



Key Message: As Early as Possible

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As early as possible

- The sooner special needs are detected and tended to, the greater the impact of services
 - Quality of care
 - Return on investment
- Timely action hinges on early:
 - Detection and assessment
 - Intervention
 - Support



Early detection and assessment

- Means: identifying and understanding special needs
- Helps caregivers
 - Describing and explaining
 - Validation
 - Raise awareness
- Provides formal identification to open pathways to
 - Direct services (e.g. learning resources) and/or
 - Indirect services (e.g. parental support)
- Serves formative goals
 - e.g. shaping learning trajectories
 - e.g. setting priorities in therapies.

Early detection and assessment

Barriers

- Risk factors easier to identify than at-risk children
- High quality screening tools not available for all areas requiring treatment
- Subtle problems difficult to detect

Enablers

- Routine surveillance has been shown to work
- Parent knowledge is very helpful and could be used more in many cases

Early intervention

- Means: rapidly responding to developing special needs of children at any age,
- Especially relevant: Early Childhood Intervention includes (European Agency 2010):
 - ensure and enhance personal development;
 - strengthen the family's own competences, an/or
 - promote the social inclusion of the family and the child'
- Key considerations
 - availability, quality and quantity of services
 - across circumstances (e.g. urban/rural regions, high/low income)

Early intervention

Barriers

- Availability of services
- Awareness of services
- Human condition (e.g. emotion, inertia, insecurity)
- Time
- Language
- Culture

Enablers

- Multilingual, low-threshold contact (e.g. attentive live person in phone call)
- Swift initiation of action (e.g. obtaining appointment by end of phone call)

Early support

- Means: Human/material resources provided to caregivers
- Wields powerful influence on if, how and when detection, assessment and intervention actions are taken.
- Examples:
 - Family support - information and exchange, with peers or professionals; sibling coaching
 - teacher support - cooperation with professionals in or outside of the school; inter-agency agreements
- Can focus on:
 - immediate concerns (e.g. competencies to be developed this week or this year),
 - anticipating and enabling appropriate and smooth transitions (e.g. into formal schooling, from one school to another, from schooling to employment).

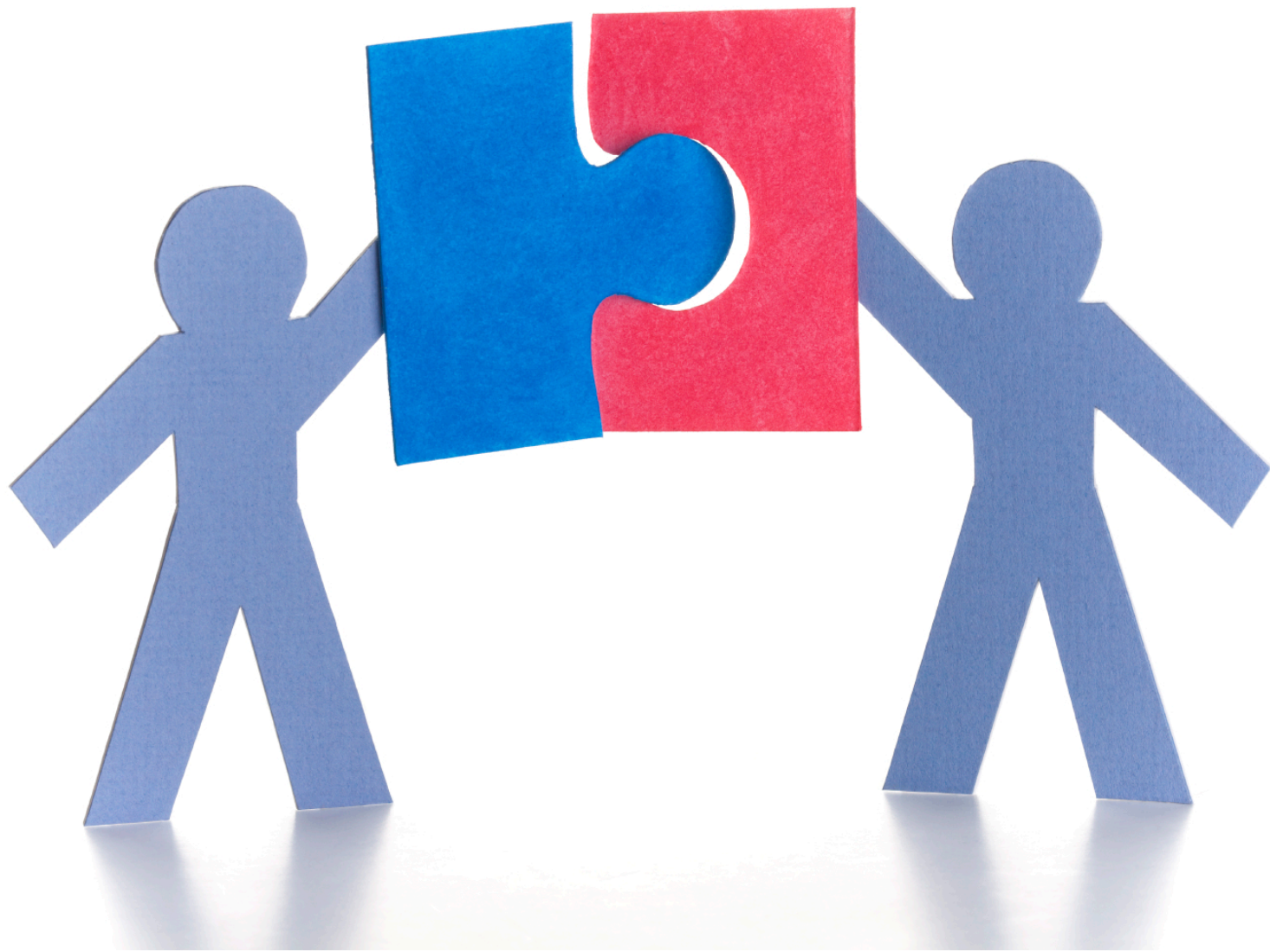
Early support

Barriers

- Establishing clear, measurable objectives is more common in programs focusing in at-risk children than in those focusing on support
- Historical lack of tools-culture to measure support outcomes

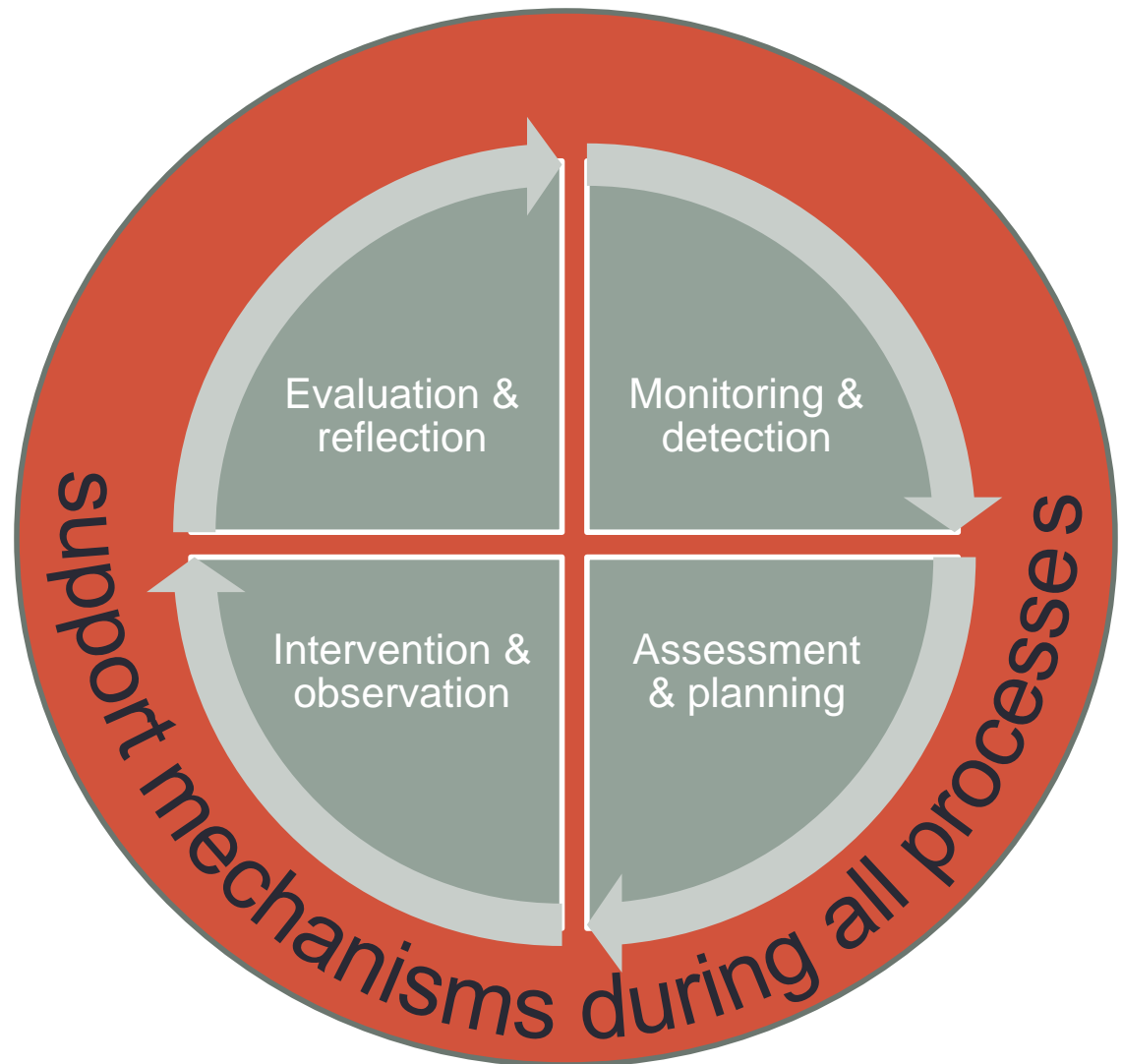
Enablers

- Outcomes and accountability levels becoming understood
- Tools are being developed
- Teachers want support
- Families want support
- Communities want to see people using the services they provide

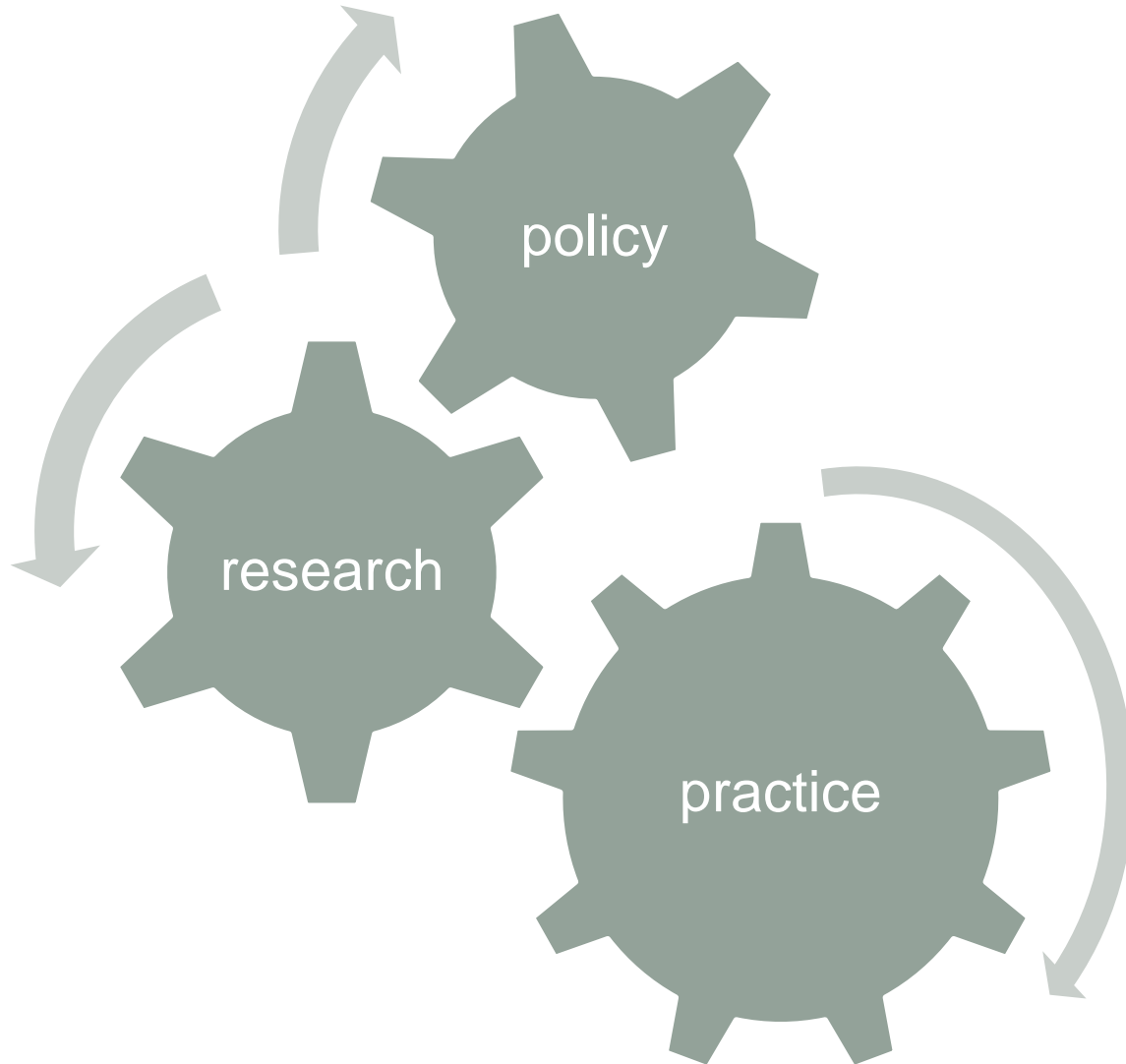


These factors...

- Are all related
- Include sub-components
- Form an ongoing cycle, not always in the ideal sequence
- Are shaped by (interactions between) policy, practice and research



Typically: interacting, but separate worlds



Toward mutually beneficial policy, practice & research interactions



RDD – DR – CoP

(Research, Development, Diffusion – Design Research – Communities of Practice)

Cross-cutting interaction requires change

- **Policies** that fund connected work (not separate funding for intervention in practice vs research work)
- **Practitioners** that want to engage, often beyond their own day-to-day
- **Researchers** who value changes in practice and practical and usable knowledge alongside or as part of the quest for theoretical understanding
- More **examples** of the added-value such approaches have to offer to inform policy, shape practice and deepen research-based understandings

Discussion:

- **Reflecting on the main issues addressed:**
 - Early monitoring, detection; assessment, planning
 - Early intervention, observation, evaluation, reflection
 - Early support mechanisms during all processes and for varied stakeholders
- **What policies, practices and research:**
 - Currently facilitate appropriate action? Across Europe?
 - Are needed to engender positive change? Across Europe?
 - Can we influence? Directly? Indirectly? (How?)
 - Should be highest on our agenda? (Why?)

Thank you!
For discussion beyond today...

Susan McKenney

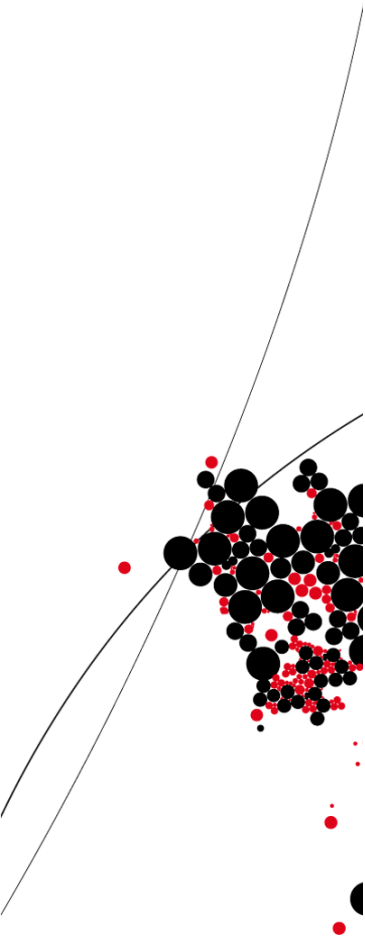
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Discussion: A task for us?

	Detection & Assessment	Intervention	Support
Policy			
Practice			
Research			

Seeing systems, one example

