



Focus on underprivileged children during international intensive programme in Lithuania



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**Sustainable
Collaboration**

**Cultural
Awareness**

Empowerment

Main Topics

- Underprivileged children in Lithuania
- Impact of institutionalization on child's development
- Intensive international course „Sensory Processing Disorders“





Underprivileged children in Lithuania

A lot of families with children in Lithuania live at poverty risk

Type of the family*	2008	2016
One adult with one and more children	48.2%	41.9%
Two adults with 3 and more children	47.9%	32.3%

* According *Statistic Lithuania*

Children in institutions in Lithuania

Parents poverty and/or alcohol/drugs consumption are the main causes why children have to fall in state custody.



	2008 *	2017*
Children in institutions	5603	2964
Number of institutions for children's care	114	91

*According *Statistic Lithuania*

Environmental barriers for children in institutions



1. Lack of stimulation in physical environment:

- not enough age appropriate toys,
- limited possibilities to play

2. Lack of support and relationships:

- poor social-emotional interactions
- lack of sensory – emotional stimulation (hugs, individual attention..),
- children who live in institution get 18 % of vestibular, touch and proprioceptive stimuli comparing with children grown up in families.

Impact of institutionalization on child's development



- Delays in *physical growth, neural atrophy, and abnormal brain maturation.*
 - Poor social-emotional interactions play a role in *attachment* problems and *general behavioral and mental deficits.*
 - Lack of sensory stimulation leads to *sensory processing deficits*
 - Evidence indicates that infants who are placed in institutional care will suffer harm to their development if they are not moved to family-based care by the age of 6 months.
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- Johnson R, Browne K, Hamilton-Giachritsis C. Young children in institutional care at risk of harm. *Trauma Violence Abuse.* 2006 Jan;7(1):34-60.
 - Narducci R, Baroncelli L, Sansevero G, Begenisic T, Prontera C, Sale A, Cenni MC, Berardi N, Maffei L. *Sci Rep.* Early impoverished environment delays the maturation of cerebral cortex. 2018 Jan 19;8(1):1187.

Impact of deprived sensory environment



- Longer lengths of institutionalization are associated with more atypical sensory discrimination, praxis, and sensory modulation.
- More vulnerable areas of sensory processing to deprived conditions in early childhood are vestibular-proprioceptive, tactile, visual, auditory, and praxis.
- Adopted children with lengthy periods of institutionalization may benefit from occupational therapy for early screenings of sensory processing.

Lin, S. H., Cermak, S., Coster, W. J., & Miller, L. (2005). The relation between length of institutionalization and sensory integration in children adopted from Eastern Europe. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 59,139–147.

International intensive programme „Sensory Processing Disorders“

- The programme was conducted by Klaipėda University (Lithuania) in close collaboration with Erasmus partners from PXL (Belgium) and Coventry (UK) universities also social partner - Klaipėda Baby Home.
- Carried out from 2014 – 2018 annually for one week (5 times already)

Study methods

- PBL approach was applied to analyze real life cases identified through practical sessions in the baby home.

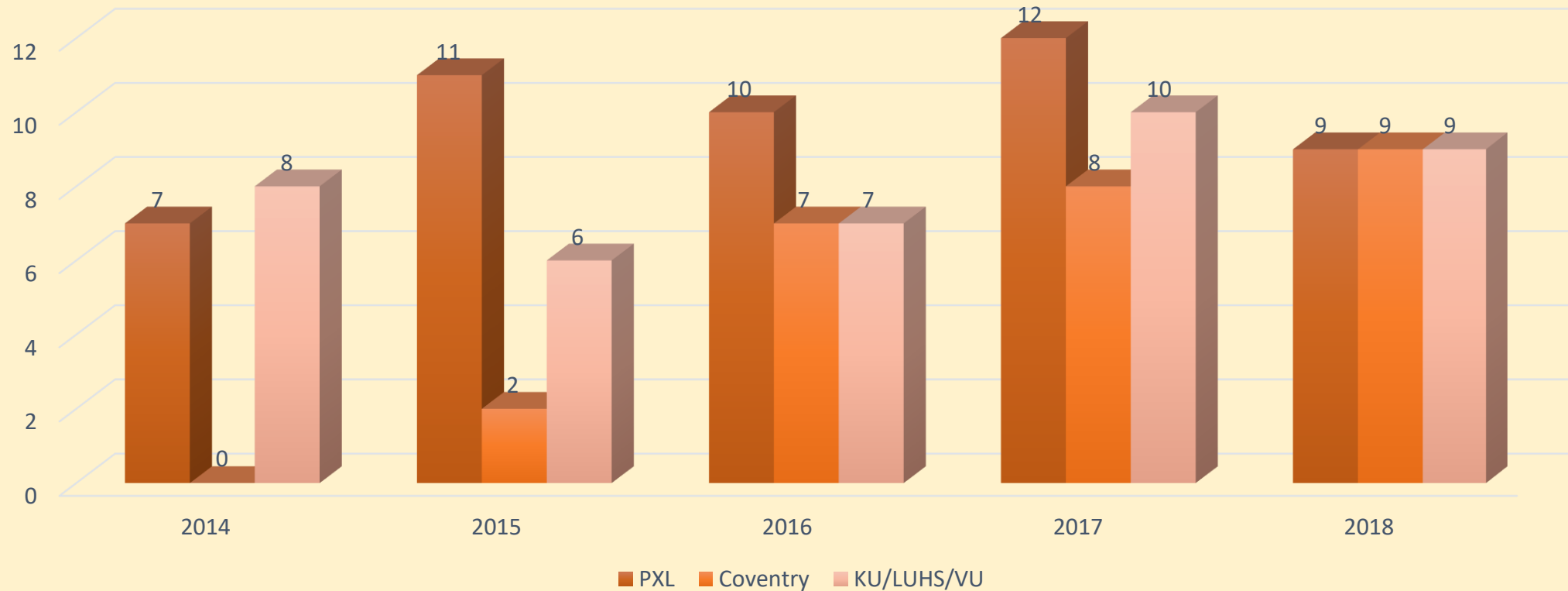
A variety of study methods:

- case study,
- role play,
- group work,
- practical observation of children
- academic debates

were used to facilitate active engagement, professional and critical reasoning of the participants.

International programme „Sensory Processing Disorders“

Number of students in the programme (Total -115)



Main goals of the course



- to enhance understanding and use of ICF language (Hasselt Occupational Performance Profile)
- to acquire knowledge about the impact of Sensory processing difficulties to child's participation
- to get insight of the impact of environmental factors on child's development (workshops in Baby Home)
- to stimulate creativity and innovative thinking (workshops for creating an app for persons with SPD difficulties)
- to develop intercultural competencies

BENEFITS of the programme (1)

- **For foreign students** – the unique intercultural (international) experience, possibility to get vivid view of impact of environment on child's development and participation.
- **For Lithuanian students** – international experience at their home country.
- Emerging themes regarding the value of the programme *from students* - practical experience with babies; working with students from different cultures; good balance between learning activities to stimulate engagement.



BENEFITS of the programme (2)

- ***For local teachers*** – empowerment by Erasmus partners to organize the first international intensive programme in Lithuania.
- The variety of active study methods used by foreign lecturers help to improve teaching competences.
- Foreign tutors valued - rich learning environment in which professional reasoning as well as intercultural thinking and competence were enhanced

BENEFITS of the programme (3)

For babies – an education of Baby home staff – another focus to the children's development

- Staff got recommendations from the students groups how to create more sensory stimulating environment, to enhance children's participation.
- The impact of occupational therapist was highlighted

As a result of the recommendations and discussions with staff children got possibility to be engaged in different activities.



Feedback for the staff – an example from one group – Sensory Passport

SENSORY PASSPORT MAKSIMAS **INTRODUCING MYSELF**

My name is Maksimas, I'm 8 years old.

I am a boy with special sensory needs, so in this passport I will show and tell you what I need and how you can see how I feel.

I live in Baby Home from my birth.

I can't talk to you with words through my mouth, but my body language can tell you a lot about myself! 😊

I have autism, an developmental disorder and cerebral palsy. Because of that, I like quiet things and places. I don't like a lot of people in one room (so don't take it personally!). I can't walk so I'm sitting in (wheel)chair.



4 SENSORY PASSPORT OF MAKSIMAS (4)

THINGS I LIKE AND DON'T LIKE

When you see me exhibiting "distressed behaviours" try using the things I like to calm me...

Do's

- I like listening to soft **music** when I'm alone.
- When people want to learn, play or do something with me, I like it more when there is just **one person (like one on one)**.
- I like it when people **massage** my hands, legs and arms. Also my chin and neck loves to be massaged.
- I like to feel hands **holding and stimulating my hands** or running through my fingers.

Don'ts

- I don't like **loud noises** around me. This can be noises like a lot of people talking, drilling, loud music, banging
- If you are going to touch me, I would like to know because I don't like **unexpected touch**. It makes me feel distressed and scared.
- Like I already told you, I don't like **much people in one room**. Don't take it personally, but it feels too busy and overcrowded!
- I don't like playing with **too much toys**.

PASSPORT MAKSIMAS WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP ME?

- When you want to play with me or you want me to learn something, I can do better work when I'm relaxed!
- Give me a more structured day schedule including time to relax before and after an important activity.
- You can help me relax by massaging my hands, arms or legs. Also making some movements with my arms can help.

- Sometimes I will slap myself or put my fingers in my mouth.
- I make a lot of movements with my hands and fingers (like pinching with my thumb and fingers, clap in my hands or grab things).
- To help me not do this, give me time to relax (like massages and music).
- Keep me away from loud sound. They make me distressed.

In conclusion

- IP helps OT students to understand the influence of the environment on participation.
- The immersive nature of the course necessitates the development of cultural competence to ensure successful outcomes for the underprivileged children

Thank you for your attention

