

# TIPS & TRICKS

TOOL FOR CHILDCARE PROFESSIONALS



The concept of *care* used in the ECaRoM project.

## About this tool

This tool for childcare professionals is intended to be a short sum-up of the useful advice collected in the European early care education systems throughout several years.

It is a part of the ECaRoM (Early Care and the Role of Men) project which aims to overcome gender stereotypes and strengthen caring masculinities in early age. This is achieved via exploration of pedagogical practices in early education which influence the formation of gender stereotypes about care work and caring, and to develop and disseminate gender-sensitive materials and tools focused on caring masculinities, gender sensitive education and self-reflection.

In the ECaRoM project, we use the term 'care' in a rather broad sense (see diagram above).

The concept of *care* used in ECaRoM project includes care occupations, care for community and friends, care for family, care for nature, care for gender equality and justice, rejection of violence, empathy, care for colleagues, self-care and social solidarity.

We recommend the ECaRoM Manual to supplement this tool. The Manual elaborates on how to implement gender-sensitive pedagogical approaches in early childhood education and primary schools. It also serves as a practical guide for educators as it presents a variety of methods suitable for tackling the topic of caring masculinity in early childhood education, including primary schools.

More materials for work with children can be found on the project website <https://ecarom.eu/>. The materials are provided in English as well as in Bulgarian, German, Italian, Lithuanian and Slovenian.

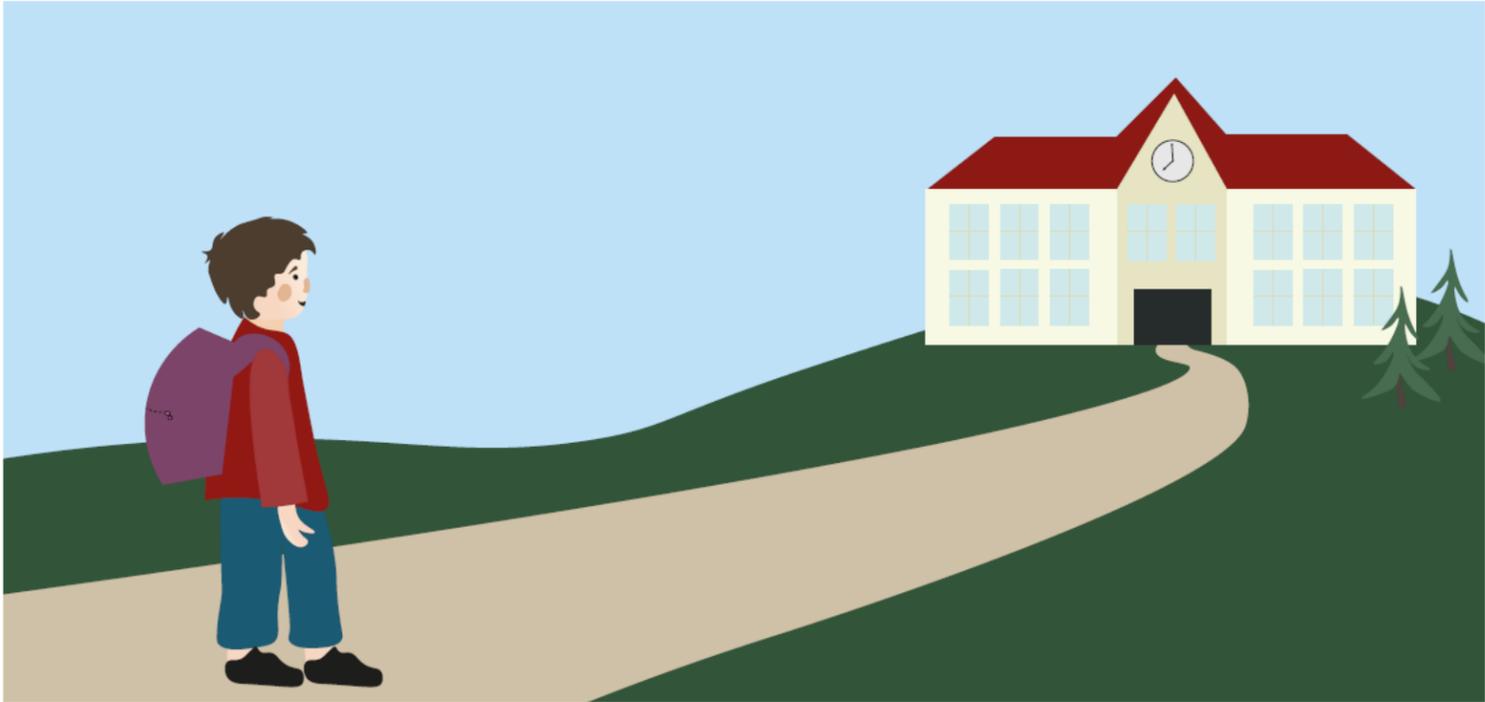


## Caring behaviour in early age: why is it important?

One of the main aims of pedagogical work in ECECs is to teach very young children from 2 years of age on how to live together and to find their own place in a group of their peers. Ways to achieve this is to develop children's behavior and skills of caring for themselves, to show them the value of care and to encourage all children to express and to show care in the everyday life for the others and for their environment.

According to the teachers that have already applied methods to develop caring behavior of children at this age, especially among youngest, there are no strictly formed stereotypes yet about female and male work and professions, and boys and girls are equally caring. Thus, this age is the right time to use such methods for learning and playing with children, which will reinforce their understanding of equal value of care work done both by women and men, and that both women and men can exercise caring professions, including to introducing the concept of caring men as real men who deserve our respect.

Teachers observed more caring behavior after similar activities. Children show sensitivity about care - they are more attentive, responsive when providing help, expressing compassion. They are more tolerant and friendly, and more cooperative when playing together or sharing toys.



## Tips for leaders of ECECs and primary schools

How you can ensure a positive environment for caring masculinities in your institution

Plan a gender-sensitive curriculum in the education plan of ECECs because the work done by individual educators runs the risk of making it unsuccessful.

Parents often have their own gender stereotypes, thus, the organization of trainings for parents is recommended.

When children are sick, alternating between calling mothers and fathers (e.g. if a child has a fever, in most cases the practice is to call the mother first to come for the child and take him/her home).

Work on increasing the number of gender sensitive materials (especially, picture books that propose non stereotyped images of boys and girls and that focus on caring masculinities and on care).

## Self reflection for early education professionals

How to ensure personal and professional self-growth



Slow down. Do not rush to react. Stop, think and only then say something. This will help you avoid a lot of gender stereotyped reactions that pop up on autopilot.

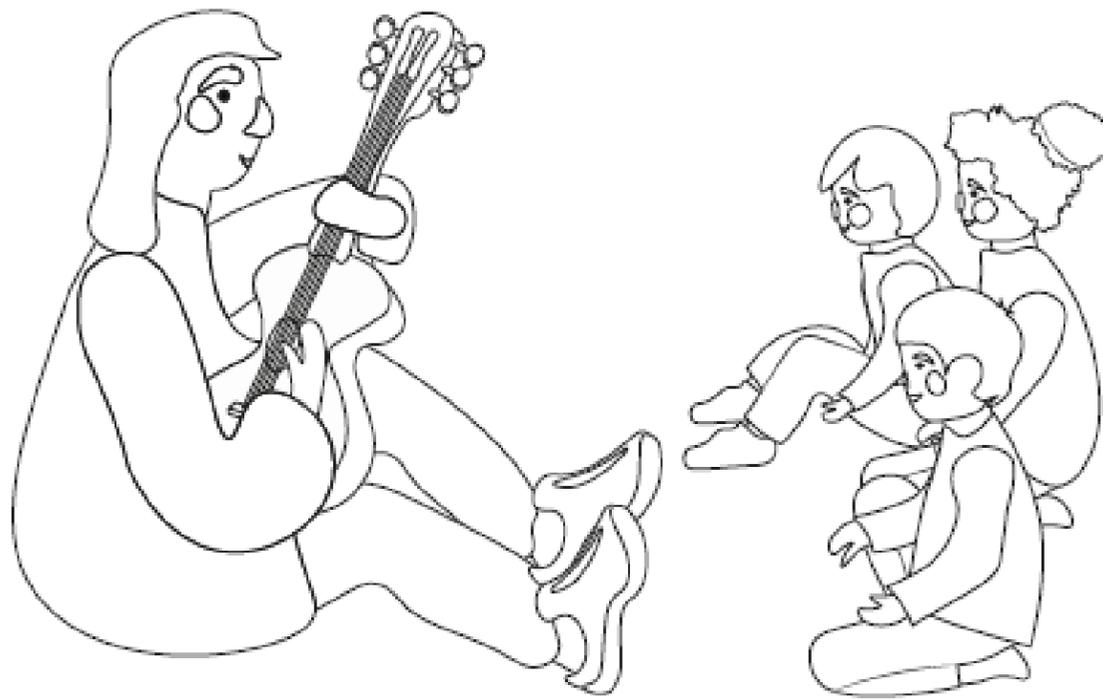
Pay attention to your behaviour with girls\* and boys\* when you interact with them. Is your tone of voice, body language, comments different when talking to boys\* and girls\*?

Hold introspection ("supervision") groups. They can be held once a month or when there is a need to discuss difficult situations and methods of working with children.

And always watch your language - it is not inherently gender neutral.

Agree with colleagues to monitor each other and provide feedback on your behaviour. It is important to note not only the manifestations of gender stereotypes, but also successful cases of overcoming them. Everyone enjoys receiving empathetic positive feedback.

You can also use video recording to facilitate monitoring. Record episodes of yourself and colleagues working with children and do a self-analysis as a team. This video, for internal use ONLY, may have some surprises you never thought possible.



---

## Work with children

### How to approach caring masculinities in your daily work

Discuss with children their experiences as uniquely human and do not categorize them into male or female roles. Support their natural curiosity and need to learn about the diversity of the world.

Use the concept of caring masculinity instead of talking about "feminine" men. Help children understand that caring is a human quality and a value that is important to cultivate regardless of a person's gender.

Do not shy away from encouraging boys\* to take care of others, ask them to help with household chores.

When introducing different professions to children, make sure that both men\* and women\* are invited to participate or are visited in their workplace. Another option is to visit different places like a museum, a park, a recreation centre, etc.

Professions can also be discussed while doing something together, e.g., tidying the room, serving lunch, watering the plants etc. (what is the name of the profession, which professionals are doing this job, what else they are doing, etc.).

Celebrate International (or national) Father's Day with the children.

If you have pictures in common areas, pay attention to the choice of each picture and look for more gender-neutral pictures.

In celebrations and daily activities, make sure that children do not receive gifts or use things that are segregated by gender.

Praise children (including boys\*!) for attentiveness, tenderness and compassion they show.

Help children understand that caring is a human quality and a value that is important to cultivate regardless of a person's gender.

Ensure conscious use of different colours in activities that do not pre-signify any gender (such as blue for boys\* and pink for girls\*).



---

# Work with parents and caretakers

## How to engage parents and family members

If there are negative reactions or resistance from parents in the implementation and processing of gender equity in educational work with children, the following points can be supportive for pedagogies working with parents:

**Ask questions:** Address parents personally. Where do the parents see concrete problems? Do parents know about the goals and the positive effects of addressing gender issues? By asking questions, you can make a connection and spark an interesting conversation.

**Listen actively:** Show genuine curiosity about parents' criticisms and concerns. Either you can already answer questions and resolve misunderstandings or miscommunications, or you may be able to discern which parents are willing to engage in an exchange with you and who wants to remain unapproachable.

**Stay constructive:** You are the expert for pedagogical work with children. Keep a clear and stable attitude and be convinced of your gender-reflective pedagogical work with children. Try to avoid generalizations and also address and specify them with your counterpart.

**Do not forget humour:** Stay calm and friendly. You cannot and do not have to convince all parents. Use your resources where you feel it is worthwhile!

**Build alliances:** Involve colleagues and people in leadership roles in these situations (talking with parents, pre-follow-up on parent exchanges, etc.). You can also boost networking between parents, groups and/or institutions.

**Keep calm:** You don't have to respond to everyone and everything. Bring your own point of view, but remember that sometimes it is not *what* you say, but *how* you say it. Slow down and take time to respond, even if your counterpart picks up the pace in the heat of the moment.

**Argue:** Explain why gender-reflective pedagogy and an examination of gender issues is already important in early education with children. Don't shy away from causing irritation among parents. Question what parents understand when they say "normal" and why.

**Persist:** Know the importance of working with children on the issue of gender equity. Each confrontation with parents represents a seed for change.

**Self-care:** Criticism and resistance from parents is not directed at you personally, but reflects a societal problem. Nevertheless, dealing with the issue and especially with resistance can be exhausting and energy-sapping. Do not forget about yourself, talk to friends and colleagues about your worries and problems and don't be too hard on yourself. Allow yourself breaks and to make mistakes.

*Parent meetings are a good way to get in touch with parents and engage in an exchange about the topic of boys\* and care. During the meetings, for example, you can show the gender sensitive materials you use or simply discuss the topic. In this way, the parents' opinions, suggestions and fears can be heard and discussed. Important: providing childcare for the duration of the parents' meeting makes it easier for many parents to participate.*

This tool was edited by Margarita Jankauskaitė and Monika Orechova, Center for Equality Advancement, Vilnius, Lithuania.

This resource was created as part of the European project ECaRoM – Early Care and the Role of Men (ECaRoM). DG JUST Grant Agreement Number 101005885.

**Project partners:**

Coordinator: Dissens – Institut für Bildung und Forschung e.V. (Berlin, Germany)  
Centre for Equality Advancement (Vilnius, Lithuania)  
Centre of Women’s Studies and Policies (Sofia, Bulgaria)  
Institute for Masculinity Research & Gender Studies (VMG, Graz, Austria)  
Istituto degli Innocenti (Florence, Italy)  
Peace Institute (Ljubljana, Slovenia)

The project ECaRoM was co-funded by the European Commission, DG Justice and Consumers Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme (REC-AG) and in Germany by the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, in Austria by the Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection and the Ministry of Education, Science and Research.

The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of the ECaRoM project team, and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Commission or of the other co-financing institutions.



**Co-funded by  
the European Union**



Federal Ministry for  
Family Affairs, Senior Citizens,  
Women and Youth



Federal Ministry  
Republic of Austria  
Social Affairs, Health, Care  
and Consumer Protection



Federal Ministry  
Republic of Austria  
Education, Science  
and Research

