Supporting parents and children with evidence-based programmes

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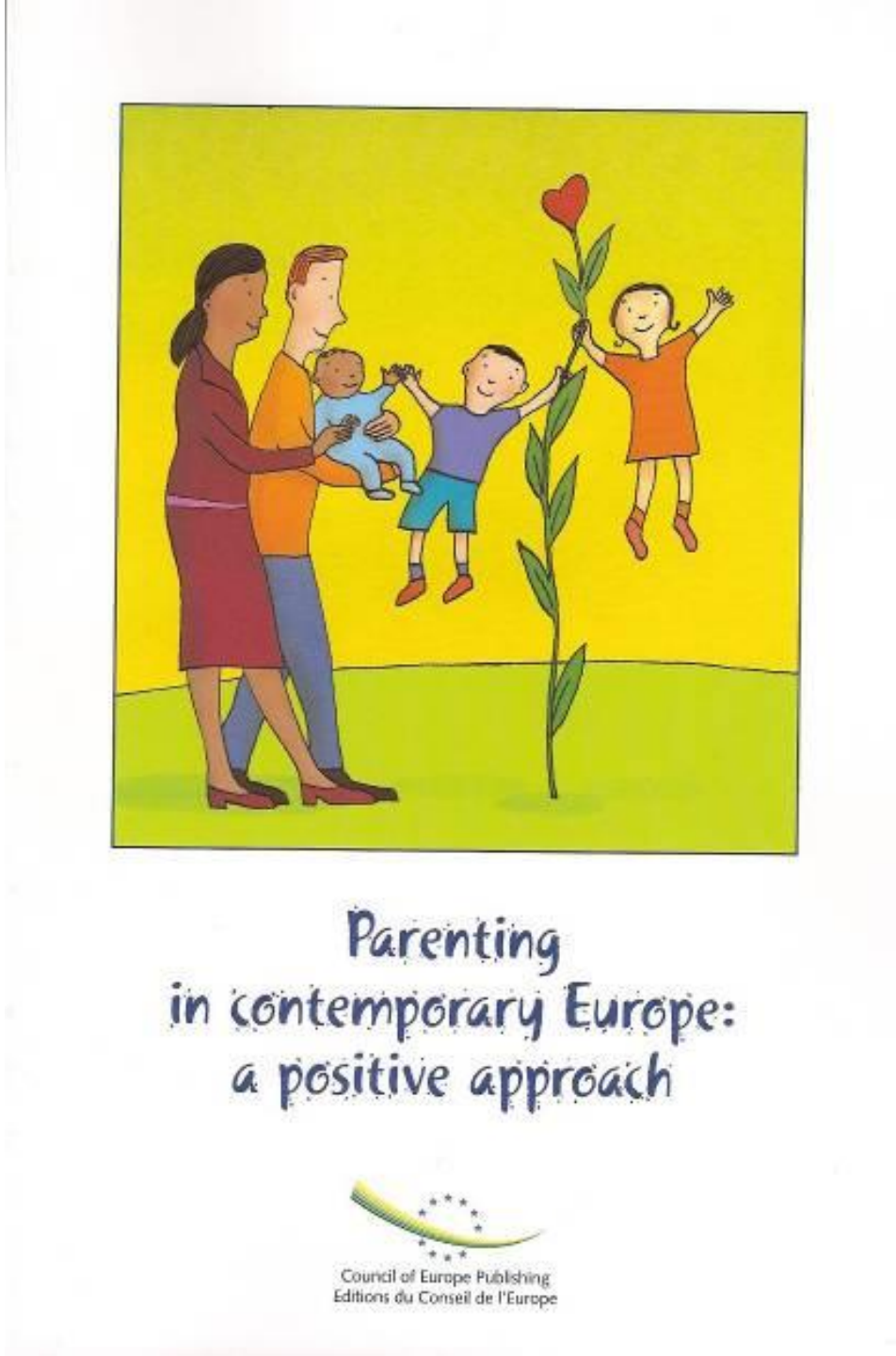
Centar za podršku roditeljstvu

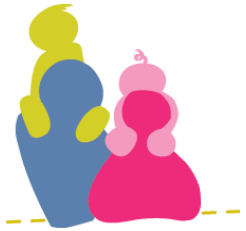
Plan of presentation

- Parenting supportive of children's rights and psychological needs
- Parenting support
- Evidence-based parenting support programmes
- Growing Up Together programmes in Croatia: Lessons learned



The four pillars of parenting in the best interest od the child

Council of Europe Recommendation Rec (2006)19 on policy to support positive parenting



NURTURING BEHAVIOUR



PROVIDING STRUCTURE & GUIDANCE



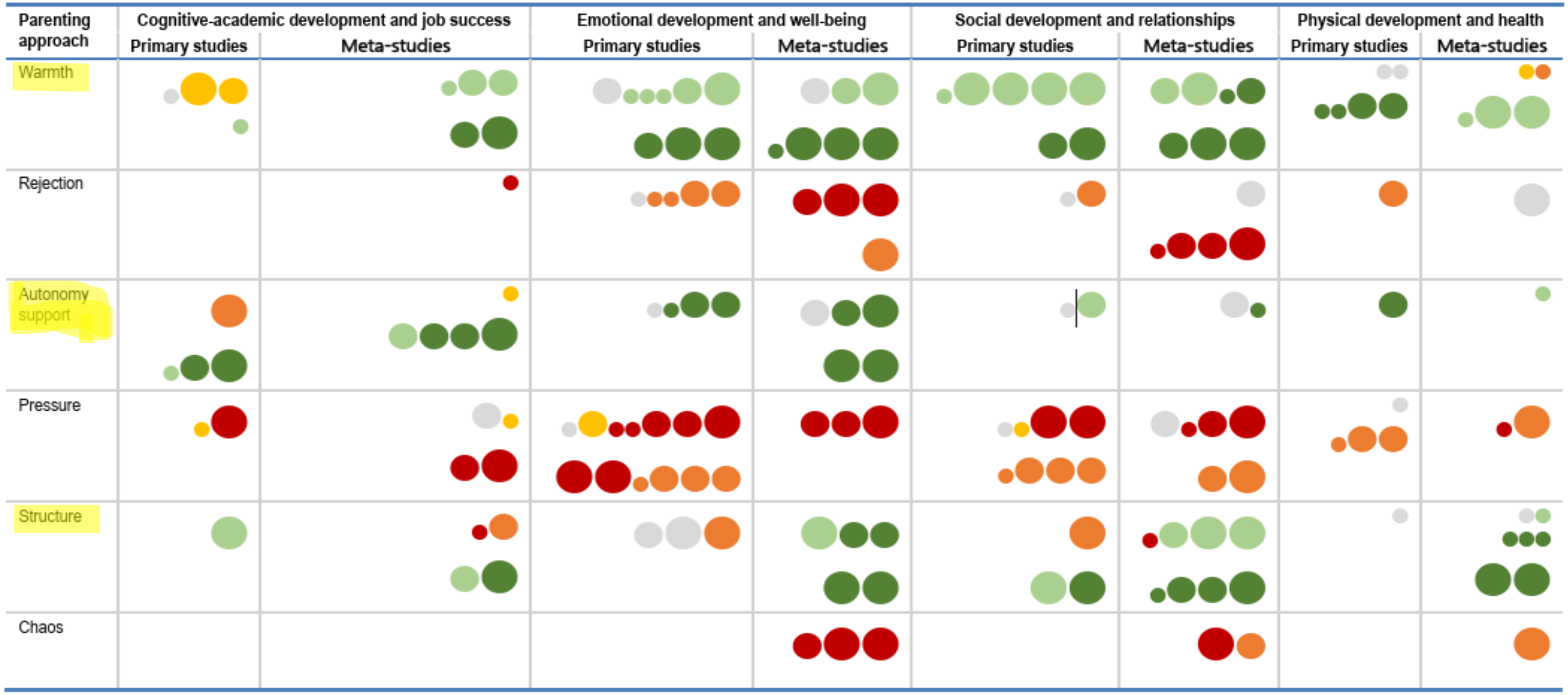
RECOGNIZING CHILD AS A PERSON



ENABLING EMPOWERMENT

Positive parenting = "parental behaviour based on the best interest of the child that is **nurturing**, **empowering**, **non-violent** and **provides recognition** and **guidance** which involves **setting of boundaries** to enable the full development of the child" *(Council of Europe, 2006)*

Associations of parenting dimensions with child outcomes (Ulferts, 2020)



Note: Size of bubbles represents sample size for primary studies/meta-studies as follows: ● < 322 participants / studies ● < 769 participants / 44 studies ● < 37,577 participants / 308 studie

Outcomes are colour coded as follows: ● = non-significant, ● = inconclusive, ● = negative, ● = mostly negative, ● = mostly positive, ● = positive.

Children's and parents' needs (Rodrigo, 2022)

Satisfaction of physical needs

Safety

Emotional warmth

Encouragement for learning

Guidance and boundaries

Stability

Information, guidance, and reflection on their parenting models

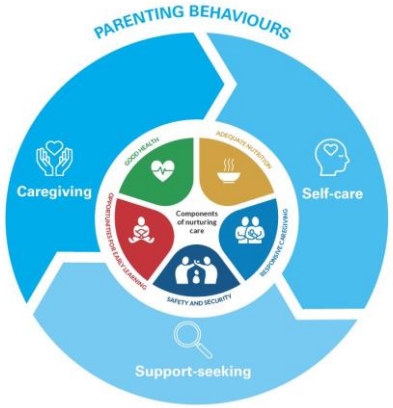
Time for themselves and for the family

Confidence in their abilities and satisfaction in the parenting role

Informal and formal social support to overcome challenges and reduce parental stress

Parenting support - objectives & types

- a set of activities oriented to improving how parents approach and execute their role as parents and to increasing parents' child-rearing resources (including information, knowledge, skills and social support) and competencies (Daly, 2015)
- child's well- being and developmental outcomes; parents' well-being



❑ Universal

❑ Selective

❑ Indicated

Common assumptions of evidence-based parenting programmes
(Asmussen, 2011)

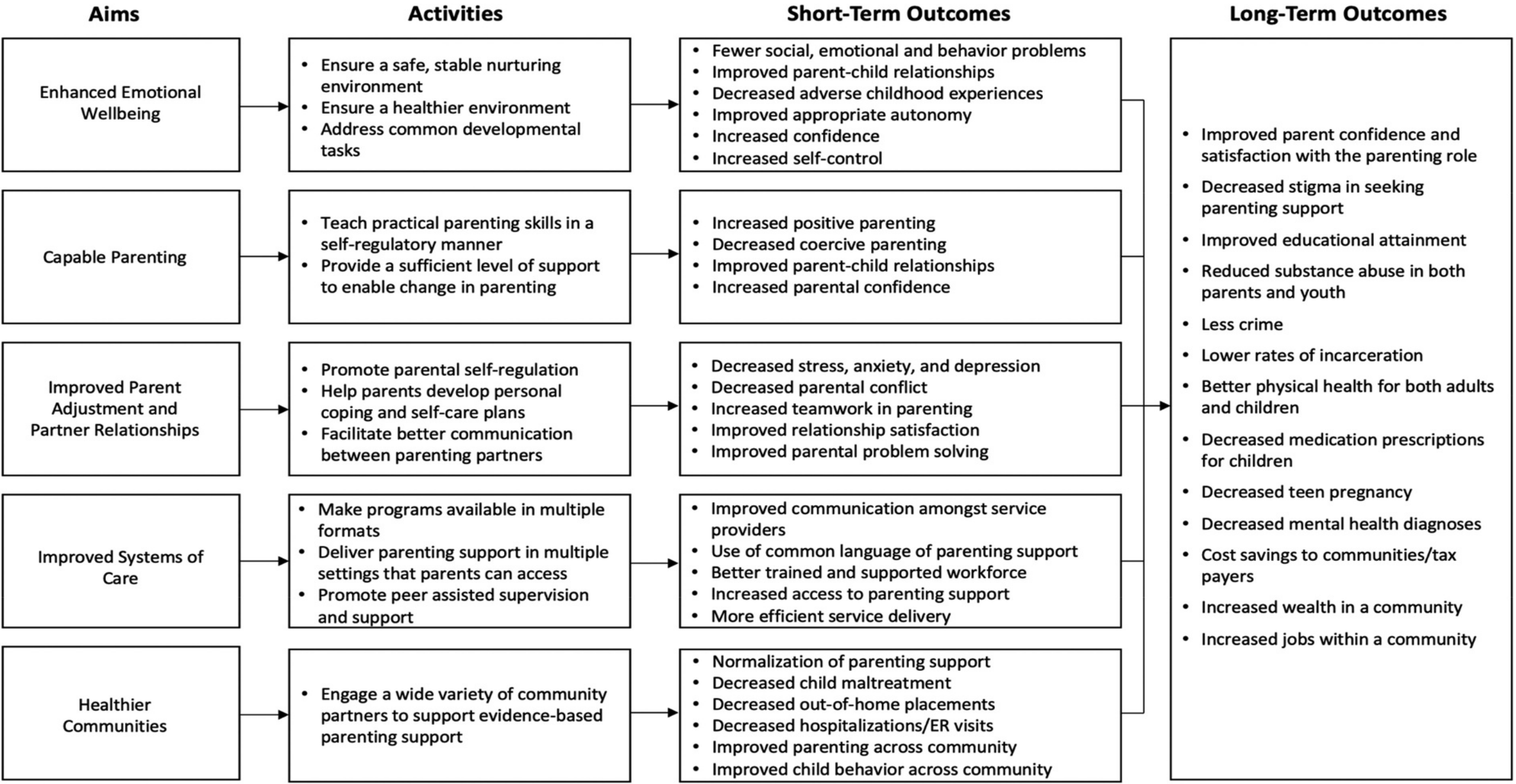
1. Warm and Supportive Relationship with Parents; empathy and respect for the parent as an individual; non-judgmenal

2. Addressing past experiences and their impact on current behaviour; opportunities to overcome barriers for establishing adequate relationship with their child.

3. Acknowledging that parenting behavior is shaped by their thoughts and feelings about their experiences, circumstances, and their role as parents; improving how parents interpret child's behaviour, self-regulate thoughts and perceive their sense of efficacy

4. Recognizing mutual influence of child and parent behavior, bidirectional nature of interactions; focus on patterns of interaction, communication, and fostering a sense of connection within the family

Mechanisms of Change in Population-Based Parenting Interventions (Sanders & Mazzucchelli, 2022)



The evidence – base

Evidence-based intervention - tested in a rigorous study that statistically demonstrates changes in the parenting practices,
and – where appropriate – shows that these practices are associated with positive behavioural or mental health changes of target group (WHO, 2024)

- early parenting interventions are effective in preventing child mental health problems across diverse cultures, clinical and socioeconomic settings (Costantini et al., 2023)
- programmes focusing on parent-child relationships and parenting skills enhance well-being and prevent mental health risks in children and young people (Kempfer et al., 2018)
- WHO (2022) systematic reviews of 435 RCTs from 65 countries - **parenting interventions improve a range of parent, child and family outcomes**: reduce negative parenting behaviours, including maltreatment, and improve positive and nurturing parenting

Quality standards in the design of evidence-based family support programs in Europe (Bernedo et al., 2023)

A total of 193 programmes from 19 European Countries (incl. 23 programmes from Chech R.)

- most commonly original (70.5%); fully manualized (74.6%), with training cost (51.9%), nationally implemented (47,6%); in public agencies (65.8%) and NGOs (44%), mostly in the social sector.
- main target group were parents (80.3%), followed by the family (44.6%) and children (41.5%); similar proportion targeted children's different age groups
- main aims: promoting positive parenting (86.3%), improving children's physical and emotional well-being (72.5%), promoting children's competences (48.7%), reducing child behaviour problems (47.2%) or neglect or abusive parenting (39.4%).
- mostly implemented face-to-face (76.8%), in group format (81.3%)

Key messages

- a large number of programmes in Europe meet evidence-based standards in their formulation (theoretically based, standardized/fully manualized, adapted to developmental stages of children and responsive to the diverse needs of target groups)
- family and parenting support programs need to be made universally available
- participation of children and adolescents in family support programmes should increase

https://eurofamnet.eu/toolbox/

catalogue-family-support-programmes

Universal, selective and indicated parenting support programs *'Growing Up Together'*

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Vyrůstat společně

growing up together

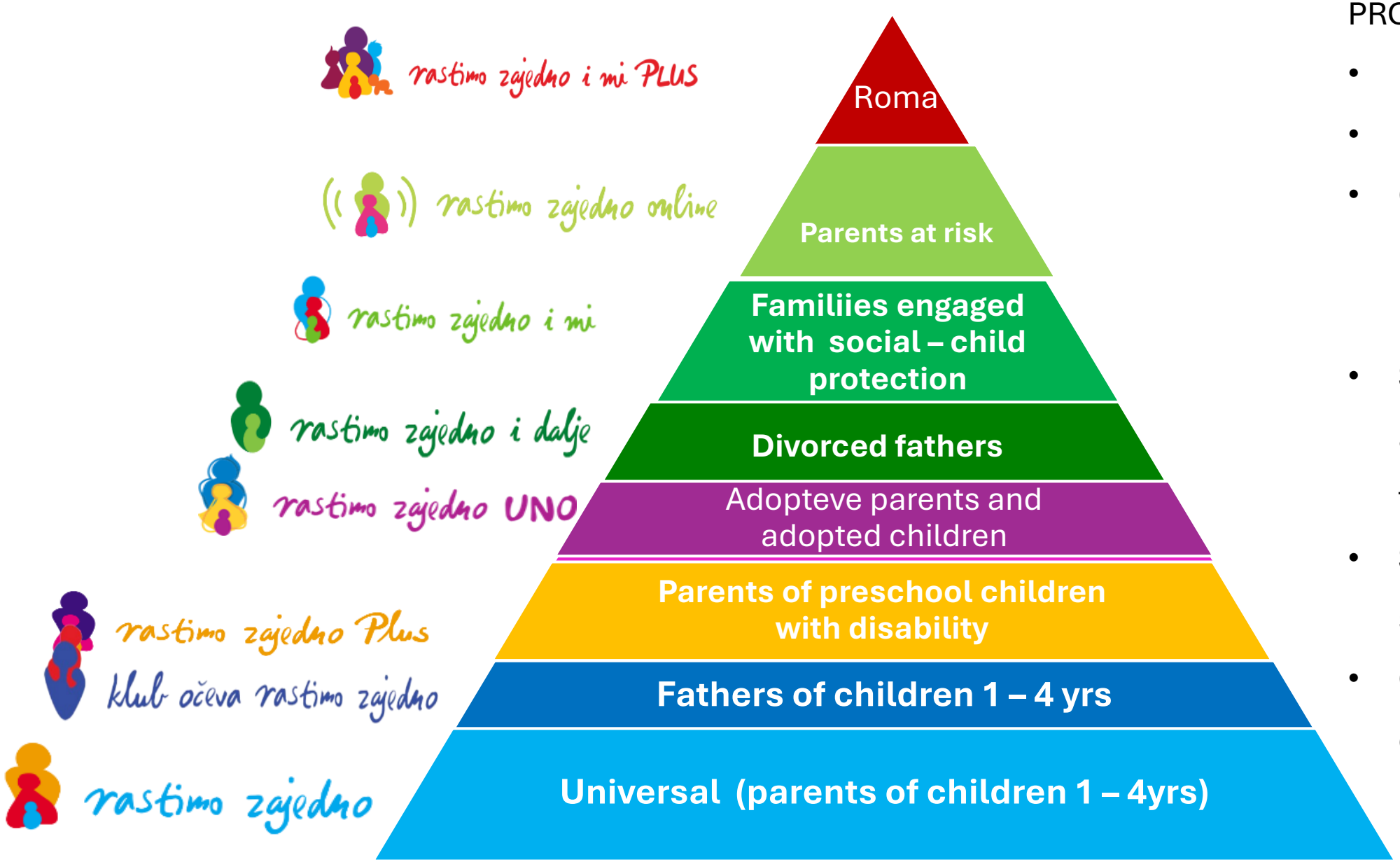
Center for Parenting Support







Right of every child to parenting support to his/her parents



PROGRAMS ARE

- Fully manualized
- Evidence - informed
- Co-created with parents and practitioners
- Standardized training and licencing of facilitators
- Striving to meet quality standards
- Ongoing monitoring, evaluation and updating

Impact on parents and children

Pre-post intervention comparisons, summary from evaluaton reports*

Parents' cognitions

increase in parenting self-efficacy, parenting experience, parenting morale

Increase in global self-esteem; general well-being

Parenting practices

Decrease in harsh parenting (angry outbursts, hitting and shouting at the child)

Increase in parents' attempted understanding of child's perspective; in positive interactions (reading storybook)

Children's mental health

Decrease in children's externalizing problems, internalizing problems and total difficulties on Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (maintained at 6 months follow up)

Pećnik, N., Nieterau, M., Špaček, M., & Leijten, P. (2024). Benefits of the Growing up Together Online Parenting Program for Families in Social Services in Croatia. *J. of Child and Family Studies*, 1-14. ; Pećnik, 2019; Pećnik, Canario, Dobrotić (2025); Keresteš et al., 2016

External evaluation: Profound impact of the implementation of targeted programs on participating **parents and children**, on the **practitioners** and **organizations** that provided the programmes and the social welfare **system**

1. Increased availability of direct support for parents and children
2. Standardization and improvement of service quality
3. Enhancing inclusiveness of support provided to vulnerable families with young children
4. Strengthening the preventative approach in the social welfare system
5. Empowerment of practitioners, professional development
6. Introduction and implementation of an innovative program based on co-creation
7. Strengthening the capacity of the social services through partnership with the civil sector (and private donors) -an important contribution to strengthening the system
8. Ensuring accessible and transferable materials and tools for working with parents and children
9. Development of a collaborative relationship between parents and professionals, parents who complete the program build trust into the system, seek help
10. Strengthening interdisciplinary and intersectoral cooperation



an example of good practice in the process of introducing innovative user-oriented services into existing systems and strengthening interdepartmental cooperation and connection of relevant stakeholders

Prof. I Dobrotić, University of Zagreb, University of Oxford (2024)



Lessons learnt, ongoing challenges…

- Multiprofessional networking and capacity building of multiprofessional teams on multiprofessional trainings
- Sustaining the multisector network of facilitators through yearly conferences of the facilitators network from kindergartens, schools and social services (family support and child protection)

  Support providers also need support!



- Continual quality assurance and program adaptations