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## Evaluation of Programmes under the Positive Parenting Initiative in Spain: Introduction to the Special Issue

María J. Rodrigo<sup>a</sup>, Victoria Hidalgo<sup>b</sup>, Sonia Byrne<sup>a</sup>, Isabel M. Bernedo<sup>c</sup>, and Lucía Jiménez<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Universidad de La Laguna, Tenerife, Spain; <sup>b</sup>Universidad de Sevilla, Spain; <sup>c</sup>Universidad de Málaga, Spain

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#### ABSTRACT

The prevention science has endorsed standards for evidence related to research on programme evaluation. However, some controversies persist regarding its application in the provision of family support under the European Positive Parenting initiative. This Special Issue aims to map the expansion of preventive family support programmes in Spain and to contrast the quality of the evidence against the prevention standards according with the European Family Support Network. Members of the Spanish Family Support Network made up of entities in several sectors identified 57 programmes implemented in Spain and filled in a formative evaluation sheet for each programme. The articles in this issue analysed the results of four main aspects in all programmes: description, implementation, evaluation, and impact/sustainability. The findings will inform the scope and variety of support provided and the quality of programmes in Spain, providing guidelines for improvement and addressing challenges to reinforce quality assurance in child and family services.

#### La evaluación de programas bajo la iniciativa de la parentalidad positiva en España: introducción al número especial

#### RESUMEN

La ciencia de la prevención avala los estándares de evidencia relativos a la investigación en evaluación de programas. Sin embargo, hay aún controversia en cuanto a su aplicación a la prestación de apoyo familiar bajo la iniciativa europea de la parentalidad positiva. El número especial tiene por objeto mapear la extensión de los programas preventivos de apoyo familiar en España y comparar la calidad de las pruebas con los estándares de prevención de la Red Europea de Apoyo Familiar. Los miembros de la Red Española de Apoyo Familiar, formada por entidades de varios sectores, han identificado 57 programas que se utilizan en España y cumplimentado una ficha de evaluación formativa para cada programa. Los artículos de este número analizan los resultados de cuatro aspectos principales de todos los programas: descripción, implementación, evaluación e impacto/sostenibilidad. Los resultados describen el panorama y variedad del apoyo brindado y la calidad de los programas en España, proporcionando orientación sobre mejora y abordando los desafíos para reforzar la garantía de calidad en los servicios para la infancia, adolescencia y familias.

The United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations General Assembly, 1989) recognizes that children's rights are better preserved and enhanced in appropriate family contexts which ensure their care, wellbeing, and protection in order to enable the child as the holder of rights to fully exercise them. The Convention emphasizes the rights and responsibility of the parental figures (parents, legal guardians, or other persons responsible for a child) in the fulfilment of a child's physical, cognitive, emotional, and social needs. Nevertheless, it took time for the international organizations and European governments to set the stage for a comprehensive and sustained child and family policy that encompasses legislation

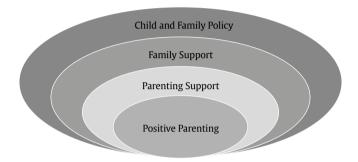
and policies which regulate and support families' living standards, functions and relations (Figure 1). We provide three examples of policy measures spread over two decades. First, the Council of Europe (CoE), a major intergovernmental organization that currently includes 47 member states, started the lead with the "recommendation on policy to support positive parenting" (Council of Europe, 2006, p. 3) that emphasizes the governments' duty to create the conditions for positive parenting. CoE defines positive parenting as the parental behaviour based on the best interests of the child, that is nurturing, empowering, non-violent, and provides recognition and guidance which involves setting boundaries to enable the full development of

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the child. According to this definition, the aim of the parenting task is to foster positive family relationships, based on parental responsibility, that guarantee the rights of children and youth in families and ensure optimal development of their potential and well-being. Second, at the European level the 'Recommendation for investing in children: Breaking the cycle of disadvantage' (European Commission, 2013) addressed child poverty and social exclusion as a key issue given the severe negative impact of the 2008 economic crisis on children and their families and stressed the importance of early intervention and preventative approaches. Finally, the EU Council Recommendation of European Child Guarantee launched in 2021 made calls to the member states to prioritize child poverty reduction policies and to develop more holistic and enabling child and family preventative policies to facilitate equal access to education, healthcare, social, and community services, among others.



**Figure 1.** Inclusive Structure of Child and Family Policy and Types of Supportive Measures Embedded in the Positive Parenting Task.

Under the umbrella of child and family policy measures, family support and parenting support provisions have been articulated to promote positive parenting (Figure 1). Family support encompasses resources and services provided to support and assist family roles and members. More specifically, family support comprises a set of (service and other) activities oriented to improving family functioning and grounding child-rearing and other familial activities in a system of supportive relationships and resources both formal and informal (Daly, 2015). Types of family support measures included income transfers and social welfare schemes, parental leave measure, workfamily reconciliation measures, and family and parenting support services. On note, McGregor et al. (2020) emphasize certain attributes of practices that are constitutive of family support services. These are the enhancement of informal social networks; the strengths and capacities of children and parents who use services; the need for services to be socially and culturally inclusive, accessible and responsive; and the need for services to work in partnership with children and families.

Among the measures of family support mainly provided in child and family services, parenting support refers to a range of information, support, education, training, counselling and other measures or services that focus on influencing how parents understand and carry out their parenting role (Daly, 2013). A common goal is to achieve better outcomes for children and young people by giving them access to a range of resources that serve to increase their competence as parents. Daly (2013) proposes the following minimum conditions to define what constitutes parenting support: a) parents are the first-line target and the focus is on their parenting role, b) the support provided is a service in kind, and therefore parental leaves or services in cash are excluded, and c) the focus is on the promotion of parents' resources and competencies. Family and parenting support measures can entail occasional information about parenting and child-rearing, organised parenting workshops or programmes, one-to-one counselling; intensive work around parenting behaviours in 'troubled families', and professional and non-professional networks and service provision oriented to reducing social isolation and increasing social integration in vulnerable families (Acquah & Thévenon, 2020; Thévenon, 2020).

#### The Positive Parenting Initiative in Spain

Spain is one of the southern European countries with an active endorsement of the positive parenting framework emanating from the Council of Europe's (2006) Recommendation 19, due to the political involvement in the dissemination of this initiative at the national level carried on since 2009 (Rodrigo, Máiquez, et al., 2015; Rodrigo et al., 2016). Spain shared the vision of the Council of Europe that the parenting task is adjusted to the needs of both the child and the parental figures (Table 1). The left column includes the features of the home environment that helped better meet the child's needs for developmentally appropriate nurturing, structuring and simulation, empowerment and freedom from a toxic environment. In turn, the right column indicates de support needs of parents in terms of guidance, family-work balance, fostering self-confidence and satisfaction with the parenting task, and having informal and formal supports to reduce stress derived from the parenting task.

To further develop the transformative potential of family services in Spain from the positive parenting standpoint, a partnership was created in 2012 that brought together the Spanish Ministry of Social Rights and Agenda 2030, the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces, and a group of researchers from seven Spanish universities (Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, Universidad de La Laguna, Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Universidad de Lleida, Universidad de Oviedo, Universidad del País Vasco, and Universidad de Sevilla). A representative steering committee at national level set dissemination and training goals each year through documents, conferences, and professional training cascading from seed groups of coordinators to local frontline providers from different sectors.

In setting the collaborative goals, the preventive approach to family intervention was adopted recognizing that strengthening parental capacities and empowering communities are the best ways to protect children, preserve their rights, and promote their development. Three common features characterize the preventive focus in service provision to families: (a) the families targeted come from a broad variety of situations according to family structure (covering

Table 1. Children's and Parents' Needs According to the Positive Parenting Framework (Daly, 2007)

Children's Needs	Parents' Needs
Nurturing: experiencing positive feelings of love, acceptance, and joy.	Guidance: having access to information and advice and reflect on their own views.
Structuring and Stimulation: living in an environment with routines, norms, and learning opportunities.	Time for their children, for themselves, and to spend on family leisure.
Empowerment: acquiring the capacity to grow up as an active and competent family member.	Self-confidence in the parental capacities to perform the parenting role well and with satisfaction.
Free from violence:not experiencing any form of verbal and physical violence in the family.	Informal and formal support to overcome difficulties and reduce parenting stress on the family.

the range of single-parent, traditional two-parent, reconstituted, homoparent, adoptive, and foster families), cultural diversity (migrant and intercultural families), and the functional diversity of children and parent figures (disabled children and parents, gifted children) - family diversity should be accompanied by the design and implementation of differentiated and cumulative forms of parental support with different levels of parental needs; (b) there is a trend to reinforce community and specialized services to support families at the local level - that means a profound change in the way practitioners understand their work with families, moving from a deficit-based approach to one based on risk prevention and building capacities and strengths (Dolan et al., 2006); and (c) there is a clear recognition on the importance of promoting intersectoral (education, healthcare, social, justice, community) work and introducing the positive parenting framework into prevention efforts in each area. In addition, these services should be taken together with the work of associations, foundations, and agencies in the tertiary sector, which means that it is important to ensure proper channels of coordination and collaboration that lead to synergies and prevent service overlap or gaps, with the advantage of offering a comprehensive view of services to the families.

Three main outcomes of the Spanish collaborative framework are the following. Firstly, an official website - familiasenpositivo.org operating since 2015 that includes an extranet with news, monographs, and materials for the general public with 420,000 visitors and 60% of return, and an intranet for politicians, professionals, researchers and students with programmes, evaluation tools, research synthesis, among others, with 2,500 entries. Secondly, the Best Practice Guide for Positive Parenting (Rodrigo, Amorós, et al., 2015) to improve the quality of professional work with families and the online evaluation protocol in accordance with those practices hosted on the intranet to be self-applied by the services, drafted an improvement plan and, eventually received formal recognition for their quality assurance efforts (see website http://familiasenpositivo.org/reconocimientos). This guide was designed to achieve a consensual adoption of best practices adjusted to services and professional work with child and families through collaborative research with professionals. Finally, the related Guide of Interprofessional Competences in Positive Parenting (Rodrigo et al., 2021) is a resource for enhancing and consolidating best practices in services for children, youth, and families also drafted in collaboration with professionals. Interprofessional competences are defined as an integrated set of knowledge, skills, and attitudes/ values that define work between professionals of different disciplines, in alliance with families, their social nnetworks, and communities, to improve the quality of the services provided and the results thereof.

#### Diversity and Quality Standards of Evidence-based Family Support Programmes

Under the umbrella of the positive parenting framework, family support initiatives in Spain have increased and evolved greatly in the last two decades, both in their theoretical basis and in their application modalities. As a result, we currently have a large number of very diverse interventions that share the objective of promoting the wellbeing of children and families. Only some of these initiatives are evidence-based programmes, that is, they are theoretically driven and empirically validated, with a clear structure, stated objectives, clearly defined methodology, a guide to assess the outcomes, and for which there is scientific evidence that they actually produce positive effects in families (Asmussen, 2011; Rodrigo, 2016). To deepen our knowledge of the family and parenting support programmes implemented in Spain, it is necessary both to analyse how the interventions vary depending on different dimensions and to know to what extent they meet the quality standards of evidence-based programmes.

The diversity of family support interventions is related, in the first place, to the target population. Thus, there are universal, selective, and indicated prevention programmes to support families with different levels of needs (Canavan et al., 2016; Gordon, 1987). These levels of prevention are related, in turn, to the agencies that deliver the programmes and their accessibility. In most European countries, family interventions for universal prevention are usually developed in health and education services, while programmes for families with higher levels of difficulties (selective or indicated prevention) are usually provided by child welfare and social services (Molinuevo, 2013). Second, family support programmes differ greatly depending on target outcomes. As noted above, while parenting support programmes are specifically aimed at promoting parental competences and have parents as the target population, there are other family support programmes that include among their objectives the promotion of competences in children and adolescents, including them as a target group. All these differences contribute to the fact that family support programmes also vary according to the mode of delivery and their implementation characteristics. In addition to individual intervention, the most common types of family programmes are home-visiting, group, and community interventions. These interventions can be either face-to-face, online or hybrid, and delivered with highly variable intensity and dosage (Frost et al., 2015). Finally, the diversity of existing programmes is also due to differences in intervention models. In the case of family support programmes, the main models used are counselling, psychoeducational, community, and therapeutic interventions (Hidalgo et al., 2018).

Beyond mapping programme diversity, it is crucial to analyse whether the interventions meet the quality standards of evidencebased programmes to improve the quality of family support services. According to the quality standards collected in relevant international publications related to formulation, implementation, evaluation and dissemination of preventive programmes (e.g., Asmussen, 2011: Flav et al., 2005: Gottfredson et al., 2015: Kilburn & Mattox. 2016; Scott, 2010; Small et al., 2009), the European Family Support Network (EurofamNet) has developed a position statement about the quality standards intended to guide the research community, programme developers, programme deliverers, and stakeholders throughout Europe as to what distinguishes a high-quality family support programme. This statement offers a comprehensive but comprehensible framework for quality standards that defines five central components to be taken into account to ensure responsible programming: "responsive" to the need that exists in the target group; "feasible" with regard to the contextual fit, financial, and human resources; "ethical", following the current principles and standards of ethical practice established by the respective professional organizations as well as European and national policies; "inclusive", being respectful of the participants and stakeholders' rights, views, and uniqueness; and "sustainable", being embedded in service delivery systems of established publicly funded agencies (Özdemir et al., in press). These fundamental considerations should guide the different phases described below, related to the process of developing, implementing, and evaluating family support programmes.

When developing a family support programme (see left column in Table 2), the first quality criterion is to analyse the needs and strengths of the families, so that the objectives are as close as possible to the specific needs of the target population (Asmussen & Brim, 2018). Second, a quality standard for family support programmes is to have a clearly defined theoretical model that both guides formulation of the programme goals and methods and explains how change occurs due to the intervention. The change model must explain how a significant improvement in the quality of life of the families is brought about after taking part in the programme (Özdemir et al., in press; Small et al., 2009). Finally, high quality family support programmes have a high degree of systematization, with clear structured activities and well-defined objectives and methods that enable practitioners

Table 2. Main Quality Standards Related to Development, Implementation, and Evaluation of Family Support Programmes

Programme Development	Programme Implementation	Programme Evaluation
Objectives tailored to the needs of target population	Detailed manual	Demonstrated changes with a sizeable effect-size
Well-defined theoretical and change model	Fidelity and flexibility	Several impact trials
Foundation for methodological proposal	Training of practitioners	Standardized assessment measures
Systematization and clear structuring	Institutional support and community integration	Rigorous statistical analyses

to implement the intervention appropriately (National Academy for Parenting Practitioners, 2008).

The structuring of the programmes favours a quality implementation process. As shown in the central column of Table 2, there are four relevant quality standards related to programme implementation. High-quality family support programmes should have a detailed manual to enable the programme to be delivered with fidelity by people other than developers (Durlak & DuPre, 2008). Having the contents and activities described and structured in a manual does not mean that programmes should be rigid and non-responsive to the needs of families and intervention contexts (Özdemir et al., in press). It is necessary to achieve an adequate balance between fidelity and adaptation in the application of the programmes. To this end, developers should clarify what the core components of the programme are that should be absolutely respected and what elements can be adapted without compromising the effectiveness of intervention (Barrera et al., 2017; Fixsen et al., 2009). Finally, other important quality standards related to implementation programmes are the training of practitioners and obtaining institutional support, as well as enlisting the programme into the resources of the community (Casillas et al., 2016; Fixsen et al., 2005).

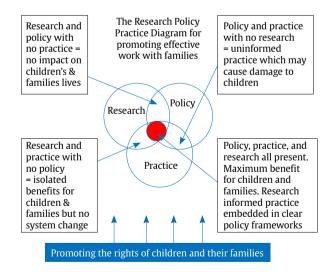
Quality standards related to evaluation are the most distinctive of the evidence-based programmes (see right column in Table 2). To obtain evidence for effectiveness, the programme needs to have demonstrated changes with a sizeable effect using appropriate statistical analysis and robust assessment measures (Small et al., 2009). In addition, changes need to have been demonstrated from several impact trials developed by external evaluators, including a comparison group and with follow-up evaluations (Flay et al., 2005; Gottfredson et al., 2015). Although the standards for evidence from the Society for Prevention Research present as a major criterion for the programme evaluation the use of randomized controlled trials (RCT), there is an increasingly widespread consensus among researchers that experimental designs are not the only way to evaluate family support programmes (e.g., Almeida et al., 2022; Fives et al., 2017; Yarbrough et al., 2011). According to this view, EuroFamNet has proposed a pluralistic methodological approach to achieve greater fit between the demands of academic rigor in evaluation and the "real worlds" of policy and intervention (Almeida et al., 2022; European Family Support Network, 2020a). This plural methodological approach implies considering both scientific and professional practice criteria when selecting evaluation strategies, which must be scientifically rigorous, but also sensitive and adjusted to a specific reality and cultural context (Almeida et al., 2022; Fives et al., 2017; Proctor & Brestan-Knight, 2016).

#### **Overview of the Special Issue**

We are witnessing in Spain a collective effort on the part of public administrations (at national, regional, and local levels) aimed at coordinating actions and improving communities within the framework of plans, strategies, and programmes bearing the seal of the Council of Europe Recommendation on Positive Parenting. There are some organizations and networks in Europe that register under request evidence-based practices and programmes that work for child and families, such as Blueprints for Europe (Axford et al., 2012) and EPIC (European Platform for Investing in Children, n.d.). Nevertheless,

there are few and partial attempts to gain knowledge about the scope of prevention programmes implemented in Spain (e.g., Hidalgo et al., 2018; Rodrigo, 2016). With his incomplete evidence, it is difficult to adjust or reorient ongoing and future programme development, and to eventually design additional implementation and evaluation work. To fill this gap, the main contribution of this Special Issue is twofold: (1) to map the current expansion of family and parenting support programmes implemented in Spain in educational, healthcare, social, justice, and community services showing a wide range of evidence, and (2) to contrast the quality of the evidence provided in those programmes against the prevention standards providing recommendations for future improvement.

The prevention standards used in this Special Issue have been adapted to the field of child and family services by the European Family Support Network (EurofamNet). EurofamNet is a bottom-up, evidence-based, multidisciplinary network funded over a four-year duration as an Action (CA18123) under the European Cooperation in Science and Technology Programme (COST). EurofamNet was created with the purpose of stablishing a pan-European family support network to inform family support policies and practices in order to contribute with global actions to face current challenges in family support agenda at European level (European Family Support Network, 2020b). There are three key areas covered by EurofamNet that currently constitute research challenges: the conceptualisation and delivery of family support in Europe, quality standards in family support services and evidence-based programmes, and advances and agreement on the skills qualification for family support workforce necessary for a quality performance when attending families.



**Figure 2.** The Research Policy Practice Diagram for Promoting Eeffective Work with Families (as published in European Family Support Network, 2020b).

This ambitious project, coordinated from Spain, is two-way innovative in terms of both its scope and its methodological approach. First, as described in Figure 2, EurofamNet activities are placed in the intersection between research, practice, and policy, with the rights and the voice of children and families as the foundations (European

Family Support Network, 2020b), in order to co-create relevant knowledge able to provide effective, relevant, and sustainable proposals that make a real impact in children and families lives (Kerner & Hall, 2009). While Action participants mainly come from academic and research institutions, there is a strong representation from policy and practice groups in the policy and practice area. Thus far, 35 countries have signed the Memorandum of Understanding, and currently 172 researchers, practitioners, policymakers, children and families' representatives, public and private agencies participate in EurofamNet. Second, the methodology of the project reflects its commitment with: (1) a bottom-up process: we are seeking regional and national solutions, by engaging the existing national structures and cooperating with them systematically during the life of the Action; (2) dialogical style: because the Action aims to make a difference to children, young people, and parents, it ensures that all relevant voices are heard and listened to in order to realise genuinely child and family-focused policy and practice; (3) double-layered structure: the Action aims to establish a supranational network that makes it possible policy engagement between the European level and the local/regional/national levels, with mutual influence between them by supporting an ongoing iterative dialogue. For this purpose, national-level networks are being developed including policy, practice, and academic representatives (Jiménez et al., 2021; Spoth et al., 2013). In sum, EurofamNet constitutes a novel initiative in jointing efforts among key actors in family support through Europe to provide evidence-informed responses at European level. EurofamNet has developed an interactive platform that supports comparative studies among European countries and includes a toolbox which is updated on regular basis made of academic, practice, and policy freeaccess resources to be used by stakeholders through Europe (https:// eurofamnet.eu/).

This Special issue is the main outcome of a collaborative work done by a group de researchers on family issues and education from 12 Spanish universities (in alphabetical order: Autónoma de Madrid, A Coruña, Islas Baleares, Jaén, Jaume I, La Laguna, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Loyola Andalucía, Lleida, Málaga, Oviedo, Sevilla), members of the Spanish Family Support Network of the EurofamNet COST project abovementioned. This work specifically falls under the responsibility of Working Group 3, which is appointed to provide a comprehensive picture at the European level of the family and parenting support programmes. The content of the Special Issue includes the results of the corresponding search for the programmes implemented in Spain that was carried out from May 2020 to April 2021. The data collection resulted in 57 programmes implemented in Spain in education, healthcare, social, and community sectors (see Appendix). This is not an exhaustive list of the programmes applied in Spain, but it is intended to be more sensitive and closer to the diversity of contexts in which they are used. Inclusion and exclusion criteria for eligibility of a programme were as follows. As for inclusion criteria (all conditions must be met): authorship (original and/or adaptations), theoretical background, more than three dose sessions, and written report of the programme results available as a white paper or a publication. Regarding the exclusion criteria (any of these conditions is sufficient to exclude): unidentified organization delivering the programme, target population being adults unrelated to parenthood and family issues, and unknown contents and programme methodology.

The articles in this issue analysed the results of four main aspects in all programmes: description, implementation, evaluation, and impact/sustainability, which correspond to the main domains addressed in the standards for evidence. The articles followed the same method and shared the same database of the programmes, but focussed their analyses on their respective aspects. To that purpose, a common Data Collection Sheet (DCS) was built under the consensus of the EurofamNet Working Group 3 to carry out a formative evaluation of the programmes. It is formative evaluation in the sense of providing guidelines to improve the programme

according to the standards for evidence and not for mere ranking purposes. It contained five sections: (a) Programme identification (5 items); (b) Programme description (11 items), to capture a variety of domains, structure, intensity, target population, and target outcomes; (c) Programme implementation (10 items), to capture the main dimensions and components to measure implementation; (d) Programme evaluation (9 items), to gain knowledge about the evaluation designs and measures; and (e) Programme impact (6 items), including the results of the programmes and sustainability. Responses of the items consisted of short answer, checkbox, one and multiple-choice formats, and Likert scale. Results of sections (a) and (b) were included in the first contribution of this Special Issue on Description of the programmes. Results from section (c) in the second contribution on Implementation; results from section (d) in the third contribution on Evaluation, and results from section (e) in the fourth contribution on Impact/Sustainability. A complementary explanation for each item was included in the DCS.

The formative evaluation was designed to identify programmes with different quality levels for evidence to sort out some practical problems of systematic reviews (Mallett et al., 2012). In our area, programme evaluations with lower and middle quality levels for evidence are often located outside the formal peer-reviewed channels, more likely to publish top-level studies written in English. Searching institutional websites also could undermine the objectivity of the search and retrieval process and introduce bias to the recollection process. Instead, we decided to have members of the Spanish Family Support Network to help identify eligible programmes operating in their close environment. To avoid collection biases, the Network is made up of entities at the national (e.g., National Childhood Observatory, National Union of Family Associations, UNAF, UNICEF Spain, Children's Platform), regional (e.g., Cantabria Government, Extremadura Government, Andalusia Government), and local (e.g., Social Rights and Services Department of the Region of Asturias) levels in several sectors, professional schools of Social Workers, Psychologists, Pedagogists, and Social Educators as well as experts from Spanish universities. The members of the Spanish Network received a five-hour online training by the Working Group 3 leaders on the following topics: (a) ways of addressing knowledgeable informants (direct informants of the programme, service coordinators, responsible authorities, front-line practitioners) in their respective regional or local community; (b) how to apply the inclusion and exclusion criteria to select a programme; (c) how to fill in the DCS on an editable pdf format; and (d) follow the data quality assurance plan to ensure validity and precision in understanding the items, reliability among informants and throughout the collection process and integrity and confidence to reduce the possibility of bias and preserve confidentiality. They were also informed that they had to send the DCS to a single person who was responsible for the storage of original data files and backup on the intranet of the website of EurofamNet to ensure that everything was saved correctly.

As for the specific content of the Special Issue, in the first article Isabel M. Bernedo, Maria Angels Basells, Lucía González-Pasarín, and María Ángeles Espinosa provide a detailed picture of the main features of the programmes surveyed examining results related to the programme's identification and description. The variety of programmes emerged from the inspection of their differences in availability, operating domain, manualization, number of sessions, periodicity, dosage, target population, target age of children, target outcome, among others. Some of the results show that Spain is currently in a transition stage between the traditional deficit-based model and the capacity-building approach inspired by the tenets of parenting support. So, further efforts are required, especially as regards making family support universally available. In addition, there is also a need to develop programmes in which children and adolescents are given a more participatory role as representatives of the target group. This information would be useful to improve

the current knowledge about the existing programmes, provide guidelines for improvement, and help design the new ones.

In the second article, Sonia Byrne, Silvia López-Larrosa, Juan Carlos Martín, Enrique Callejas, María Luisa Máiquez, and María José Rodrigo make the case for a good implementation research on how well a programme is conducted when applied in real-life conditions. They examine a wide variety of contextual, processual, and participant's response components, which can affect the quality of implementation. They analyse the variability in the associative patterns between the implementation components and how they related to impact of the programmes. The results indicate that the programmes cover most of the implementation quality standards. However, programmes varied by programme setting, differing in professional discipline, training, participant response, and professional perception of implementation. These findings help illustrate some conceptual and practical challenges that researchers and professionals usually encounter during implementation.

In the third article Victoria Hidalgo, Beatriz Rodríguez-Ruiz, Francisco Juan García-Bacete, Raquel Amaya Martínez-González, Isabel López-Verdugo, and Lucía Jiménez undertake the important task of examining the quality of the evaluation designs of prevention programmes and the evaluation tools used in family support programmes implemented in Spain. The results obtained offer a comprehensive picture about how evaluation is approached in family support programmes, being quite good on average, according to quality standards. In addition, findings show relevant milestones reached as well as challenges to address, such as inclusion of a control group, follow-up assessment, and evaluation of indirect outcomes, especially for children.

The Special Issue concludes with an article from Carmen Orte, Javier Pérez-Padilla, Jesús Maya, Lidia Sánchez-Prieto, Joan Amer, Sofía Baena, and Bárbara Lorence who provides an analysis of the impact of the programmes on child and family wellbeing and other dimensions. Furthermore, variability in the systematization of programmes mainly in terms of descriptive and implementation characteristics of the programmes is examined as were related to the impact, dissemination of programme results, and sustainability of the support of organisations. The results show that most of the programmes use quantitative methodologies, with a positive impact, while about half of them defined the core contents and included professional training. So, this article synthesized the most important impact results and fosters knowledge of the Spanish promising family support programmes and provide guidelines for improvement.

#### **Conclusions**

This Special Issue reflects the increasing use in Spain of structured family support programmes mainly in educational, social, health, and community sectors for the promotion of universal, selective, and indicated preventive actions under the Positive Parenting initiative. Parenting and family support programmes are a good strategy for helping families to gain more autonomy over their lives and become better integrated into the community, while improving their abilities to bring up their children and deal with adverse circumstances. This is an important step toward introducing the evidence-based movement in the domains of child and family services. In this regard, it is good news to see quality assurance in the service provision increasingly being placed at the forefront of efforts by policymakers, researchers, and professionals to deliver evidence-based programmes aimed at supporting parents and families. Besides improving child and family wellbeing, the incorporation of evidence-based programmes leads to positive changes in professionals' work with families and contributes to the better organization of the services. Moreover, the existence of rigorous research on effective parenting and family support programmes not only provides information about the quality of the programmes but is also useful in informing, in return, new social actions and social policies.

In this Special Issue we present the first comparative study addressed with the Spanish programmes reported here, under the support of the EurofamNet project. Although the list of programmes is not meant to be exhaustive, it represents the first catalogue of Spanish family support programmes rigorously contrasted with the same set of standards for evidence in the prevention science. As such, along with other European programmes, the ones listed in the Appendix are available in the webpage of the EurofamNet https://eurofamnet.eu/toolbox/catalogue-family-supportprogrammes?utm\_source=mailpoet&utm\_medium=email&utm\_ campaign=newsletter-european-family-support-network\_1. This is an open catalogue that could be complemented upon request of authors of potential non-listed programmes that meet the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Future international comparison studies will be possible to address involving all the programmes of the catalogue, also under the sponsorship of EurofamNet.

The scope and variety of descriptive features of the programmes presented here give a comprehensive picture of how the provision of support services for families is taking place in Spain. The scope is mainly national, regional, and local, usually regional, but not international, indicating a heavy reliance on original programmes. The public support is predominant as programmes are delivered by public services and, to a lesser extent, by private agencies and NGOs. Diversity is the rule since Spanish programmes are used in universal, selective, and indicated preventive interventions, although most of them are aimed at at-risk families, aimed at a continuum of child ages from early childhood through adolescence, specially pre-adolescents, to a broad target population involving the couple, parents, family and community, mainly parents, and taking place in many settings, such as school, social services, NGO, civic centres and health centres, which speaks in favor of the flexibility and adaptability of the programmes. Target outcomes are achieved with moderate to intensive interventions focused on the strengthening of competences and physical and emotional wellbeing as well as the reduction of substance use, behavioral disorders, and child maltreatment, as might be expected from effective coverage of the population needs from the basic to the more problematic levels.

From the point of view of implementation, the programmes presented here mainly covered the transition between the initial pilot stage to the real-world implementation in the mainstream services. This is a complex translational process that has been closely analyzed here in its main components (Garcia et al., 2019). The results indicated that the average level of implementation of the Spanish programmes is quite good according to quality standards, showing some variability depending on the settings in which they are located. The culture of evaluation following standards for evidence is not yet very widespread in the different sectors, being more adopted in programmes run in multisetting locations than in those in single locations (e.g., educational setting). However, it is very positive that professionals from different disciplines have been involved in programme implementation, laying the foundations for the adoption of integrated and intersectoral work with families to provide more comprehensive and coordinated support to families. Future challenges include the use of ICT programmes, greater replication of evidence-based programmes, and improving their sustainability in services to increase the resilience of families in times of crisis.

Programme evaluation design is a crucial part of the standards of evidence identified by prevention science. In fact, strong claims about the efficacy and effectiveness of the programme depended on that. However, this is the topic that arouses the most controversy among researchers and professionals (Fives et al., 2017). The discrepancies had led to an underestimation of the quality of the programmes from the perspective of the evaluation design used,

following a very restricted set of criteria to qualify for an evidencebased programme (i.e., randomized controlled trials or RCT). Here, a pluralistic methodological perspective of the evaluation is adopted that includes quantitative, qualitative, and mixed strategies and different types of designs to account for evaluation traditions related to the diversity of professional disciplines involved in the provision of family support services. On average, the findings from the surveyed programmes support a fairly positive picture of the quality of programme evaluation according to these standards for evidence. However, significant challenges remain in some of the programmes, such as designs that include a control group, follow-up evaluations that assess long-term effects, and evaluation of child and indirect outcomes.

Finally, the impact of the programme is also addressed in this comparative study to examine the effectiveness with which the results obtained with the evaluation design have been exploited. Findings point to the general use of quantitative analyses and less use of qualitative ones, with a majority reporting positive results while negative changes are almost inexistent. However, it is a weakness that fewer additional analyses are performed for moderating effects, interindividual differences, drop-out trends, or the cost-benefit trends. The programmes differed in the level of systematization in terms of manualization, definition of core components, specification of implementation conditions, organizational support, and explanation of the evaluation process. Those with a high level of systematization reported greater impact, more ways to disseminate the results, and greater sustainability of the programme in the services. An important lesson to be learned is that high compliance with all standards for evidence must be maintained across the aspects of description, implementation, evaluation, and impact (Özdemir et al., in press), since there seem to be carry-over effects that ultimately put the programme qualification as evidence-based at risk.

In conclusion, during the long period of economic and sanitary crisis, the number and quality of programmes have been increasing, which speaks in favor of the effort made by both services and social entities as well as by professional and scientific collaboration in favor of children and families. It is our shared hope that Spain finally addresses the structural underinvestment in family policies to continue promoting evidence-based programmes to improve the wellbeing of child and families and to empower communities.

#### **Conflict of Interest**

The authors of this article declare no conflict of interest.

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#### **Appendix**

Alphabetical List of Spanish Family Support Programmes Surveyed in the Special Issue "Quality of Evidence in the Evaluation of Programmes under the Positive Parenting Initiative in Spain"

-to-face -to-face
-to-face
-to-face
ed (online e-to-face rities)
-to-face
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### M. J. Rodrigo et al. / Psicología Educativa (2022) xx(x) xx-xx

Programme Title	Programme's Author(s)	Target Group	Target Outcome	Delivered
Currículum para el aprendizaje socio- emocional	García, F. J., & GREI Group	Children Family Other	Positive parenting promotion Child competences promotion Physical and emotional wellbeing Reducing child behavioural problems Community development	Face-to-face
Descubre tu potencial para edu- car a tus hijos e hijas (Servicio de evaluación preventiva de contextos familiares)	Arranz-Freijo, E. B., Olabarrieta, F., Manza- no, A., Barreto-Zarza, F. B., Roncallo, C. P., Sánchez, M., Rekagorri, J., & García, D.	Children Family	Positive parenting promotion Positive couple relationships Child competences promotion Educational skills and attainment	Mixed (online + face-to-face activities)
Educar en familia	Martínez-González, R. A.	Parents (father and/or mother figures) Children Family	Positive parenting promotion Child competences promotion Physical and emotional wellbeing Adolescence competences promotion Reducing adolescence behavioural problems Reducing adolescence substance use	Mixed (online + face-to-face activities)
Educar en positivo	Rodrigo, M. J., Máiquez, M. L., Martín, J. C., Byrne, S., Álvarez, M., Padilla, S., Suarez, A., & Torres, A.	Parents (father and/or mother figures) Family Community	Positive parenting promotion Positive couple relationships Reducing neglect or abusive parenting Child competences promotion Educational skills and attainment Physical and emotional wellbeing Reducing child behavioural problems Community development	Online
EGOKITZEN adultos: programa de intervención post-divorcio con hijos/ as de 8 a 12 años	Martínez-Pampliega, A., Iriarte, L., Sanz- Vázquez, M. Cormenzana, S., Merino, L., & Corral, S	Parents (father and/or mother figures)	Positive parenting promotion Positive couple relationships Physical and emotional wellbeing Reducing child behavioural problems Adolescence competences promotion Reducing adolescence behavioural problems	Face-to-face
EGOKITZEN infantil: programa de intervención post-divorcio con hijos/ as de 8 a 12 años	Merino, L., Corral, S., Cormenzana, S., Sanz, M., Gordo, L., & Martínez-Pampliega, A.	Children	Child competences promotion Physical and emotional wellbeing Reducing child behavioural problems	Face-to-face
EmPeCemos: emociones, pensamientos y conductas para un desarrollo saludable	Romero, E., Villar, P., Luengo, M. A., Gó- mez-Fraguela, J. A., & Robles, Z.	Parents (father and/or mother figures)	Positive parenting promotion Child competences promotion Reducing child behavioural problems Reducing adolescence substance use	Face-to-face
En familia. Educar para la vida	Alarcón, R., Alvarado, C., Bermúdez, C., Borrego, A., Cabrera, V., Cossío, C. T., Fernández, I., Fominaya, S., Gil, C., Lloret, D., Llorente, R. M., López, M. A., Loureyro , C., Macarro, R. M., Montalvo , J. F., Navas, M. M., Paños , R., Ramírez, R., Reinoso, L., Rodríguez, M. A., & Sánchez, M. Collabora- tion: Calderón, G., Carro, R., Cubillo, T., Gil, C., Martínez, R., Mengual, A., & Ros, M.	Parents (father and/or mother figures)	Positive parenting promotion Positive couple relationships Physical and emotional wellbeing Reducing adolescence substance use	Face-to-face
Eso por la salud	Aguiar, S., Alonso, J. J., Blanco, A. G., Ceballos, A., Fernández, M. J., Frechilla, A., García, E., García-Vázquez, J., Lena, A., Pérez, D., Pérez, M. E., Rodríguez, R., Suárez, C., & Vallina, M.	Children Family	Child competences promotion Educational skills and attainment Physical and emotional wellbeing Reducing child behavioural problems Adolescence competences promotion Reducing adolescence behavioural problems Reducing adolescence substance use Community development	Face-to-face
Familia con emociones	Bustillo, C., Jimeno, S., & González, G.	Parents (father and/or mother figures) Children Family	Positive parenting promotion Child competences promotion Physical and emotional wellbeing Adolescence competences promotion Reducing adolescence behavioural problems Reducing adolescence substance use	Mixed (online + face-to-face activities)
Feliz de conocerme	Martín, J. C., Rendón, A. M., Pérez, J., Hernández, B., Cruz, M. M., & Cabrera, C.	Parents (father and/or mother figures) Other	Positive parenting promotion Reducing neglect or abusive parenting	Face-to-face
Formación y apoyo familiar (FAF)	Hidalgo, V., Menéndez, S., López, I., Sán- chez , J., Lorence, B., & Jiménez , L.	Parents (father and/or mother figures)	Positive parenting promotion Positive couple relationships Child competences promotion Physical and emotional wellbeing Adolescence competences promotion Community development	Face-to-face
Fortaleza	Morrell, J. M. & Vallejo, L. (Coords). Barrero, E., Martín, I., & Londoño, M. T. (Eds.)	Parents (father and/or mother figures) Family	Positive parenting promotion Reducing neglect or abusive parenting Child competences promotion Reducing child behavioural problems Community development	Mixed (online + face-to-face activities)

Programme Title	Programme's Author(s)	Target Group	Target Outcome	Delivered
Ganar salud y bienestar de 0 a 3 años	Rodrigo, M. J., Martín-Quintana, J. C., Máiquez, M. L., Álvarez, M., Byrne, S., Rodríguez, E., Padilla, S., Suárez, A., & García, C.	Parents (father and/or mother figures) Family	Positive parenting promotion Positive couple relationships Reducing neglect or abusive parenting Child competence promotion Educational skills and attainment Physical and emotional wellbeing Reducing child behavioural problems	Mixed (online + face-to-face activities)
GUÍA	Reina, A., Miguel, J., González, A., & Luque, J. A.	Parents (father and/or mother figures) Children Family	Positive parenting promotion Adolescence competences promotion Reducing adolescence behavioural problems	Mixed (online + face-to-face activities)
Las visitas: un espacio de desarrollo familiar	Bernedo, I. M., González-Pasarín, L., Salas, M. D., & Fuentes, M. J.	Parents (father and/or mother figures) Family	Positive parenting promotion Physical and emotional wellbeing Community development	Face-to-face
Limits: programa d'actuació preven- tiva familiar de la transgressió i del consum de drogues en menors i joves que passen pel circuit de la justícia juvenil	Larriba, J., & Duran, A. M.	Parents (father and/or mother figures)	Reducing adolescence delinquency Reducing adolescence substance use	Face-to-face
Mentes únicas	López, S., & González, R. M. Adapted version from Unique Minds Program (Stern, M.)	Parents (father and/or mother figures) Children	Positive parenting promotion Child competences promotion Educational skills and attainment Physical and emotional wellbeing Reducing child behavioural problems	Face-to-face
MONEO: programa de prevención familiar del consumo de drogas	Larriba, J., Duran, A. M., & Suelves, J. M.	Parents (father and/or mother figures)	Positive couple relationships Reducing adolescence substance use	Face-to-face
Motivados por aprender	del Prado, M., Simón, C., & Alonso, J.	Parents (father and/or mother figures) Children Family	Positive parenting promotion Child competences promotion Educational skills and attainment Adolescence competences promotion	Mixed (online + face-to-face activities)
NAYFA	Dirección General de Infancia. Consejería para la Igualdad, Políticas Sociales y Con- ciliación. Junta de Andalucía	Parents (father and/or mother figures) Children Family	Positive parenting promotion Child competences promotion Physical and emotional wellbeing Adolescence competences promotion	Face-to-face
Ni ogros ni princesas	García, J., Ordóñez, A., González, C., & Blanco, A. G.	Parents (father and/or mother figures) Children	Child competences promotion Educational skills and attainment Physical and emotional wellbeing Reducing child behavioural problems Adolescence competences promotion Reducing adolescence behavioural problems Community development	Face-to-face
Padres como facilitadores de la amis- tad de los hijos	Mikami, A.Y. Adapted and translated from the Parental Friendship Coaching (Univer- sity of British Columbia, Vancouver)	Parents (father and/or mother figures) Family	Positive parenting promotion Reducing neglect or abusive parenting Child competences promotion Physical and emotional wellbeing Reducing child behavioural problems Community development	Face-to-face
Padres y madres sin barreras. Pro- grama para la promoción de la pa- rentalidad positiva desde los centros penitenciarios.	Pellegrino, G., & Martín, J. C.	Parents (father and/or mother figures) Family Community	Positive parenting promotion Reducing neglect or abusive parenting Community development	Face-to-face
Prevención de conductas delictivas	Fundación Diagrama Intervención Social	Children Family	Positive parenting promotion Reducing neglect or abusive parenting Child competences promotion Physical and emotional wellbeing Reducing child behavioural problems Reducing adolescence delinquency Reducing adolescence behavioural problems Reducing adolescence substance use Community development	Face-to-face
Primera alianza: mejorando los vínculos tempranos	Pitillas, C., & Berástegui, A.	Parents (father and/or mother figures)	Positive parenting promotion Reducing neglect or abusive parenting Reducing child behavioural problems	Face-to-face
Programa de apoyo integral a las familias (PAIF)	Hidalgo, V., Oliva, A., Jiménez, L., Antolín, L., Menéndez, S., & Lorence, B.	Parents (father and/or mother figures) Community Other	Positive parenting promotion Positive couple relationships Child competences promotion Educational skills and attainment Physical and emotional wellbeing Reducing child behavioural problems Adolescence competences promotion Reducing adolescence behavioural problems Community development	Face-to-face

Programme Title	Programme's Author(s)	Target Group	Target Outcome	Delivered
Programa de competencia familiar (PCF)	Orte, C., Kumpfer, K., & GIFES	Parents (father and/or mother figures) Children Family	Positive parenting promotion Positive couple relationships Reducing neglect or abusive parenting Child competences promotion Educational skills and attainment Physical and emotional wellbeing Reducing child behavioural problems Adolescence competences promotion Reducing adolescence delinquency Reducing adolescence behavioural problems Reducing adolescence substance use Community development	Face-to-face
Programa de formación para el acog- imiento en familia extensa	Amorós, J., Jiménez, J., Molina, M. C., Pastor, C., Cirera, L., & Martín, D.	Parents (father and/or mother figures) Children Family	Positive parenting promotion Positive couple relationships Reducing neglect or abusive parenting Educational skills and attainment Community development	Face-to-face
Programa de formación/reflexión inicial para la adopción en Canarias	Triana, B., Plasencia, S., Rodríguez, G., Ortega, E. M., López, I., & Hernández, M. M.	Couple Parents (father and/or mother figures)	Positive parenting promotion Positive couple relationships Child competences promotion Physical and emotional wellbeing Reducing child behavioural problems Adolescence competences promotion Reducing adolescence behavioural problems Community development	Face-to-face
Programa de integración familiar (PIF)	Fundación Meniños	Family	Positive parenting promotion Positive couple relationships Reducing neglect or abusive parenting Child competences promotion Educational skills and attainment Physical and emotional wellbeing Reducing child behavioural problems Adolescence competences promotion Reducing adolescence delinquency Reducing adolescence behavioural problems Reducing adolescence substance use Community development	Face-to-face
Programa de intervenión familiar	KAMIRA S. Cooperación de iniciativa social	Family	Positive parenting promotion Positive couple relationships Reducing neglect or abusive parenting Child competences promotion Educational skills and attainment Physical and emotional wellbeing Reducing child behavioural problems Adolescence competences promotion Reducing adolescence behavioural problems	Face-to-face
Programa de promoción de parentali- dad positiva en Polígono Sur (5Ps)	Moreno, M. C., Díez, M., Estévez, R. M., Hi- dalgo, V., Jiménez, L., López, F., Román, M., Jiménez, J., Oliva, A., & Antolín-Suárez, L.	Parents (father and/or mother figures) Family	Positive parenting promotion Reducing neglect or abusive parenting Child competences promotion Educational skills and attainment Physical and emotional wellbeing Reducing child behavioural problems Community development	Face-to-face
Programa para la promoción de paren- talidad positiva en familias refugiadas	Jiménez, L., Hidalgo, V., Nogales, I., Baena, S., & Maya, J.	Parents (father and/or mother figures)	Positive parenting promotion Community development	Face-to-face
PROTEGO: entrenamiento familiar en habilidades educativas para la pre- vención de las drogodependencias	Larriba, J., Duran, A. M., & Suelves, J. M.	Couple Family	Positive parenting promotion Reducing adolescence substance use	Face-to-face
Ruptura de pareja, no de familia	Fariña, F., Novo, M., Arce, R., & Seijo, D.	Parents (father and/or mother figures) Children Family	Positive parenting promotion Positive couple relationships Child competences promotion Physical and emotional wellbeing Reducing child behavioural problems Adolescence competences promotion Reducing adolescence behavioural problems	Face-to-face
Servicio de Unidad de Día para la infancia y adolescencia en situación de riesgo de exclusión social	Ayuntamiento de Sevilla. Área de Biene- star Social, Empleo y planes integrales de transformación social. Delegación de Bienestar Social. Dirección General de Acción Social. Servicio de Intervención de los Servicios Sociales	Children Family	Positive parenting promotion Reducing neglect or abusive parenting Child competences promotion Educational skills and attainment Physical and emotional wellbeing Reducing child behavioural problems	Face-to-face
Terapia familiar estructural-es- tratégica	Minuchin, S. Adapted from Structural family therapy and strategic family therapy (Haley, J., & Weakland, J.)	Family	Positive parenting promotion Positive couple relationships Physical and emotional wellbeing Reducing child behavioural problems Reducing adolescence behavioural problems	Face-to-face

Evaluation of Programmes under the Positive Parenting Initiative

Programme Title	Programme's Author(s)	Target Group	Target Outcome	Delivered
Tratamiento a familias con menores	Dirección General de Infancia y Familia. Consejería para la Igualdad y Bienestar Social. Junta de Andalucía	Parents (father and/or mother figures) Family	Positive parenting promotion Positive couple relationships Reducing neglect or abusive parenting Child competences promotion Educational skills and attainment Physical and emotional wellbeing Reducing child behavioural problems Adolescence competences promotion Reducing adolescence behavioural problems Community development	Face-to-face
Vacaciones en familia	Comunidad de Madrid	Family	Child competences promotion Community development	Face-to-face
Vivir la adolescencia en familia	Rodrigo, M. J., Martín, J. C., Máiquez, M. L., Álvarez, M., Byrne, S., González, A., Guerra, M., Montesdeoca, M. A., & Rodríguez, B.	Parents (father and/or mother figures)	Positive parenting promotion Positive couple relationship Reducing neglect or abusive parenting Child competences promotion Educational skills and attainment Physical and emotional wellbeing Adolescence competences promotion Reducing adolescence behavioural problems Reducing adolescence substance use Community development	Face-to-face
Yo cuento, tú pintas, ella suma	Lena, A., & García, J. (Coords.)	Children Family	Child competences promotion Educational skills and attainment Physical and emotional wellbeing Reducing child behavioural problems	Face-to-face