIME Project - Capacity building for primary education teachers in Physical Education

We are pleased to invite you to join us in developing educational resources designed to enable primary education teachers to improve the quality of their physical education lessons. Your experience and perspective are invaluable as we endeavour to create engaging, effective and age-appropriate resources for pupils, seeking to make a difference to their learning.

In this European collaboration, we will be developing teaching materials/resources with teachers from three different countries (Austria, Portugal and the Netherlands), and we would like you to join us in this project.

Your input will play a key role in defining the content and structure of the educational materials/resources, ensuring that they resonate with teachers' teaching practice and have a positive impact on children's motor development.

Thank you for your co-operation.

Processing of Personal Data

The processing of teachers' personal data is carried out by the DGE for the purposes of the possibility of participating in the EPRIME project, and is based on the execution of the contractual relationship and carried out under the general terms of the Privacy Policy accessible at www.dge.mec.pt.

For any complaint, communication of incidents or exercise of rights, namely access, rectification, opposition or limitation of processing and elimination, data subjects may contact the DGE's Data Protection Officer by email (epd@dge.mec.pt).

Characterisation:

1. Sex

- Male
- Female

2. Academic qualifications:

- Bachelor's degree
- Graduate
- Masters
- PhD

3. How long have you been teaching?

- 0-5 years
- 6-15 years
- 16-25 years
- 26 or more years.



4. Have you done any additional training in Physical Education?

- Yes
- No

5. How many hours did you teach PE lessons last week?

- None
- 1 hour
- 2 hours
- 3 hours
- 4 or more hours

6. I would be interested in receiving further training in Physical Education to improve my knowledge of this curricular area.

- Yes
- No

Physical education competences

Specific knowledge | Planning skills | Pedagogical and didactic strategies | Assessment

7. I'm aware of Physical Education Essential Learning in primary education.

- Strongly disagree | Disagree | Undecided | Agree | Strongly agree
- 1 a 5

8. I have the ability to select the activities to be developed in Physical Education lessons.

- Strongly disagree | Disagree | Undecided | Agree | Strongly agree
- 1 a 5

9. I believe that physical education lessons have risks.

- Strongly disagree | Disagree | Undecided | Agree | Strongly agree
- 1 a 5

10. As a preparation strategy for PE lessons, I'm able to carry out an initial assessment of the pupils' motor skills.

- Strongly disagree | Disagree | Undecided | Agree | Strongly agree
- 1 a 5

11. I am able to select what learning will be developed in Physical Education lessons in order to fulfil the curriculum guidelines.

- Strongly disagree | Disagree | Undecided | Agree | Strongly agree
- 1 a 5

12. I feel confident in creating PE lessons that are attractive to pupils.

- Strongly disagree | Disagree | Undecided | Agree | Strongly agree
- 1 a 5

13. During PE lessons, I am able to use all kinds of material resources (fixed and/or portable)

- Strongly disagree | Disagree | Undecided | Agree | Strongly agree
- 1 a 5

14. During PE lessons, I'm able to give instructions (or feedback) to help pupils develop their skills.

- Strongly disagree | Disagree | Undecided | Agree | Strongly agree
- 1 a 5



- 15. During Physical Education lessons, I am able to define the specific teaching approaches/principles or teaching methods that best suit my pupils.**
- Strongly disagree | Disagree | Undecided | Agree | Strongly agree
 - 1 a 5
- 16. During PE lessons, I am able to respond to pupils' individual needs by promoting differentiation according to their needs.**
- Strongly disagree | Disagree | Undecided | Agree | Strongly agree
 - 1 a 5
- 17. During PE lessons, I manage to create a safe and comfortable learning environment for my pupils.**
- Strongly disagree | Disagree | Undecided | Agree | Strongly agree
 - 1 a 5
- 18. Regarding assessment, I am able to monitor the development of motor skills in relation to benchmarks.**
- Strongly disagree | Disagree | Undecided | Agree | Strongly agree
 - 1 a 5
- 19. Regarding assessment, I make use of a monitoring system (assessment criteria) for learning, created by my school, which I adapt to the context of the class.**
- Strongly disagree | Disagree | Undecided | Agree | Strongly agree
 - 1 a 5

Appendix 4 - Detailed overview participants needs assessment

	Austria	Netherlands	Portugal	Other EU countries	Total
Total number of participants	14	16	4	22	56
Total number of completed surveys	14	16	48 ^a	19	97
Gender (n=female)	14	10	41	10	75
Experience					
0 - 5 years	2	13	^a	7	22
6 - 10 years	1	3	^a	2	6
11 - 15 years	3	-	^a	2	5
16 years or more	8	-	^a	8	16
Additional training on physical education (n= yes)	11	11	12	10	44
How many hour of PE did you teach last week?					
None	2	-	6	1	9
1 hour	2	1	31	2	36
2 hours	3	4	10	1	18
3 hours	2	8	1	5	16
4 hours or more	5	3	-	10	18
Would you be interested in additional training on physical education for young pupils? (n=yes)	14	10	38	18	80

* In Portugal, a more extensive survey was distributed by mail to increase the response of the target population. The four participants in the focus group also completed the survey. ^a a different scale was used in this survey: 1-5 years = 3, 6 - 15 years = 5, 16 - 25 years = 24, 26 years or more = 16.

Appendix 5 - Overview of themes and factors reported in the focus group sessions

	Austria	The Netherlands	Portugal	Other EU
Other stakeholders				
- motivation pupils				X
+ inspiration for a more active school day	X			
+/- involvement parents	X			X
PE lesson				
+ collaboration with others	X	X	X	X
+ employ new technologies	X			X
+ PE not focused on performance	X	X		
+ repetition	X			
+/- differentiation during PE	X	X	X	X
+/- flexibility	X	X	X	X
+/- inspiration for PE routines	X	X	X	X
+/- set-up PE together with pupils	X	X		
+/- use of assessment in PE	X	X	X	X
Practical considerations				
- time constraints	X	X	X	X
+ pupil monitoring system		X	X	
+/- availability of facilities and equipment	X	X	X	X
Teacher				
- limited physical capacity teacher	X	X	X	
- limited repertoire	X	X		
- safety concerns	X	X		X
+ sufficient experience with monitoring		X		X
+ understand the pupils	X	X	X	X
+/- experience		X		
+/- knowledge	X	X	X	X
+/- motivation	X	X	X	X
+/- structured plan	X	X	X	X
+/- sufficient didactical skills	X	X	X	X
+/- sufficient pedagogical skills	X	X	X	X

X = reported in the focus group session of this project team. Cells marked in green were highlighted as a factor that could and should be targeted with the educational program.