SYMPOSIUM: Promoting or preventing play for children with disabilities in Europe
PERSPECTIVES FROM POLICY AND PRACTICE
SEPTEMBER 2017

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Play for Children with Disabilities

SYMPOSIUM CONTENT:
• Introductions
  – European Research network on Play for Children with Disabilities: Ludi COST ACTION
  – Who we are!
• Presentation of our 3 papers
• Summary and take-home messages
European Research Network on Play for Children With Disabilities: COST ACTION PROJECT: TD1309

http://www.cost.eu/COST_Actions/tdp/TD1309

LUDI COST Action (TD1309)

FOUR WORKING GROUPS:
WG1: Play related to types of disability
WG2: Tools and technologies for play
WG3: CONTEXTS FOR PLAY
WG4: methods, frameworks for play
The network aims – development of new knowledge, expertise, and recommendations:

GOAL:
• To disseminate rights and needs in relation to play for children with disability
  – to ensure children have opportunities to play.
• To grant this research topic visibility and authority
• To put play at centre of multidisciplinary research and intervention for children with disabilities

3 PAPERS:

PLAY OCCUPATION & PLAYSPACES RESEARCH

Paper 1: Lynch & Moore (Ireland)
Review of evidence and European policy: play and playspaces

Paper 2: Schulze (Switzerland)
Survey of play in Occupational Therapy Sweden, Switzerland, Ireland

Paper 3: Prellwitz (Sweden)
Barriers and enablers for play in playgrounds
Symposium Themes:
Supporting the right to play and participate in outdoor playspaces.... Social policy and practice

**OUR RESEARCH AIMS**
- To foster *equality* & promote *social inclusion*
- To explore *context-based solutions in communities: Universal approaches*

**PAPER 1:**
Review of international policy, and research on playground usability and accessibility

*Dr. Helen Lynch & Alice Moore*
Department of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy, University College Cork, Ireland.
Background to Policy Project

2015 SCOPING REVIEW
Accessibility and Usability of Playground Environments
(Moore & Lynch)

2016 BARRIERS TO PLAY
Initial review of Policy Context
(Lynch & Moore)

2016 – Present
POLICY, GUIDELINES, STANDARDS
European Survey of Play Policy
(Lynch, Moore, & Prellwitz)

Phase 1: Scoping Review

2015 SCOPING REVIEW
Accessibility and Usability of Playground Environments
(Moore & Lynch)

2016 BARRIERS TO PLAY
Initial review of Policy Context
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2016 – Present
POLICY, GUIDELINES, STANDARDS
European Survey of Play Policy
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Phase One: Scoping Review


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Figure 1. PRISMA flow diagram.
Key Findings

1. **Physical environment**
   - The physical environment presents barriers to participation in playground settings, particularly for children with disabilities.

2. **Social environment**
   - Social barriers related to physical design barriers: i.e. the physical environment underpins issues in relation to social participation in playgrounds.

3. **Political environment**
   - Insufficient policy, standards, legislation result in insufficient funds, limited knowledge, diminished responsibility amongst playground planners, designers, and providers.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Through focusing on **advocacy and change at policy and community levels**, children and community citizens in general have the capacity to participate in meaningful occupation and experience better health, well-being, and quality of life (Moore & Lynch, p. 342)
Phase 2: Barriers to Play

2015 SCOPING REVIEW
Accessibility and Usability of Playground Environments (Moore & Lynch)

2016 BARRIERS TO PLAY
Initial review of Policy Context
(Lynch & Moore)

2016 – Present
POLICY, GUIDELINES, STANDARDS
European Survey of Play Policy
(Lynch, Moore, & Prellwitz)

Phase Two: COST Ludi

https://www.degruyter.com/view/product/481918
**Policy Context**

- **International**
  - UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON RIGHTS OF THE CHILD
  - UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (2007)
    - GENERAL COMMENT NO. 17 (2013)
  - IPA POSITION STATEMENT ON PLAY FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES (2015)

- **National**
  - NATIONAL PLAY POLICY

- **Local**
  - LOCAL POLICY

**Phase 3: Policy Review**

- 2015 SCOPING REVIEW: Accessibility and Usability of Playground Environments (Moore & Lynch)
- 2016 BARRIERS TO PLAY: Initial review of Policy Context (Lynch & Moore)
- 2016 – Present: POLICY, GUIDELINES, STANDARDS
  - European Survey of Play Policy
    - (Lynch, Moore, & Prellwitz)
Phase Three: Policy review

Current project underway.........

Policy Context

UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON RIGHTS OF THE CHILD
UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (2007)
GENERAL COMMENT NO. 17 (2013)
IPA POSITION STATEMENT ON PLAY FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES (2015)
NATIONAL PLAY POLICY
LOCAL POLICY??

International
National
Local
Why review Policy?

1. **Policy** plays a crucial role in organisation of society.
2. **Play** is undervalued and poorly recognised as an area of concern.
3. **Policy analysis of play** is crucial to identifying whether the evidence-base for the power of play is evident in standards, policy, and legislation.

Aim of policy review:

- To identify the different ways **play** is positioned in policy.
- To identify how **playspaces** are represented in play policy - what frameworks/lens are adopted?
- To identify how **children with disability** are represented in play policy?
- To **compare, contrast and critically analyse** play policy to highlight strengths, weaknesses/gaps.
Methods:
Combination of methods is being employed to identify relevant national policy that address play:

- Survey distributed to Ludi members to elicit information on National Policy and relevant Ministries
- Search of internet-based sites; websites of national ministries of health, education, children, culture, sports; health promotion agencies
National Play Policy – Ireland

- Published by the National Children's Office to address the issue of play provision from 2004–2008
- Vision: “An Ireland where the importance of play is recognized so that children experience a range of quality play opportunities to enrich their childhood” (NCO, 2004, p.10).


How are PLAY, PLAYSPACES AND CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES CONCEPTUALISED?

IRISH PLAY POLICY: CENTRALITY OF UNIVERSAL DESIGN
Applying this perspective to Europe......

Play Policy Survey - EUROPE

Distributed to colleagues (Ludi Members) in 37 European Member States
Play Policy Survey – RESPONDENTS

Q.1: which country are you from:

12 Responses to the Survey
- Malta
- Italy
- Poland
- Turkey
- Serbia
- Sweden
- Romania
- Spain
- Switzerland
- Iceland
- Germany
- Bulgaria

Q. 2: For your country, what NATIONAL Government Department is responsible for children’s play?
(Tick all that apply)

- Health: 25.00%
- Education: 58.33%
- Social Inclusion: 16.67%
- Children and Youth: 41.67%
- Other: 36.67%
Q.3: Does your country have a NATIONAL play policy for children's play?

Yes: 83.33%
No: 16.67%

Q.6: What are the overall principles underlying/underpinning the NATIONAL play policy/guidelines for children's play?
(Tick all that apply)

- UNCRCPD: 8.33%
- Children's rights: 33.33%
- Social Inclusion: 25.00%
- Health and Well-being: 16.67%
- Prevention of risk and harm: 16.67%
- Universal Design: 16.67%
- Not Applicable: 50.00%
- Other: 25.00%
Q. 8: If your country has a NATIONAL PLAY POLICY, are children with disabilities mentioned?

Q. 9: Does your country have NATIONAL Universal Design/anti-discrimination policy or guidelines for play provision? (e.g. for playgrounds)
Emerging findings

• There is a significant lack of policy to guide play promotion in community settings for children with disability, across Europe.

AT A NATIONAL LEVEL
There is a need to develop ‘space-oriented children’s policy’
(Gill, 2008)

...for PLAY!!
PAPER 2: Occupational Therapy practice and the role of play

Christina Schulze, PhD
Switzerland

PLAY SURVEY PROJECT 2016-2017

The state of play in children’s occupational therapy: A comparison between Ireland, Sweden and Switzerland

Lynch, Prellwitz, Schulze, Moore

With thanks to Miller-Kuhaneck et al, for permission to use their survey
Ireland n=65  
Sweden n=74  
Switzerland n=199

Play in occupational therapy

- Play has a value and an important place in children’s occupational therapy
- Play occupation is also known as play for the sake of play
• To date, there has been little research in a European context on the role of play in occupational therapy

• The primary focus of play in occupational therapy is on play activities rather than play occupation (Bundy, 1991; Couch et al., 1998; Miller Kuhaneck et al., 2013)

**METHOD**

• Therapists from Ireland, Sweden and of the German speaking part of Switzerland were recruited to the study

• Expanded and adapted version of the questionnaire which was used in a study of Miller Kuhaneck et al., 2013

• Survey was available in different formats (survey management tools, and in hard copy)

• Survey responses were analysed using a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods
### Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Ireland n=65</th>
<th>Sweden n=74</th>
<th>Switzerland n=199</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor n (%)</td>
<td>44 (67.7%)</td>
<td>68 (91.9%)</td>
<td>68 (34.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master in occupational therapy n (%)</td>
<td>16 (24.6%)</td>
<td>3 (4%)</td>
<td>8 (4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master degree in another discipline n (%)</td>
<td>4 (6.2%)</td>
<td>1 (1.4%)</td>
<td>4 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctoral degree n (%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (0.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other n (%)</td>
<td>1 (1.5%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>111 (55.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nil selected n (%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>2 (2.7%)</td>
<td>7 (3.5%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Most common diagnostic groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Ireland n=65</th>
<th>Sweden n=74</th>
<th>Switzerland n=199</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) n (%)</td>
<td>51 (78.5%)</td>
<td>41 (55.4%)</td>
<td>93 (46.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) n (%)</td>
<td>23 (35.4%)</td>
<td>12 (16.2%)</td>
<td>147 (73.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD) n (%)</td>
<td>43 (66.2%)</td>
<td>55 (74.3%)</td>
<td>154 (77.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual Disability (ID) n (%)</td>
<td>29 (44.6%)</td>
<td>30 (40.5%)</td>
<td>77 (38.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cerebral Palsy n (%)</td>
<td>22 (33.8%)</td>
<td>62 (83.8%)</td>
<td>69 (34.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other n (%)</td>
<td>14 (21.5%)</td>
<td>12 (16.2%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Have you completed any occupational therapy courses focusing on play

Where did you learn to evaluate play?

Respondents were offered a choice of 32 assessment tools
Which of the following examples best describes your main use of play within occupational Therapy service?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Ireland (n = 65)</th>
<th>Sweden (n = 75)</th>
<th>Switzerland (n = 162)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I use play as a means to an end</td>
<td>61.50%</td>
<td>53.30%</td>
<td>82.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I use play as a reward</td>
<td>10.00%</td>
<td>30.60%</td>
<td>6.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I use play as an aim</td>
<td>7.70%</td>
<td>7.30%</td>
<td>11.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I use play in home/school programmes</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What does play mean to you
Implications

- Need to consider play as occupation more specifically in practice and research
- Need to expand and develop educational opportunities regarding play
- Need to further explore how play occupations are addressed in occupational therapy curricula across Europe

Main findings: summary

- Majority of occupational therapists value play
- However, majority also do not set play as a goal in therapy: play instead is used as a means to an end
- There is a conflict between what we believe and what we do
- There is a lack of education on play theory in occupational therapy
PAPER 3: Barriers and enablers for play in playgrounds

Examples of best practice and qualitative data.

Examples of play research papers:
Maria Prellwitz, PhD
Universal Design (UD)

Universal design means the design of products, environments, programmes and services to be *usable by all people*, to the greatest extent possible, *without the need for adaptation or specialized design* (UNCRPD 2007: 4).
“There are swings and she can’t play on them, and there is sand and the wheelchair can’t go on it. She’ll probably have to just sit all the time on the side, so there’s no point her going to the playground”. (Boy aged 7)

“Once I became friends with a girl at the playground we sat on the swings and talked, but it was only once.”

“I’m always with an adult, I wish I could sit on the swings with the others.”

”I sit in the sandbox or I sit on the swing.”
Enablers that can promote play in playgrounds

PRINCIPLE ONE: Equitable Use
or BE FAIR! (Playcore.com)
The design is useful and marketable to people with diverse abilities.
PRINCIPLE TWO: Flexibility in Use
BE INCLUDED!
The design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities.

PRINCIPLE THREE: Simple and Intuitive Use
BE SMART!
Use of the design is easy to understand, regardless of the user’s experience, knowledge, language skills, or current concentration level.
PRINCIPLE FOUR: Perceptible Information
BE INDEPENDENT!
The design communicates necessary information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user's sensory abilities.

PRINCIPLE FIVE: Tolerance for Error
BE SAFE!
The design minimizes hazards and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions.
PRINCIPLE SIX: Low Physical Effort

BE ACTIVE!

The design can be used efficiently and comfortably and with a minimum of fatigue.

PRINCIPLE SEVEN: Size and Space for Approach and Use

BE COMFORTABLE!

Appropriate size and space is provided for approach, reach, manipulation and use regardless of user's body size, posture, or mobility.
Things to think about!

1. Create gathering places throughout the playground to promote social inclusion.
2. All areas of the playground must be accessible.
3. Integrate accessible equipment next to those that requires greater ability.
4. Raised up play equipment must be accessible for all.

WHAT CAN WE TAKE FROM THESE STUDIES?
WHAT DO THEY TELL US ABOUT THE STATE OF PLAY IN EUROPE?
How to unleash play for children with disabilities?

- There is a need to integrate our knowledge of interdisciplinary good practice in designing accessible and usable playgrounds/playspaces.
- We need to shift from unintentionally preventing play to **PROACTIVE PROMOTION OF PLAY AND PARTICIPATION**.

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Thank You!
Questions for Policy, Practice and Playspace design.....

Questions....

1. What is it like for you in your country/profession- do you have ways to promote play for children with disabilities: in policy and play provision? do you know if you have a play policy for your country?

2. How can we move towards promoting play differently- advocacy?

3. How can we include/involve children with disabilities authentically in planning/designing for play?